

TERTULLIAN AND THE EUCHARIST

by

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(Under the Direction of Erika Hermanowicz)

ABSTRACT

Tertullian, a North African Christian writing in Latin in the second and third centuries C.E., produced over thirty texts on topics ranging in nature from apologetic to polemical to theological. He did not, however, write a treatise on the eucharist, leading many scholars to ignore the wealth of information which he provides throughout his texts on this sacrament. Through a study of the terminology Tertullian uses to talk about the spiritual and physical (*corpus, caro, spiritus, and anima*), followed by a close examination of how he uses such language when discussing the eucharist, this thesis aims to shed light on his eucharistic theology. It argues that Tertullian believed in a consecrated eucharistic bread and wine that were imbued with Christ's presence, a presence which he conceived of as purely spiritual in nature during his early career but which became increasingly physical in his later texts.

INDEX WORDS: Tertullian, eucharist, North Africa, early Christianity

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CHAPTER 1

BODY, FLESH, SPIRIT, AND SOUL IN TERTULLIAN

Tertullian rarely makes specific mention of the eucharist, and he wrote no known treatise on the subject. This should not be taken to mean, however, that he did not attach significance to the sacrament or have an opinion on it. The lack of a treatise on the eucharist may only indicate that it was not a source of serious conflict for the North African Christians of Tertullian's world at the time.¹ The majority of his texts address either what he perceived as heretical teachings or contentious issues within his own Christian community. For example, *De Baptismo* was written to combat an opponent who was trying to convince Christians not to partake in baptism, while *De Virginibus Velandis* was a response to the problem of Christian virgins attending services unveiled, and *De Corona* addressed Tertullian's views about a Christian soldier who had recently refused to wear a laurel crown. His texts deal with issues pertinent to the setting in which he lived and practiced his faith, and he often begins a treatise by naming the event or opposing figure that prompted him to write. He may simply have never had a pressing reason to write extensively on the eucharist.

Regardless, it is clear from his extant body of work that Tertullian viewed the eucharistic sacrament as an important part of Christian practice. Tertullian wrote extensively on the nature of Christ, the resurrection of the flesh, and the salvation of the soul, all subjects which are deeply connected to the eucharist as a representation of

¹ Of course, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, but the point stands: Tertullian had beliefs about the eucharist's significance regardless of the lack of a treatise on it.

Christ's body of which his believers must partake. What is less clear is how Tertullian viewed the nature of the eucharist as an act of consumption. Did he perceive the body and blood as simply representative of Christ's own, or did he believe that Christ was truly present in the meal? If he believed in a true presence, did he understand the presence as corporeal or spiritual? Did he consider the sacrament to be a sort of Christian sacrifice, as later authors did, or did he view it simply as a communal expression of faith? I aim to answer all of these questions in the following pages.

Burns and Jensen trace the progression of beliefs concerning the eucharist through key African Christian figures in their book on North African Christianity. They claim that a clear change can be seen by following the beliefs of Tertullian through to Cyprian and finally Augustine. Tertullian, they say, downplayed the sacrificial nature of the sacrament and pushed its communal aspects, while Cyprian encouraged the view of the eucharist as sacrifice. Augustine took the concept still further by viewing the practice as "the offering in which all, as members of Christ, were presented to God."² Tertullian wished to "avoid parallels to idolatrous rituals."³ As the persecution of Christians increased in Cyprian's time and greater emphasis was put on the Christians' refusal to perform sacrifice, views began to shift; Christians were now encouraged to proclaim the nature of their sacrament as sacrifice.

Although Burns and Jensen's history of the eucharist demonstrates a neat progression of ideas from one major African author to the next, I think that they have oversimplified the way that Tertullian thought about the sacrament. In this thesis I intend to conduct an in-depth exploration of Tertullian's beliefs regarding the eucharist.

² J. Patout Burns, Jr. and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 290.

³ *Ibid.*

Tertullian's ideas are not clear-cut and unchanging, and he often expresses new or slightly altered beliefs between one text and another. As we will see in Chapter 2, his concept of the eucharist developed over the course of his career along with his concepts of topics such as the body and flesh, the spirit and soul, meal and sacrament, and the nature of Christ. I will trace this development as closely as possible, keeping in mind that chronology will be a challenge. For the purpose of establishing a basic chronology, I will follow the order proposed by Barnes, with the revisions made in his 1985 postscript taken into consideration.⁴ Instead of hinging my arguments too much on a tight chronology, I will try to group texts broadly as either "early" or "late", and will also sometimes look at texts in groups based on subject matter rather than date of publication.

Before attempting to derive any significance from Tertullian's few mentions of the eucharist, it is crucial to understand four key concepts: body (*corpus*), flesh (*caro*), spirit (*spiritus*), and soul (*anima*). All four terms are related to the nature of Christ and the components of the eucharist. The similarities and differences between these terms as they are used by Tertullian, as well as the ways in which he applies them to Christ himself, will shed light on what the sacrament of the eucharist meant to him, and how he may have conceptualized the presence, or lack thereof, of Christ, either physically or spiritually, in the food elements.⁵

³ Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 55 & 325-329.

⁵ Bread and wine were likely the predominant food elements of the eucharist during Tertullian's time, although the wine may have sometimes been switched with water (Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 243-244.) Milk and honey were part of baptism, rather than the eucharist; in *De Corona* 3.2-3.3, Tertullian is describing various Christian traditions and mentions that milk and honey are consumed by the newly baptized immediately after their new birth as Christians. He then mentions the taking of the eucharist at meal-time as a separate act. At any point where the specific elements of the eucharist are mentioned by Tertullian, they are always bread and wine.

The Body and the Flesh

I will begin with an exploration of the terms *corpus* and *caro* (“body” and “flesh” respectively). While discussing Tertullian’s use of *corpus* and *caro* it is important to note that other forms or compounds of the terms will be considered as well, including the adjectival forms *corporalis* (“corporeal/having body”), *carnalis* (“carnal/fleshly”), and *carneus* (“carnal/of flesh”) and the adverbial forms *corporaliter* (“corporeally/bodily”) and *carnaliter* (“carnally/fleshly”). The relationships among these terms are difficult to pin down; Tertullian himself is not at all regular in his use of the terms from text to text, and the distinction between them is often unclear or even non-existent. By analyzing his use of the terminology throughout his extant texts, however, a few important points will become clear: 1) In his earlier texts, Tertullian views *corpus* and *caro* as distinct concepts, referring to Jesus as having *caro* but not *corpus*, and only later coming to understand Christ as being corporeal; 2) When Tertullian first begins to state that Jesus had a body, he does so only in the allegorical context of Christ’s body as bread; 3) Tertullian eventually begins to use *corpus* and *caro* interchangeably, but two characteristics of *caro* that continue to set it apart from *corpus* are the life inherent in it, and its sinful and lustful nature.

Due to the challenges in determining exact dates for Tertullian’s works, it is impossible to trace the terms *corpus* and *caro* chronologically with precision.⁶ It is generally agreed, however, that *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum* are among his earliest writings, so I will begin there. One complication in understanding Tertullian’s conception of the body and flesh at this point arises with his ideas about the corporeality of the

⁶ See Chapter 5 in Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* for a discussion of the methods used for and problems associated with dating Tertullian’s works.

divine; he seems to contradict himself between the texts. In *Ad Nationes*, he argues that a true god is *incorporalis* (lacking a physical body), since anything corporeal that is *animalia* (living or animate) must be mortal:

*Nam etsi immortalem constat animam, ipsi hoc soli licebit, non etiam illi cui adnectatur, id est corpori.*⁷

For although it is established that the soul is immortal, this will be allowed for itself alone, not also for that to which it is bound, that is the body.⁸

By this logic, a god with a physical body is not really divine. How then does he explain the existence and nature of Jesus?

The question of Christ's nature is not addressed directly in *Ad Nationes*, but it is discussed in the lengthier *Apologeticum*, which expands on and adds to the arguments put forth in *Ad Nationes*. In this text, Tertullian clearly asserts that Jesus was both divine and had flesh. He is said to be a part of God just as a ray is a part of the sun; they are of the same substance, and Christ is merely an extension of God himself on Earth. However, he is more than just God's spirit:

*Iste igitur dei radius...delapsus in virginem quandam et in utero eius caro figuratus nascitur homo deo mixtus.*⁹

Therefore that ray of God...having descended into a certain virgin and having been formed into flesh in her womb is born as man mixed with God.

Christ clearly has flesh; in fact, it makes up a key part of who he is since *caro spiritu instructa...Christus est* ("the flesh furnished with spirit...is Christ").¹⁰ This might at first

⁷ Tert. *Ad Nationes*. 2.3.8. This is part of Tertullian's refutation of Varro. He argues against the divinity of three classes of pagan gods, which he takes from Varro: the physical gods (*physicum*), or heavenly bodies, which certain philosophers believe to be gods; the mythical gods (*mythicum*), who are discussed by poets; and the gods of individual nations (*gentile*), who are unique to their own peoples and cities. This particular passage is part of the argument against the divinity of the heavenly bodies, since they have *corpus* and must therefore be mortal even if they were *animalia*.

⁸ All translations in this paper are my own.

⁹ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 21.14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

appear to contradict the idea put forth in *Ad Nationes* that a divine immortal being must be incorporeal, but this is not necessarily the case, provided that Tertullian views *corpus* and *caro* as distinct from each other in some way.

The *Apologeticum* provides further evidence that Tertullian sees a distinction between the two terms. The word *corpus* is used 17 times throughout the *Apologeticum*, referring at different times to the mass or timespan of the universe (sec. 11.5, 17.1, 26.1, 48.7), the bodies of pagan gods (sec. 12.3, 16.6), mortal human bodies (sec. 15.3, 17.5, 21.2, 22.4, 23.13, 23.16, 47.14, 48.2, 48.4, 50.6), and collective groups of people (sec. 39.1). It is never used in reference to Jesus, however, not even when discussing his death, burial, and resurrection in 21.19-21. Tertullian seems hesitant to apply the word *corpus* to Jesus, despite using *caro* to describe him, as discussed above. Therefore, at the time this text was written, I suggest that he somehow viewed Christ as being *carnalis* but not *corporalis*.

There is also a notable difference in the way Tertullian describes death for mortals as compared with Jesus. For humans, he claims, *repraesentabuntur et corpora* (“their bodies also will be brought back”);¹¹ they will have their souls returned into their original bodies on the day of the resurrection so that they can receive judgement and either reward or punishment from God. Souls and bodies are separate entities, but humans need both their bodies and souls in order to be whole and alive again. Thus it can be assumed that death for a mortal human is the separation of the soul and the body.¹² When Jesus’ death is described, however, it is said that *spiritum cum verbo sponte dimisit* (“he sent out his

¹¹ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 48.4.

¹² Tertullian actually uses this as the definition of death in *De Anima* 52.1, likely a much later text than the *Apologeticum* according to Barnes. The idea is not his own; Plato gives the same definition of death in the *Phaedo*. Tertullian’s ideas about the separation and reunion of body and soul during death and resurrection remain largely consistent.

spirit with a word by his will”).¹³ It is not specified that his spirit was sent out from his body, nor is his return to a physical state after the resurrection described, perhaps further evidence for Tertullian’s discomfort with the idea of Jesus being corporeal.¹⁴ It is not exactly clear what Tertullian believes happened at the moment of Jesus’ death. As previously stated, the flesh of Jesus was formed by the spirit of God and he was, in essence, *caro spiritu instructa* (“flesh furnished with spirit”).¹⁵ Perhaps we are meant to assume that God’s divine spirit separated from the flesh which had been given to it in Mary’s womb.¹⁶

I will not press the point about the nature of Christ’s death too far. That is not really the purpose of this paper, and the main point to take away is that Christ’s death and resurrection are not described in terms of the separation of body and soul like the deaths and resurrections of humans are. Most importantly, the use of the terms *caro* and *corpus* in the *Apologeticum* indicates that Tertullian saw flesh and body as different concepts at the time of its writing. His comparison of humans with Christ in the same text shows how Tertullian is continuing in the *Apologeticum* to grapple with the idea, put forth in *Ad*

¹³ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 21.19.

¹⁴ It is possible that Tertullian is simply following the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ death here, all of which he had access to and none of which mention Jesus’ body at the moment of his death. However, although very similar to the original Greek, his Latin is not an exact translation. See in particular Matt. 27:50: ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν κράζας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα (“Jesus, having cried again in a loud voice, sent forth his spirit”) and Mark 15:37: ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείδ φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν (“Jesus, having let out a great sound, breathed his last”). It is still significant that in chapter 21 of the *Apologeticum*, which is focused on discussing the divinity and nature of Christ, there is mention of his *caro* but never once his *corpus*, despite the term seeming to fit in at several places in the text. See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 157-160 on the establishment of New Testament canon and evidence that Tertullian knew all four Gospels.

¹⁵ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 21.14.

¹⁶ Tertullian seems to have two competing ideas here about the nature of Christ. At one point, he states that Christ is man *mixtus* with God, and at another, that his flesh is *instructa* with spirit. In the later text *De Carne Christi*, Tertullian uses the word *induens* to describe the relationship of Christ’s flesh to his spirit, which is closer in meaning to *instructa*, both of which give the sense of Christ being a spirit clothed in flesh. *Mixtus* can also have the sense of uniting two parts rather than intermixing or blending, in which case it does not contradict the sense of *instructa*. (TLL) The description of Christ sending his spirit out from him makes the most sense if Tertullian envisions him as being a divine spirit furnished or dressed in flesh.

Nationes, that one difference between the mortal and the divine is the presence or absence of a body. He seems at this point to believe that Jesus' spirit was able to be made flesh without having a true physical body. In the texts which will be examined next, all likely written after *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum*, Tertullian does begin to associate the term *corpus* with Christ, but the specific context in which he does so is significant.

Adversus Iudaeos and *De Idololatria* both provide good examples of Tertullian's transition to acknowledging a corporeal Christ. *Adversus Iudaeos*, written to argue that the Christians are the new recipients of God's favor, replacing the Jews, clearly states that Christ had a body which died on the cross:

*Utique in corpus eius lignum missum est. Sic enim Christus revelavit panem corpus suum appellans, cuius retro corpus in pane prophetae nuntiavit.*¹⁷

Certainly the wood was put on his body. For so Christ revealed, calling his body bread, whose body the prophet formerly announced [was] in bread.

De Idololatria, a treatise urging Christians to cease from idolatry and explaining what sorts of actions they must avoid, also refers to Christ as having a body. This body is defiled by those who give physical form to demons by creating images of the pagan gods:

*Ad hanc partem zelus fidei perorabit ingemens Christianum... eas manus admouere corpori domini, quae daemoniis corpora conferunt.*¹⁸

The zeal of faith will speak at length to this part, lamenting that a Christian...applies these hands, which confer bodies to demons, to the body of the Lord.

Both of these references to Christ's body seem to be specifically referring to the body-as-bread idea that is rooted in the tradition of the Last Supper.¹⁹ The first passage above says

¹⁷ Tert. *Adversus Iudaeos*. 10.12. The context here is that Tertullian believes that Jeremiah predicted the death of Jesus on the cross in Jeremiah 11:19. He gives the Latin translation of the verse: *Venite, immittamus in pane eius lignum et conteramus eum a terra vivorum et nomen illius non memorabitur amplius*. ("Come, let us place wood upon his bread and let us obliterate him from the land of the living and the name of that man will be remembered no longer.") Tertullian argues that the *lignum* is the cross and the *pane* is Jesus' body.

¹⁸ Tert. *De Idololatria*. 7.1.

blatantly that Christ's body is bread, while the second talks about Christian artisans who create idols for a living placing their hands on Christ's body in church, presumably a reference to the eucharistic bread which was consumed at Christian services.²⁰ A similar observation can be made in some of Tertullian's other texts. In *De Oratione*, for example, he only uses the word *corpus* in connection with Jesus when discussing the part of the Lord's Prayer which states, *Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie* ("Give us today our daily bread")²¹ and when giving instructions about the eucharist;²² otherwise Jesus' physical component is referred to as flesh. Tertullian seems comfortable in these texts using the word *corpus* in association with Jesus, but specifically in the allegorical context of Christ's body as bread, rather than a literal human body.

It is interesting to note that there is a reversal from the *Apologeticum* in the above texts. Not only does Tertullian apply the word *corpus* to Jesus, but he uses it almost exclusively when discussing Jesus. The word appears four times in *Adversus Iudaeos*, three times in the passage quoted previously and once when quoting a passage from Deuteronomy cursing those who are suspended on trees (sec. 10.2). It appears five times in *De Idololatria*, four times in the passage quoted previously and once when comparing the human body to the shape of a cross (sec. 12.2). The word *caro*, on the other hand, as well as its adjectival form *carnalis*, is used by Tertullian in *Adversus Iudaeos* mainly to discuss Jewish circumcision and sacrificial practices (sec. 3.1, 3.7, 3.11, 4.1, 4.5, 5.6, 5.7,

¹⁹ The story of the Last Supper is told in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:14-20. See also I Corinthians 11:23-34, in which Paul describes the Last Supper and admonishes those who disgrace the body and blood of Christ by eating bread and drinking wine *ἀναξίως* ("in an unworthy way").

²⁰ Burns & Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 234-242. Burns and Jensen explain that Christians at Tertullian's time received the eucharist during the morning service and as part of their community prayer time. It is likely that they also took the sacrament at their evening meal. (See p. 32-34.) Most of the evidence comes from Tertullian himself in *De Oratione* and the *Apologeticum*.

²¹ Tert. *De Oratione*. 6.2.

²² Tert. *De Oratione*. 19.1-4.

and 6.1) or the human race in general (sec. 4.3 and 4.4). Christ is twice said to have mortal flesh (sec. 13.11 and 14.7), but the term is mostly used to show the discrepancy between the old *carnalis* Jewish law and the new *spiritalis* Christian law. In *De Idololatria* the word *caro* is used when discussing sinful indulgence of the flesh, especially sexual sin. It has become clear in these texts that one difference between body and flesh is that *caro* can take on a negative connotation that *corpus* generally does not.

One sub-set of Tertullian's texts is particularly useful for drawing this distinction between body and flesh with its special use of flesh-related terminology; it contains those texts which discuss marriage, sex, and lust. Sexual sin is nearly always referred to as *carnalis* ("fleshly") sin rather than *corporalis* ("bodily"). This is especially evident in *Ad Uxorem*, *De Cultu Feminarum*, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, *De Virginibus Velandis*, and *De Pudicitia*, all of which treat the subjects of marriage, sex, and lust in detail. In such texts *caro* and *carnalis* are synonymous with *terra* and *terrenus* ("earth" and "earthly"), as opposed to *spiritus* and *spiritalis* which are synonymous with divine and heavenly. The marriage of Adam and Eve, for example, is an earthly counterpart to the spiritual marriage that has taken place between Christ and the Church,²³ and the flesh is weak to earthly desires while the spirit provides strength against temptation.²⁴ However, despite earthly things being the opposite of heavenly things, the flesh is not inherently something shameful or scornful. Christian flesh is described in *Ad Uxorem* as *sancta* since it was created by God and saved by Christ's blood, and if Christians defile it by marriage to a

²³ Tert. *De Exhortatione Castitatis*. 5.1-5.4. Tertullian regularly quotes Genesis 2:24 when he discusses marriage, especially the part which states that when a man joins with a wife, *erunt duo in unam carnem* ("they will be two in one flesh"). He also takes his interpretation of Adam and Eve's marriage as representative of Christ and the church from Paul's letter to the Ephesians 5:22-33, where Paul likewise quotes the same passage from Genesis.

²⁴ Tert. *Ad Uxorem*. 1.4.1. The conflict between the weakness of the flesh and the strength of the spirit is also the major topic of Tertullian's *Ad Martyras*, a treatise encouraging Christians not to fear martyrdom.

non-Christian *eum laedimus de proximo* (“we wound him [God] directly”).²⁵ The flesh is also not irrevocably sinful; it can be cleansed through baptism²⁶ and those who choose celibacy can even *carnis suae honorem restituere* (“restore honor to their flesh”).²⁷ The use of the term *caro*, therefore, can have both positive and negative connotations;²⁸ it can be an integral component of holy matrimony and a substance created by God which should be regarded as sacred, or it can be the primary vehicle of earthly sin, especially sexual sin, and the part of a human which is most susceptible to temptation by the Devil. The term *corpus*, on the other hand, is more neutral. Like *caro*, it refers to a human’s physical substance, but it takes on the responsibility neither for purity and holiness nor for sin and lust. The uniquely sinful nature of the flesh is a noteworthy point, considering that Tertullian initially described Christ as having *caro* but not *corpus*. I will come back to Tertullian’s possible reasoning at the end of this section.

In all of the texts discussed to this point, *corpus* and *caro* have been treated as distinct concepts. In other texts, however, they become more or less interchangeable. For example, in *De Baptismo*, a treatise on the importance and proper practice of baptism, the sacrament is described as being twofold:

*Et spiritus in aquis corporaliter diluitur et caro in eisdem spiritualiter emundatur.*²⁹

The spirit is washed bodily in the waters and the flesh is cleansed spiritually in the same [waters].

²⁵ Tert. *Ad Uxorem*. 2.2.6. & 2.3.1.

²⁶ Tert. *De Baptismo*. 4.5.

²⁷ Tert. *De Exhortatione Castitatis*. 13.4.

²⁸ For the idea that Tertullian primarily views the flesh as something positive, because it is glorious evidence of God’s love, see Jérôme Alexandre, *Une chair pour la gloire: L’anthropologie réaliste et mystique de Tertullien*, *Théologique historique* 115 (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001).

²⁹ Tert. *De Baptismo*. 4.5

The use of *spiritus* in the first half of the sentence with the use of *spiritaliter* in the second shows that the two halves are meant to correspond with each other, each half the other's reverse. Therefore *corporaliter* and *caro* must correspond with each other and have essentially the same meaning (i.e. the physical component of the baptismal sacrament). At various times it is said that *corpora* are cleansed by baptism (sec. 8.3) and that *caro nostra* is dipped in the baptismal font (sec. 8.4), and that baptism is both *corporaliter* (sec. 4.5 above) and a *carnalis actus* (sec. 7.2). In *De Paenitentia*, a treatise on performing penitence after sin, bodily and fleshly sins are defined as literally the same:

*Praestringere tamen non pigebit delictorum quaedam esse carnalia, id est corporalia quaedam vero spiritalia.*³⁰

Nevertheless it will not be troublesome to mention that certain sins are fleshly, that is bodily, and indeed certain sins are spiritual.

Both terms are then used throughout the text to discuss sinful deeds. The *Scorpiace*, which urges Christians to strengthen their resolve toward martyrdom, also treats the terms nearly identically, both able to be tortured and killed by men while only the Devil himself can kill the spirit.³¹

So far Tertullian's uses of the terms *corpus* and *caro*, as well as his concept of their relationship to each other and their applicability to Christ, have changed from text to text. In *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum*, Tertullian considered *caro* a key component of Christ but avoided applying the term *corpus* to him; in *Adversus Iudaeos*, *De Idololatria*, and *De Oratione*, he almost exclusively described Christ as having *corpus*, particularly in the context of his body being compared with bread, while in *De Idololatria*

³⁰ Tert. *De Paenitentia*. 3.3.

³¹ Tert. *Scorpiace*. 9.6.

and those texts which deal with sex and marriage, *caro* began to take on a negative association with sinfulness; in other texts, such as *De Baptismo*, *De Paenitentia*, and *Scorpiace*, he used the two terms interchangeably. An altercation with Marcion's followers, whom Tertullian viewed as heretical, seems to have inspired him to finally make some decisive statements concerning the physical nature of Christ and the distinction between body and flesh. Marcion, who lived before Tertullian in the early to mid-second century C.E., held several beliefs which Tertullian found objectionable, among which were the denial of Christ's real physical body and the resurrection of the flesh.³²

The subject of Christ's physical nature is treated in detail in *De Carne Christi*, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, and *Adversus Marcionem*.³³ In *De Carne Christi*, Tertullian argues that Christ did indeed have flesh which was exactly the same as mortal human flesh, and also firmly accepts Christ as both corporeal and divine. In a total reversal of his position from *Ad Nationes* (i.e. that an immortal being must be incorporeal), he claims that God can take on any condition and still remain God, refuting those who deny that *deum in hominem vere conversum, ita ut et nasceretur et carne corporaretur* ("God was truly converted into man, in such a way that he was born and embodied by flesh").³⁴ Christ is thus asserted in this text to be more than just *carnalis*, as had already been affirmed in previously discussed texts, and more than *corporalis* in the metaphorical body-as-bread sense taken from the Gospels and Paul. He is fully and literally embodied

³² For a detailed account of Tertullian's objections to Marcion, see Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 50-85.

³³ In *De Carne Christi* alone, Tertullian uses forms of the word *caro* (including the adjectives *carnalis* and *carneus*) a total of 255 times. This is unsurprising considering the subject matter, but nevertheless demonstrates how extensively the topic of flesh is treated in this text.

³⁴ Tert. *De Carne Christi*. 3.4.

and corporeal. *De Carne Christi* ultimately declares that Christ had both the divine spirit of God and, like humans, a soul putting on flesh (he uses the term *induens*), the only difference being that Christ's flesh never committed sin.³⁵ *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* and *Adversus Marcionem* contain similar beliefs about Christ's nature, but Tertullian also expands on the concepts of *corpus* and *caro* in general, giving definitions which make the terms' relationship to each other clear:

*Sed quoniam et hic de interpretatione corporis quaestio cavillatur, ego corpus humanum non aliud intellegam quam omnem istam struem carnis, quoquo genere materialiarum concinnatur atque variatur, quod videtur, quod tenetur, quod denique ab hominibus occiditur.*³⁶

But since this inquiry also asks mockingly about the interpretation of the body, I will understand the human body as not other than all that heap of flesh, with whatever sort of materials it is produced and altered, which is seen, which is held, which finally is killed by men.

*Et relinquitur intellegi corpus id quod in promptu est, caro scilicet...*³⁷

And it is left to be understood that the body is the thing which is at hand, clearly the flesh...

*Etenim aliam substantiam in homine non video post spiritum et animam cui vocabulum corporis accommodetur praeter carnem, hanc totiens in corporis nomine intellegens quotiens non nominatur.*³⁸

And indeed I do not see another substance in man after the spirit and soul to which the name of body should be applied except the flesh, understanding this [the flesh] in the name of body as often as it is not named.

In these texts, likely written later in Tertullian's career,³⁹ he decisively states that the body and flesh are interchangeable terms for the physical and tangible component of

³⁵ Tert. *De Carne Christi*. 5.7, 11.6, 16.2. 5.7 declares Christ to have the spirit of God and the flesh of man, 11.6 explains that Christ's soul existed in the human condition of being clothed by flesh rather than made of flesh, and 16.2 asserts that Christ abolished sin in the flesh (a belief which he gets from Paul) without abolishing the reality of his flesh.

³⁶ Tert. *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*. 35.3.

³⁷ Tert. *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*. 35.5.

³⁸ Tert. *Adversus Marcionem*. 5.15.8. In this particular passage, Tertullian is refuting what he views as Marcion's incorrect interpretations of Paul's writing. Marcion believed that a resurrection of the body and a resurrection of the flesh were not the same thing.

humans. The human body is made of flesh, and the flesh is to be understood as synonymous with the body. *De Carne Christi*, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, and *Adversus Marcionem* treat the subject of body and flesh most extensively in comparison to Tertullian's other texts, and they are also clearest about what those terms mean and how they should be applied to mortals and to Christ. Perhaps the necessity of refuting Marcion's rejection of the resurrection of the body encouraged Tertullian to form a solid and cohesive idea about what the terms *corpus* and *caro* entailed. That Marcion viewed the terms as distinct from each other, apparently claiming that the resurrection of the body which Paul taught did not refer to a resurrection of the flesh, may have been a large factor in Tertullian's decision to firmly equate *corpus* with *caro*.

Although Tertullian eventually conflated the terms in the texts just now discussed, a few overall generalizations can be made concerning the major differences between *corpus* and *caro* throughout most of Tertullian's body of work. In all of his extant writings, both *corpus* and *caro* refer to the physical components of men and both are involved in suffering, death, and resurrection. There are two distinguishing characteristics which stand out. First, while the term *caro* can only be applied to living (or once-living) beings, *corpus* can refer both to living bodies and to inanimate or abstract bodies, such as the heavenly bodies, the body of the universe, collective bodies of people, and the church as a body. *Caro* has life inherent in it; celestial masses and abstract concepts are never described as having flesh. Second, the term *caro* is far more likely to have negative connotations of sinfulness and lust than *corpus*. Although the body is sometimes described as being liable for sin (in *De Paenitentia*, for example), it is significantly more

³⁹ According to Barnes' chronology. Parts of *Adversus Marcionem* may have been written earlier, but as he states in his later revised chronology, book 5 was likely one of the last written (Barnes, *Tertullian*, 327).

common for Tertullian to describe physical sin as being *carnalis*. This is especially obvious in the treatises which focus their attention on sexual sin and lust. The sinfulness of the flesh is interesting since Tertullian is initially more comfortable with referring to Jesus as having *caro* than as having *corpus*. The key to this discrepancy may be found in the living nature of flesh rather than its sinful nature; Christ is sinless, as Tertullian states several times, but he was also certainly living since he was able to die.

As I have shown, Tertullian's concept of the relationship between body and flesh and their applicability to Jesus does not remain unchanged over the course of his career, but goes through several developments, both over time and in different subsets of his texts. To repeat, Tertullian does not at first consider *corpus* and *caro* to be synonymous, but later comes to view them as such. The most important development for the purpose of understanding Tertullian's ideas about the eucharist is the conceptual transition from Christ as only *carnalis* to Christ as *corporalis*. This transition begins after the writing of the *Apologeticum*, when Tertullian begins to refer to Christ's body as bread, and reaches its fullest development in *De Carne Christi, Adversus Marcionem*, and *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, when Christ is described as being both fully corporeal and made of flesh. The significance of the observation that Tertullian is hesitant to apply the term *corpus* to Christ's physical state until he begins using it in the context of the eucharistic bread will be explored thoroughly in the next chapter. For now, I will move on to distinguishing between Tertullian's use of the terms *spiritus* ("spirit") and *anima* ("soul").

The Spirit and the Soul

The abstract natures of the spirit and the soul make them in some ways more challenging to define than the body and flesh, but Tertullian's largely consistent usage of the terms throughout his texts aids in understanding his concept of the terms *spiritus* ("spirit") and *anima* ("soul"). Just as in the section above concerning *corpus* and *caro*, adjectival forms of the terms in question, such as *spiritalis* ("spiritual") and *animalia* ("living/having a soul"), will be considered in addition to *spiritus* and *anima*. It is also important to note that *animus* has a somewhat different meaning than *anima*, referring more specifically to a person's rational mind than to the essence that gives them life and breath; it is a specific function of the soul, rather than the soul itself.⁴⁰ Therefore the term *animus* will not be considered in this study. By tracing Tertullian's use of *spiritus* and *anima* throughout his body of work, I will show that there are two main stages in his conceptualization of the terms: at first, he views them as closely related yet different entities, but around the time that *De Anima* was written he transitions to a Stoic view of their sameness.

I will begin with the same two early texts which I began with in the preceding section: *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum*. In these texts, the different contexts in which Tertullian uses the terms *spiritus* and *anima* show that he perceives them as different concepts. In *Ad Nationes*, for example, the term *anima* is used in the sense of the life-giving quality of a being (sec. 1.7.31, 1.8.5, 1.10.47, 1.19.3, 1.19.7, 2.3.7-11, 2.3.16, 2.5.3, 2.11.2, 2.15.2). Souls and bodies are said to be separated at death, lifeless bodies

⁴⁰ Lewis & Short gives the definition of *animus* as "the rational soul in man (in opp. to the body, *corpus*, and to the physical life, *anima*).” Tertullian explains the difference between *animus* and *anima* in *De Anima* sec. 12. The *animus* ("mind"), he states, is *ingenitum et insitum* ("innate and implanted") in the *anima* ("soul"). It is the part of the soul which allows it to perceive the world around it, learn new things, and feel emotions; it is a function, not the essence of life which defines the soul itself.

are called *exanimata* (“soulless”), and Varro’s idea that the heavenly bodies are *animalia* (“living/having a soul”) is refuted. *Spiritus* is used only 3 times, twice in the sense of divine forethought or inspiration (sec. 1.16.17 & 2.10.12) and only once as essentially synonymous with *anima* (sec. 1.19.4). In the *Apologeticum*, the term *spiritus* receives much more use and is closely connected with divinity.⁴¹ Tertullian gives *spiritus* as the substance *sermoni atque rationi itemque virtuti* (“for the word and reason and also power”) through which God works;⁴² when discussing the nature of Christ, he states *nam et deus spiritus* (“for God also is spirit”) and goes on to say that Christ is *de spiritu spiritus et de deo deus* (“spirit from spirit and God from God”);⁴³ and he discusses evil spirits (*vires spiritales* or *daemones*) extensively, which he claims are intangible and invisible like God but attempt to harm and deceive us.⁴⁴ *Spiritus* is used twice in the *Apologeticum* to refer to a life-giving quality, but is largely used in relation to divine, immortal, or intangible beings.⁴⁵ *Anima*, when it appears in this text, retains the sense of life-giving which it had in *Ad Nationes* (sec. 8.1, 9.8, 17.4, 17.6, 23.1, 23.13, 24.5, 30.1, 30.5, 30.7). Thus, although their meanings occasionally overlap, there is a reasonably clear distinction between spirit and soul in these early texts of Tertullian. *Spiritus* is a sort of invisible and non-physical entity which gives God his being. Tertullian closely associates the term with heavenly beings such as Christ, angels, and demons. *Anima*, however, he associates with mortals; it is the component of man that gives him life, and

⁴¹ This is perhaps due to the tendency for the Latin Bible to use *spiritus* as a translation for the Greek πνεῦμα.

⁴² Tert. *Apologeticum*. 21.11.

⁴³ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 21.12-13. Tertullian says the same thing, that God is spirit, in *De Oratione* 28.2 as well.

⁴⁴ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 22.1-23.11, 27.4-5, 37.9.

⁴⁵ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 30.3 & 47.13. The first instance states that the emperor must know where he gets his power and his very life from (that is, from God), and the second instance is discussing the spirits of saints who have died that have been carried to heaven.

when it leaves his body he is dead. The following passage from the *Apologeticum* nicely illustrates the difference:

*Animatum spiritu omnium animarum animatore...*⁴⁶

[This body of the world] given life by the spirit as life-giver of all souls...

The spirit is not life itself, but the divine entity which acts as life-giver to create living souls. The world was an empty body, but God's *spiritus* filled it and gave it *anima*.

In another early text, *Ad Martyras*, written to encourage martyrs in prison, Tertullian further demonstrates that spirit and soul are not synonymous by always pairing *spiritus* with *caro* and *anima* with *corpus*. Recall from the preceding section that Tertullian does not use *caro* and *corpus* synonymously in his early texts, so there is no reason to believe that the two pairs of terms are simply different ways of referring to the same thing. In fact, the previous observations concerning the use of *caro* and *corpus* may help with understanding the distinction that Tertullian draws between *spiritus* and *anima*. In *Ad Martyras*, both sets of terms set up battles of the stronger versus the weaker:

*Ut caro serviat spiritui, infirmior fortiori...*⁴⁷

So that the flesh might serve the spirit, the weaker serve the stronger...

*Ornamentum enim et gloria deputatur maiore quidem titulo, si anima potius cesserit plagis, quam corpus.*⁴⁸

For distinction and glory are esteemed indeed with more renown, if the soul will have submitted to blows, rather than the body.

Tertullian encourages Christians to let their divine and intangible components (i.e. *spiritus* and *anima*) be stronger than their earthly and physical components (i.e. *caro* and *corpus*). However, the sets are not exact parallels. *Spiritus* and *caro* tend to be used

⁴⁶ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 48.7.

⁴⁷ Tert. *Ad Martyras*. 4.1

⁴⁸ Tert. *Ad Martyras*. 4.8.

together more abstractly when discussing willpower and salvation (sec. 2.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3), while *anima* and *corpus* tend to be used together when discussing suffering and physical strength (sec. 3.3, 4.8, 4.9).⁴⁹ In pairing up spirit and flesh, Tertullian is following biblical precedent. He regularly quotes Matthew 26:41, τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα πρόθυμον ἡ δὲ σὰρξ ἄσθενής (“The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”),⁵⁰ and he follows Paul’s example in setting the will of the spirit at odds with the will of the flesh.⁵¹ The terms also both have a sense of divinity to them; as previously discussed, Tertullian strongly associates *spiritus* with God and Christ, while he exclusively uses the term *caro* for Christ’s physical nature in his early texts. *Anima*, on the other hand, is initially used in connection with mortals, as is *corpus* (see the discussion of *corpus* in *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum* on p. 4-8). In the texts discussed so far (*Ad Nationes*, the *Apologeticum*, and *Ad Martyras*), *spiritus* and *anima* are not interchangeable.⁵²

On a bit of a side note, although there are clear differences between the uses of *spiritus* and *anima* in Tertullian’s early texts, in most of his work the distinction between the physical (i.e. the body and flesh) and the non-physical (i.e. the spirit and soul) is more important to his point than the distinction between spirit and soul. This was seen previously in *Ad Martyras*, and is also prominent in *Adversus Iudaeos* (Jewish law is referred to as *carnalis* while Christ’s new law is *spiritalis*), *De Baptismo* (the sacrament of baptism cleanses the *spiritus* and the *caro*), *De Oratione* (the nourishment of the daily bread in the Lord’s Prayer can be understood both *spiritaliter* and *carnaliter*), and *De*

⁴⁹ This is a general observation, but not a hard and fast rule. For example, in sec. 1.1 Tertullian says that *spiritus esurire* (“the spirit hungers”), which is a form of physical suffering.

⁵⁰ For example, in *Ad Martyras* 4.1: *caro infirma sit, spiritus promptus* (“the flesh may be weak, but the spirit is ready”).

⁵¹ See, for example, Romans 8:6-7 and Galatians 6:8, among many other instances.

⁵² Note that the specific pairing of *anima* with *corpus* also exists in *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum*. It occurs seven times in *Ad Nationes* (sec. 1.10.47, 1.19.3, 2.3.8, 2.3.10, 2.5.3, 2.11.2, 2.15.2), as well as several times in the *Apologeticum* (sec. 47.8, 48.2-4, 48.7, 48.11).

Paenitentia (there are both *spiritalis* and *carnalis* sins), among others. The difference is explained in *De Paenitentia*:

Praestringere tamen non pigebit delictorum quaedam esse carnalia, id est corporalia, quaedam vero spiritalia — nam cum ex hac duplicis substantiae congregatione confectus homo sit, non aliunde delinquit quam unde constat; sed non eo inter se differunt, quod corpus et spiritus duo sunt, atquin eo magis paria sunt, quia duo unum efficiunt, ne quis pro diversitate materiarum peccata earum discernat ut alterum altero levius aut gravius existimet. Si quidem et caro et spiritus dei res, alia manu eius expressa, alia adflatu [eius] consummata; cum ergo ex pari ad dominum pertineant, quodcumque eorum deliquerit ex pari dominum offendit...Exinde spiritalia et corporalia nominantur, quod delictum omne aut agitur aut cogitatur, ut corporale sit quod in facto est quia factum ut corpus et videri et contingi habet, spiritale vero quod in animo est quia ut spiritus neque videtur neque tenetur.⁵³

Yet it will not be troublesome to mention that certain sins are fleshly, that is bodily, and indeed some certain [sins] are spiritual – for since man is made from this union of a twofold substance, he does not sin from elsewhere than from where he is established; but not for this reason, that body and spirit are two, do they differ among themselves, but rather for this reason, that the two produce one, are they more equal, lest anyone should distinguish their sins according to the difference of their materials, so that they consider one as lighter or heavier than the other. If indeed both the flesh and the spirit are things of God, one pressed out by his hand, the other perfected by his breath; since therefore they pertain to the Lord equally, whichever of them sins offends the Lord equally... Therefore they are called spiritual and bodily, since every sin is either done or thought, so that what is in a deed is bodily since a deed, just as a body, can both be seen and touched, and truly what is in the mind is spiritual since, just as a spirit, it is neither seen nor held.

The things which are of the body and flesh are physical and can be physically perceived by sight and touch, while the things of the spirit are in the mind and cannot be perceived by the senses. Both are equally important components of a human being, and both are responsible for sin.⁵⁴ Notably the term *anima* is not used at all, an omission which is typical of Tertullian in many of his texts when he is contrasting intangible with corporeal

⁵³ Tert. *De Paenitentia*. 3.3-5 & 3.8.

⁵⁴ Tertullian often blames sin on both the flesh and the spirit equally in other texts as well. As noted in the previous section, however, he usually uses *caro* and *carnalis* rather than *corpus* and *corporalis* when discussing physical sin. *De Paenitentia* is thus a bit of a departure from texts like *Ad Uxorem*, *De Cultu Feminarum*, and *De Exhortatione Castitatis* which also discuss sins of the flesh extensively.

or carnal things. Perhaps this is an indication that he is beginning to integrate the idea of *spiritus* into that of *anima*.

The two terms become fully integrated in Tertullian's treatise on the soul, *De Anima*. The permeable yet clear boundary which was observed between *spiritus* and *anima* in previous texts is gone and replaced with a conception of the soul that draws heavily on Stoic ideas. A highlight of the treatise is Tertullian's definition of *anima*:

*Definimus animam dei flatu natam, immortalem, corporalem, effigiatam, substantia simplicem, de suo sapientem, uarie procedentem, liberam arbitrii, accidentis obnoxiam, per ingenia mutabilem, rationalem, dominatricem, diuinatricem, ex una redundantem.*⁵⁵

We define the soul as born from the breath of God, immortal, corporeal, formed, simple in substance, knowledgeable about itself, advancing variously, free of judgement, subject to the things befalling it, changeable through its nature, rational, ruling, divining, pouring out from one [soul].

Several Stoic ideas are present in this definition: the equation of breath with life, the view of the soul as both breath and the center of rational higher thought processes, and the corporeal nature of the soul.⁵⁶ As Tertullian explains, the soul is essentially the same as the spirit. The spirit gives breath while the soul gives life, and because life is breath and breath is life, the two substances are actually the same. He writes:

*Et quanto nunc firmitus est, ut unum credas, cum distantiam non das, ut ipsa sit anima spiritus, dum ipsius est spirare cuius et uiuere?...Ita cum de anima et spiritu agitur, ipsa erit anima spiritus, sicut ipsa dies lux.*⁵⁷

And how much more firm is it now, that you believe [they are] one, since you do not give them a difference, so that the soul itself is the spirit, while breathing is characteristic of the very thing of which living is also?...So when it is pursued

⁵⁵ Tert. *De Anima*. 22.2.

⁵⁶ For a basic outline of Stoic ideas and their relation to early Christianity, see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 354-369. For a more detailed account of Tertullian's use of Stoic ideas in *De Anima*, see George Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2013), 193-199.

⁵⁷ Tert. *De Anima*. 10.9.

concerning the soul and the spirit, the soul itself will be the spirit, just as the day is the light itself.

Thus both *spiritus* and *anima* refer to the breath of life and are identical. However, Tertullian still distinguishes a special separate meaning of *spiritus*, which he calls *secundum scripturam et secundum spiritus distinctionem* (“according to the scripture and according to the distinguishing aspect of the spirit”).⁵⁸ This is the divine sense of *spiritus*, either referring to the Holy Spirit of God or to the evil spirits which serve the devil.

De Anima also declares the corporeality of the *anima* (and, in turn, *spiritus*), giving its ability to suffer and be rewarded as evidence:

*Nihil enim, si non corpus; incorporalitas enim ab omni genere custodiae libera est, immunis et a poena et a fouella. Per quod enim punitur aut fouetur, hoc erit corpus.*⁵⁹

For it is nothing, if it is not a body; for incorporeality is free from every sort of custody, exempt both from punishment and from nourishment. For the thing through which one is punished or nurtured, this will be a body.

As seen in *De Paenitentia* above, Tertullian clearly explained that *spiritus* was the opposite of the body, intangible and unable to be experienced physically, which is completely different from what he claims in *De Anima*. The inability of the soul to experience physical suffering is mentioned in the *Apologeticum* as well:

*Ideoque repraesentabuntur et corpora, quia neque pati quicquam potest anima sola sine materia stabili, id est carne, et quod omnino de iudicio dei pati debent animae, non sine carne meruerunt intra quam omnia egerunt.*⁶⁰

And so bodies also will be brought back, since the soul is not able to suffer anything on its own without firm material, that is the flesh, and [since] that which souls should suffer entirely from the judgement of God, they did not deserve without the flesh within which they did everything.

This is no longer true in *De Anima*, since the soul is said to be corporeal.

⁵⁸ Tert. *De Anima*. 11.2.

⁵⁹ Tert. *De Anima*. 7.3.

⁶⁰ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 48.4.

The ideas that the soul is corporeal and that the soul and spirit are one are maintained in other texts likely written around the same time or later.⁶¹ In *Adversus Marcionem*, for example, Tertullian writes:

*Nam et animam posuit et corpus, tam duas res quam diversas. Licet enim et anima et corpus sit aliquod suae qualitatis, sicut et spiritus, cum tamen et corpus et anima distincte nominantur, habet anima suum vocabulum proprium, non egens communi vocabulo corporis.*⁶²

For he [Paul] fixed the soul and the body as two different things. For although the soul is also some body of its own nature, just as the spirit is too, yet since both the body and the soul are named distinctly, the soul has its own individual name, not needing the common name of body.

Tertullian is referring to Paul's three-part division of the spirit, soul, and body in his letter to the Thessalonians, in which he prays that all three of these substances will be kept safe for Christians until the coming of Christ.⁶³ The commentary in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* edition of the text aptly notes that Tertullian "quotes this text of the three principles, in defense only of two of them."⁶⁴ Presumably he is grouping the soul and spirit together under the umbrella of *anima*, as he did in *De Anima*, thus rejecting Paul's sense of spirit and soul as separate entities.⁶⁵ *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* also uses *spiritus* and *anima* almost interchangeably to refer to the non-bodily half of a person which will be resurrected along with their flesh.⁶⁶ In the conclusion, for example, he writes that Christ

⁶¹ For a discussion of the controversial nature of Tertullian's beliefs about the corporeality of the soul, and for more on its connection to Stoicism, see Petr Kitzler, "Nihil enim anima si non corpus: Tertullian und die Körperlichkeit der Seele," *Wiener Studien* 122 (2009): 145-169.

⁶² Tert. *Adversus Marcionem*. 5.15.8.

⁶³ 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

⁶⁴ Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume III* (New York: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), 463.

⁶⁵ Hebrews 4:12 is often used as additional evidence that Paul viewed the soul and spirit as separate entities, although not all scholars agree on this point.

⁶⁶ It is important to note that, although Tertullian uses *spiritus* and *anima* as having the same meaning in *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, he also sometimes uses *spiritus* in its secondary sense of divine or holy spirit. For example, he explains in 53.18 that the flesh is considered *animalia* from its birth because it contains the full substance of *anima*, but that it will obtain the *spiritus* and become *spiritalis* at the resurrection because

will reconcile the *spiritus* with the *caro* at the resurrection as if uniting a bride and bridegroom, but in the following sentence he expands the marriage metaphor using *anima* and *caro*.⁶⁷ All of the above examples show that Tertullian has transitioned to beliefs concerning the soul which are very close to those of the Stoics.⁶⁸

Tertullian's adoption of Stoic beliefs about the soul is not without problem. As J. Barnes notes, despite his animosity toward pagan philosophers and harsh refutation of Plato's concept of the soul, "The Stoics are treated by Tertullian with an exceptional civility – indeed they are treated with respect."⁶⁹ For example, near the beginning of the text he writes, *Sed etiam Stoicos allego* ("But I also employ the Stoics"),⁷⁰ and he later mentions Seneca with a sense of affection, writing, *Sicut et Seneca saepe noster* ("Just as our Seneca often says also").⁷¹ For someone who proclaims a disgust for philosophers, his apparently sudden acceptance of the Stoic idea of the soul may come as a surprise. It is important to note, however, that he does not believe in the corporeality of the soul primarily because of some fondness for Stoicism, but rather because of scriptural evidence which he details throughout the text (although he does use arguments employed by Stoics in addition to scripture).⁷² He simply acknowledges that the Stoic idea is *paene*

it has not yet been fully imbued with the heavenly spirit. Here the *spiritus* referred to is specifically God's Holy Spirit.

⁶⁷ Tert. *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*. 63.1-2.

⁶⁸ Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, 197-198.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Barnes, "Anima Christiana," in *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Dorothea Frede and Burkhard Reis (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 455.

⁷⁰ Tert. *De Anima*. 5.2.

⁷¹ Tert. *De Anima*. 20.1.

⁷² Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, 197. See also Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, Vol. II: Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 13. It is important, Colish claims, not "to confuse parallels with influences... and to bypass some of the most significant changes in Stoic doctrine that he [Tertullian] affects as he applies it to Christian problems." Tertullian cannot be viewed as "primarily or exclusively a supporter, an enemy, or a transformer of Stoicism," but a combination of the three.

nobiscum (“nearly in line with us”) and uses it to make his own arguments more persuasive.⁷³

The exact reason for Tertullian’s conceptual transition is beyond the scope of my research, but consider the timing of *De Anima*’s publication. Barnes places it within a year of *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* and within three or four years of *De Carne Christi*, in the mid to late period of Tertullian’s career. *De Carne Christi* and *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* mark the cohesion of Tertullian’s ideas about the relationship of *corpus* and *caro* and the nature of Christ; after using the terms in different contexts throughout previous texts, he finally declares that they are the same and that Christ had both. *De Anima* marks a similar cohesion of ideas, this time concerning *spiritus* and *anima*. All three of these texts were written in refutation of those whom Tertullian perceived as heretics. Other anti-heretical texts, including *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, *Scorpiace*, *Adversus Hermogenem*, *Adversus Valentinianos*, and *Adversus Marcionem*, among others, were likely published in the same general time period.⁷⁴ To re-state my earlier point (see p.13-15), Tertullian’s battles against his religious adversaries forced him to form a clear understanding of his own beliefs. In order to argue effectively against Hermogenes and the pagan philosophers in *De Anima*, he needed to establish firmly what the soul and spirit entailed.⁷⁵ Tertullian actually laments this necessity in the text:

⁷³ Tert. *De Anima*. 5.2.

⁷⁴ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55.

⁷⁵ Petr Kitzler, “*Ex uno homine tota haec animarum redundantia: Ursprung, Entstehung und Weitergabe der individuellen Seele nach Tertullian*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010): 353-381 also argues that the necessity of refuting heretics like Hermogenes and Marcion was Tertullian’s primary motivation for becoming firmer in his beliefs about the soul. Kitzler, however, does not find Tertullian’s concept of the soul and its relation to the spirit to be particularly clear or convincing.

*Atque utinam nullas haereses oportuisset existere, ut probabiles quique emicarent. Nihil omnino cum philosophis super anima quoque experiremur, patriarchis, ut ita dixerim, haeticorum.*⁷⁶

And would that it had been necessary for no heresies to exist, so that each man worthy of approval might be apparent. Nothing at all would we put to the test with philosophers concerning the soul, the patriarchs, as I have thus said, of heretics.

Whatever the reasons for his shift in ideas, his body of anti-heretical texts represents an important formative period in Tertullian's beliefs.

The terms *spiritus* and *anima* have a more clear-cut transition in their usage throughout Tertullian's extant works than *corpus* and *caro*. They have cross-over in meaning in his earliest texts, but there is definite, although not exclusive, distinction between them at that point; *spiritus* is more often used in the sense of a divine spirit or willpower, while *anima* is more often used in the sense of the quality that gives life. Outside of *Ad Nationes*, the *Apologeticum*, and *Ad Martyras*, the terms are somewhat more interchangeable, with *spiritus* more commonly being used to describe the non-physical component of humans (in *Adversus Iudaeos*, *De Baptismo*, *De Oratione*, and *De Paenitentia*, for example). Ultimately Tertullian declares that *spiritus* and *anima* are the same in his text devoted to the topic, *De Anima*, arguing for the Stoic concept of a soul that encompasses both life-giving breath and higher mental functioning and is corporeal, and rejecting both Plato's concept of the soul and Paul's three-part division of spirit, soul, and body. The term *spiritus* retains a distinct secondary meaning, since it can also be used in the sense of God's divine spirit (i.e. the Holy Spirit), or good and evil spirits (i.e. angels and demons) even after Tertullian declares soul and spirit to be the same. Both terms, however, deal with the substance which gives life to living creatures, separates from the flesh at death, and comes from the breath of God.

⁷⁶ Tert. *De Anima*. 3.1

Conclusion

The four terms in this chapter were not chosen arbitrarily; they are not only related to the sacrament of the eucharist, but are also of great interest to Tertullian (hence treatises written entirely about two of them, i.e. *De Carne Christi* and *De Anima*) and are used together and often throughout his extant works. In the case of both the pairing of *corpus* and *caro* and that of *spiritus* and *anima*, two important observations have been made: 1) To the extent that we can trust chronology, Tertullian views the terms as distinct in meaning in his earlier texts, and later conflates them; and 2) The mid to late period of Tertullian's career, during which he was writing several texts against people whom he considered heretics, inspired him to give clear explanations of the concepts of body, flesh, spirit, and soul (and, as it happens, those explanations included that *corpus* is synonymous with *caro* and *spiritus* is synonymous with *anima*).

Understanding the ways in which Tertullian uses the terms *corpus*, *caro*, *spiritus*, and *anima* throughout his texts is crucial to an exploration of his ideas concerning the eucharist. It would be impossible to understand what he has in mind when he refers to the eucharistic bread as the *corpus* of Christ, or when he claims that the consumption of Christ's *corpus* and blood by the *caro* nourishes the *anima*, without knowing what exactly he means by such terms. As this chapter has shown, what Tertullian means will differ depending on which text we are talking about. Tracing developments in his use of the terminology, therefore, was a necessary first step to studying his references to the eucharist. The next chapter will take the analyses of terminology from this chapter and apply them to each individual reference which Tertullian makes to the eucharist throughout his body of work.

CHAPTER 2

INTERPRETING THE EUCHARIST IN TERTULLIAN

Previous scholarship has oversimplified or passed over an explanation of how Tertullian conceived of the eucharist. Bradshaw states vaguely that “Tertullian speaks in similar realistic terms of the eucharistic elements as do the earlier writers” and, although acknowledging that there is some complexity in Tertullian’s use of terminology such as *repraesentant* and *figura* when discussing the eucharist, he concludes that “it is impossible to go in expounding his theology of eucharistic presence.”⁷⁷ McGowan, writing about the early Christian eucharist, cautions against “reading back full-blown theories of the presence of Christ in the elements.”⁷⁸ Alikin, in her book on early Christian gatherings, reserves only one brief paragraph for a description of Tertullian’s understanding of the eucharist:

As to Tertullian’s interpretation of the Eucharist, he declares that the bread is the Lord’s body and the wine his blood. He also states that in celebrating the Eucharist, the participants are convinced of God’s presence.⁷⁹

Burns and Jensen delve a bit further into the significance that Tertullian placed on the eucharist, stating that he viewed the bread and wine as carrying “the power of the resurrected flesh and blood of Christ to nourish the bodies of its recipients and prepare

⁷⁷ Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (London: SPCK, 2004), 94-96.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 143.

them for an eternal reward.”⁸⁰ Yet they are unclear on the issue of Christ’s presence and on the implications of Tertullian’s “language of symbol and representation.”⁸¹

Part of the problem, as previously mentioned, is that Tertullian wrote no known treatise on the eucharist. In fact, the term *eucharistia* only appears seven times in his body of work (and most likely only six of these actually refer to the sacrament). It would be nearly impossible, as Bradshaw claims, to gain a meaningful insight to Tertullian’s understanding of the eucharist from just these few short fragments, but there are, fortunately, a few other instances in which he discusses it. Another part of the problem is that many of the brief mentions of the eucharist in Tertullian’s texts focus mainly on the practical aspects of performing the sacrament while giving little explanation of its religious meaning.

Despite these challenges, the study of Tertullian’s terminology conducted in Chapter 1 has helped to shed light on his understanding of the eucharist’s significance, providing a wider context for his statements about the body of Christ and the spiritual and physical aspects of the sacrament. In this chapter, I will argue that Tertullian viewed the bread and wine of the eucharist as consecrated objects imbued with the presence of Christ. He maintained this view throughout his career but, in line with the development that was traced in Chapter 1, his understanding of the eucharist’s sanctity became increasingly physical over time as he began to argue for a fully corporeal Christ and a corporeal concept of the spirit and soul.

I will begin by explaining how Tertullian experienced the eucharist in his time and examining the evidence which demonstrates that Tertullian believed the eucharistic

⁸⁰ Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 246.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

elements were special and consecrated, something separate from regular bread and wine. Then I will look at some passages from an earlier point in Tertullian's career which show what I will call a "spiritual" eucharist, followed by some passages from later texts which show a "physical" eucharist. Throughout this study, I will avoid using the term "real presence," which is often associated in the modern day with the idea of transubstantiation and places emphasis on physical presence. For Tertullian, the sacred presence of Christ within the eucharist is always "real"; it is his ideas about the nature of that presence that change.

The Practice of the Eucharist in Tertullian's Time: Meal or Sacrament?

McGowan defines eucharistic meals as "the communal meals of early Christians, in which...processes of giving thanks tended to play a central part."⁸² He goes on to argue that the early Christian eucharist must be considered on broad terms, as both a meal and a ritual and with caution about "assuming the existence of well-defined realms of sacred and secular for ancient Christians."⁸³ Although his warning is well taken, it is only partly true for Tertullian, who stood at a period of transition within the world of North African Christianity. He knew the eucharist within at least two different contexts – the evening *agape* meal, which falls more in line with the communal meal riding the line between sacred and secular which McGowan describes, and the morning services, at which the eucharist became less of a meal or community gathering and more of a ritualized sacrament.⁸⁴

⁸² Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 12.

⁸³ McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 13.

⁸⁴ For more information on Christian gatherings in North Africa during Tertullian's time, see Eric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 14-17.

Although Tertullian never explicitly states that the eucharist was celebrated at the *agape* meals, that it did is evident from his defense of the gatherings in *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum*. In both texts he claims that Christians had been accused by non-Christians of murdering infants and dipping bread in their blood, almost certainly a misunderstanding of things they had heard or been told about the eucharist. Tertullian does not outright deny the charges at first (in fact, he does not do so at all in *Ad Nationes*), but rather responds by charging the pagans with hypocrisy, turning the accusations back on the accusers themselves in an act of retorsion:⁸⁵

*Sed nec eo distat, si uos non ritu sacri neque <ferro nec>atis. Atquin hoc asperius, quod frigore et fame aut bes<tiis, si exp>onitis aut longiore in aquis morte, si mergitis... Quamquam quid minus, immo quid non amplius facitis? Parum scilicet humanis uisceribus inhiatis, quia uiuos et puberes deuoratis? Parum humanum sanguinem lambitis, quoniam futurum sanguinem elicitis? Parum infante uescimini, quia infantem totum praecocum perhauritis?*⁸⁶

But it does not differ by much, if you kill neither at a sacred rite nor with a sword. And yet [you kill] more cruelly than this, since it is by cold and hunger or wild beasts, if you expose [them], or by a longer death in water, if you submerge [them]... But what do you do less, or rather what do you not do more [than us]? Doubtless it is a small thing [to you] to gape at human entrails, since you devour men alive and young? And it is a small thing to lap up human blood, since you draw out future blood? And it is a small thing to feed on an infant, since you drain a whole premature infant?

*Erubescat error vester Christianis, qui ne animalium quidem sanguinem in epulis esculentis habemus... Porro quale est, ut quos sanguinem pecoris horrere confiditis, humano inhiare credatis, nisi forte suaviorem eum experti?*⁸⁷

May you blush for your error toward the Christians, we who do not even have the blood of animals in foods fit for eating... Again what kind of thing is it, that you think that they gape at human [blood] whom you believe to shudder at the blood of cattle, unless by chance you have experienced [human blood] as sweeter?

⁸⁵ James B. Rives, "Tertullian on Child Sacrifice," *Museum Helveticum* 51 no. 1 (1994): 61-62. Rives is discussing the *Apologeticum* in particular, but the section he is talking about reuses and expands on material from *Ad Nationes*. For more on Tertullian's use of rhetorical technique, see Robert Dick Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). Also cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*.

⁸⁶ Tert. *Ad Nationes*. 1.15.4 & 1.15.8.

⁸⁷ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 9.13-14.

Tertullian does eventually state plainly that the charge of killing and eating children is not true, as in the following passage from the *Apologeticum*:

*Dicimur sceleratissimi de sacramento infanticidii et pabulo inde, et post convivium incesto...Dicimur tamen semper, nec vos quod tam diu dicimur eruere curatis. Ergo aut eruite, si creditis, aut nolite credere, qui non eruistis. De vestra vobis dissimulatione praescribitur non esse quod nec ipsi audetis eruere.*⁸⁸

We, the most wicked men, are said [to partake] of a sacrament and then a meal of child-murder, and after the banquet incest...Although we are always spoken about, you do not take care to bring out that which we have been said [to be doing] for so long. Therefore either bring it forth, if you believe it, or do not believe that which you do not bring forth. Because of your hypocrisy it will be written before you that the thing which you yourselves do not dare to bring forth is not [true].

More important than his accusations and refutations, however, is when he finally describes what does actually happen at the *agape* gatherings:

*Coena nostra de nomine rationem sui ostendit. Id vocatur quod dilectio penes Graecos... Quod sit de religionis officio, nihil vilitatis, nihil immodestiae admittit. Non prius discumbitur quam oratio ad deum praegustetur. Editur quantum esurientes capiunt, bibitur quantum pudicis utile est...Post aquam manuaem et lumina, ut quisque de scripturis sanctis vel de proprio ingenio potest, provocatur in medium deo canere; hinc probatur quomodo biberit. Aequae oratio convivium dirimit. Inde disceditur non in catervas caesionum nec in classes discursationum nec in eruptiones lasciviarum, sed ad eandem curam modestiae et pudicitiae, ut qui non tam coenam coenaverint quam disciplinam.*⁸⁹

Our meal shows its reason by its own name. It is called that which is “love” to the Greeks [i.e. *agape*]...Since it is a service of religion, it allows nothing vile and nothing immodest. There is no reclining at table before prayer to God is tasted. As much is eaten as the hungry take, and as much is drunk as is fit for the modest...After water for the hands and lamps [are brought in], each person is called forth into the middle to sing to God as he is able, from the holy scripture or from his particular talent; from this it is proven how much he has drunk. Likewise prayer breaks up the banquet. From there is a departure not in throngs of cut-throats nor in armies of wanderers nor in eruptions of licentiousness, but according to the same care of modesty and of shame as those who have dined not so much at a dinner as at a place of learning.

⁸⁸ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 7.1-2.

⁸⁹ Tert. *Apologeticum*. 39.16-19.

Tertullian does not mention the eucharist by name in this description of the *agape*, but describes such activities as prayer, modest eating and drinking, and the singing of hymns. The term *eucharistia* is absent and there is no mention of bread or a sacrament, which has led some to believe that the eucharist did not take place at the *agape*. Yet as McGowan points out, based on the context of this passage within a series of explanations about what actually happens at Christian gatherings, “It would certainly be stretching credibility to imagine that Tertullian’s community was eating sacred food elsewhere that needed no explanation, but were engaging in a merely ‘secular’ or ritually insignificant use of food at night that had to be defended from misunderstanding.”⁹⁰ Thus the eucharist may once have been celebrated as a substantial meal “in the most literal sense of the word.”⁹¹ A large communal meal in the ancient Roman world could, and often did, have ritualistic and religious components to it. In fact, other second-century authors refer to the eucharistic meal as an *agape*, and Tertullian himself refers to the evening gathering as the Lord’s Supper in other texts.⁹² It is almost certain that the eucharist took place in some form at the *agape* gatherings which Tertullian attended.

While it is true that the boundary between sacred and secular in the ancient Roman world was fluid and that Tertullian may have experienced a more substantial and meal-like form of the eucharistic at *agape* gatherings, the *agape* was on its way out as the

⁹⁰ Andrew McGowan, “Rethinking Agape and Eucharist in Early North African Christianity,” *Studia Liturgica* 34 (2004): 167-169. McGowan explains further, “The *agape* was certainly the setting for whatever actions did give rise to anxieties and slurs regarding the ritual food of the Christians. Thus although the apologetic context provides no further details of the actual food ritual, the implication is clearly that the meal did include the sacral food called ‘eucharist.’” See also Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 240-241 for a discussion of what happened at the *agape* meal.

⁹¹ Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 12.

⁹² Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering*, 142-143. In *De Spectaculis* 13.4, Tertullian mentions the *cena Dei*, and in *Ad Uxorem* 2.4.2 he mentions the *convivium dominicum*.

major Christian gathering towards the end of his lifetime.⁹³ Besides the *Apologeticum*, the term *agape* only appears in a couple of his other texts and neither instance refers to the evening communal gatherings.⁹⁴ As Burns and Jensen write concerning Tertullian's time, "The morning service had already begun to emerge as the more frequent or regular gathering of the whole community."⁹⁵ Throughout the remainder of his body of work, the contexts in which Tertullian uses the term *eucharistia* demonstrate that he did not think of the eucharist as simply a communal meal with a ritualistic component to it. Whenever he uses *eucharistia* (with one exception),⁹⁶ he does not mean the general act of thanksgiving or a thanksgiving meal, but specifically the bread and wine which are consumed as part of a sacrament. This bread and wine, understood to be the body and blood of Christ according to the tradition of the Last Supper, are consecrated objects which Tertullian sets apart from unsanctified foods and are often consumed outside of normal meals.⁹⁷ Passages in several of his texts make this clear.

⁹³ Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 251 & 269. During the time of Cyprian, the morning gathering gained primacy over the evening one as the place where the eucharistic sacrament took place. By the time of Augustine, the evening *agape* meals had ceased.

⁹⁴ Tert. *Ad Martyras*. 2.7 uses the term *agape* in the context of providing charity to Christians who are in prison; it might be referring to a small meal brought to the prison, but certainly not the large evening gatherings. Tert. *De Ieiunia*. 17.2-3 includes *agape* in a list of various virtues, including *fides* and *spes*, and is used in a mocking tone; it does not seem to be talking about the evening meal either.

⁹⁵ Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 251.

⁹⁶ See n. 113.

⁹⁷ Some scholars have argued that the eucharist developed from a multiplicity of traditions, and that not all early Christian eucharists can be traced back to the story of the Last Supper. Tertullian, however, appears to understand the sacrament of the eucharist in terms of Christ's command at the Last Supper to eat bread (his body) and drink wine (his blood) in remembrance of him (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-29). In *De Oratone* 6.2, he quotes the Last Supper story from the Gospels (*Hoc est corpus meum*) as evidence that Christians are asking for indivisibility from Christ's body, which is bread, when they ask for their daily bread. In *De Corona* 3.3 (*Eucharistiae sacramentum, et in tempore uictus et omnibus mandatum a Domino, etiam antelucanis coetibus nec de aliorum manu quam praesidentium sumimus*), the eucharistic sacrament is referred to as *mandatum a Domino* ("a command from God"), further suggesting that Tertullian understands the practice as a fulfillment of Christ's command to take and eat in remembrance of him. It is true that some scholars have interpreted that part of the passage a bit differently, understanding it as "commanded by the Lord as both at the time of the meal [i.e. at the evening meal] and for all" (McGowan, "Rethinking Agape and Eucharist in Early North African Christianity," 169). The *et...et* construction, however, makes *mandatum* parallel to *victus* in addition to making *in tempore* parallel to

For example, *De Corona*, a text in which Tertullian argues that a Christian soldier made the right choice by refusing to be crowned with laurels, provides good evidence for the sanctity of the bread and wine and the eucharist's importance as a Christian ritual. The following passage is found in a section in which Tertullian is listing off Christian traditions that do not have biblical precedent:⁹⁸

*Eucharistiae sacramentum, et in tempore uictus et omnibus mandatum a Domino, etiam antelucanis coetibus nec de aliorum manu quam praesidentium sumimus.*⁹⁹

In pre-dawn meetings also we take the sacrament of the Eucharist, both a nourishment at the time and a command to all from the Lord, nor from the hand of any others than the ones presiding.

This passage contains some interesting practical information about how and when the eucharist was performed, but also demonstrates its holiness. The most obvious indication is that the eucharist is called a *sacramentum* ("sacrament"), a term which is associated with religious rites and truths and with the Greek term μυστήριον ("mystery") in the New Testament.¹⁰⁰

It is also significant that Tertullian, in his brief discussion of the sacrament, forefronts the actual food items themselves rather than the act of communal eating or thanksgiving by referring to the eucharist as *victus* ("nourishment"). The reception and

omnibus. Thus *victus* should not be understood as a genitive but as an accusative like *mandatum*, and both must therefore be in apposition to *sacramentum*, rather than *mandatum* being a participle modifying it. If the passage is read in this way, then it is clear that Tertullian is referring to the eucharist as an act commanded by God (i.e. the act commanded at the Last Supper), rather than explaining the specific way in which the eucharist was commanded to be received. Additionally, Tertullian is an avid reader of Paul and takes many of his theological ideas from the apostle, who himself understood the sacrament as commanded by Christ at the Last Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Taken all together, the above evidence points to Tertullian as belonging to a community which practiced the eucharist with the belief that it originated from the Last Supper.

⁹⁸ The sacrament of the eucharist does, of course, have scriptural precedent in the story of the Last Supper and in 1 Corinthians (see n. 97 above). Tertullian means that the specific circumstances under which it was received in his time were not scripturally ordained.

⁹⁹ Tert. *De Corona*. 3.3.

¹⁰⁰ William A. Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1992), 37.

consumption of these food items is *mandatum a Domino* (“a command from the Lord”) and they must be handed out only by Christian leaders (i.e. “the ones presiding”), indicating their consecrated status. It is also important that the eucharist is taking place *antelucanis coetibus* (“at pre-dawn meetings”) because this shows the separation of the sacrament from its original setting within the evening *agape* gatherings. The consumption of the bread and wine as commanded by Christ at the Last Supper has been singled out as a sacred Christian act separate from the food consumed at communal gatherings.

Additional evidence for the sanctity of the eucharistic food appears shortly after the above passage:

*Calicis aut panis etiam nostri aliquid decuti in terram anxie patimur.*¹⁰¹

We suffer anxiously at some cup or bread, even our own, that is cast onto the ground.

This is further evidence that the food elements, that is the bread and cup (i.e. of wine),¹⁰² are held as sacred and thus cannot be defiled by falling to the ground. Significantly, it is not only the bread and wine consumed at church that are owed a special reverence. The phrase *etiam nostri*, which evidently means that even bread and wine taken and consumed at home outside of the formal sacrament were included, suggests that the two substances became consecrated during the eucharistic ritual; if it were only the act of consumption or thanksgiving that was considered sacred, there would be no need to honor the food items.¹⁰³

A passage in the fourth book of *Adversus Marcionem* also calls the eucharist a *sacramentum* (“sacrament”), along with baptism:

¹⁰¹ Tert. *De Corona*. 3.4.

¹⁰² By metonymy.

¹⁰³ There is evidence that the consecrated eucharistic bread was sometimes taken home to be consumed in private later. See Tert. *Ad Uxorem* 2.5.3 and Tert. *De Oratione* 19.1-4.

*Aut si omnino negas permitti divortium a Christo, quomodo tu nuptias dirimis, nec coniungens marem et feminam, nec alibi coniunctos ad sacramentum baptismatis et eucharistiae admittens nisi inter se coniuraverint adversus fructum nuptiarum, ut adversus ipsum creatorem?*¹⁰⁴

But if you altogether deny that divorce was permitted by Christ, how do you destroy marriage, neither joining man and woman, nor admitting those joined elsewhere to the sacrament of baptism and of the eucharist unless they will have sworn between themselves against the fruit of their marriage, so that [they will have sworn] against the creator himself?

Here the term *eucharistia* is again used to denote a sacred Christian practice rather than a type of meal or the act of thanksgiving. Just as baptism is not simply a bath with ritual elements, but a sacred rite which involves the rebirth of new converts in Christ, so the eucharist is not simply a meal with ritual elements, but a rite through which Christians grow closer to Christ and to one another by answering Christ's call to eat his body and blood in remembrance of him.

Another passage which uses the term *eucharistia*, this time from the treatise *De Pudicitia*, does not call it a *sacramentum* but clearly separates the eucharistic food from regular unconsecrated food. In *De Pudicitia*, Tertullian condemns the overly forgiving practices of several Christian leaders, who have allowed people back into their churches after committing what he considers to be egregious sins such as fornication. In the passage below, Tertullian makes use of Paul's commands to the Corinthians regarding associating with sinners:

*Nunc autem scribo uobis, si quis frater nominatur in uobis fornicator aut idololatres...aut fraudator...et cetera, cum talibus ne cibum quidem sumere, nedum eucharistiam; quoniam scilicet et fermentum modicum totam desipit conspersionem.*¹⁰⁵

“But now I write to you, if anyone is named a brother among you as a fornicator or idol-worshipper...or a deceiver”...and other things, “do not even take food

¹⁰⁴ Tert. *Adversus Marcionem*. 4.34.5.

¹⁰⁵ Tert. *De Pudicitia*. 18.7-8.

with such men,” much less the eucharist; since of course “a moderate amount of yeast makes flavorless the whole dough.”

Tertullian cites Paul’s command to the Corinthians that they should not associate with πόρνος ἢ πλεονέκτης ἢ εἰδωλόλατρης ἢ λοῖδορος ἢ μέθυσος ἢ ἄρπαξ (“a fornicator or greedy man or idolater or denouncer or drunk or robber”),¹⁰⁶ and that they should not eat with them. The comment *nedum eucharistiam* is not, however, from Paul’s letter; Tertullian has added it in. He felt it necessary to specify that refraining from taking food included the eucharist. This supports the idea that he viewed the eucharist as being something more than simple food consumed during a meal as a symbolic remembrance of Christ’s Passover meal with his disciples. The bread and wine were instead sacred components of the sacrament instituted by Christ’s command at that meal. If Tertullian felt the need to ensure that his Christian audience understood the eucharist as part of the prohibition against eating with sinners, presumably he feared that they would also find a way to argue that the eucharist was not just food.

A passage from *De Oratione*, a treatise on prayer, further shows the ritualization of the eucharist in Tertullian’s time. The passage concerns a question about the days of stations. Stational days, which included Wednesdays and Fridays, involved optional half-day fasts which were broken in the evening.¹⁰⁷ Some Christians participating in the fasts apparently thought that they need not be present at an earlier meeting where prayer and the eucharist occurred, on the grounds that they were waiting to end their stations later in the day with the eucharist. Tertullian refutes this concern, saying:

¹⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 5:11.

¹⁰⁷ Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 564. Other evidence for stational days comes from Tertullian himself in *De Ieiunia*, a treatise on fasting.

*Similiter et stationum diebus non putant plerique sacrificiorum orationibus interueniendum, quod statio soluenda sit accepto corpore Domini. Ergo deuotum Deo obsequium Eucharistia resoluit an magis Deo obligat? Nonne sollemnior erit statio tua, si et ad aram Dei steteris? Accepto corpore Domini et reseruato utrumque saluum est, et participatio sacrificii et exsecutio officii.*¹⁰⁸

And similarly on the days of fasting [i.e. stationary days] most do not think that there should be an intervening at the prayers of sacrifice, since the fast must be dissolved by receiving the body of the Lord. Therefore does the Eucharist do away with obedience devoted to God or bind it more to God? Will your fast not be more solemn if you will have also stood at the altar of God? With the body of the Lord received and preserved each thing, both participation in sacrifice and performance of duty, is safe.

Tertullian argues that taking the eucharist at the earlier prayer time is not a problem at all, and in fact will make the recipient more devoted to God and more solemn during their fast.

Just as in the above passage from *De Pudicitia*, it is implied that the eucharist is somehow different from normal meals and food, as demonstrated by Tertullian's assertion that consuming the eucharist before evening would not break a stationary fast. Some scholars have tried to skirt around this implication by interpreting the passage differently. McGowan, for example, argues that it could mean that fasting Christians were allowed to take the eucharistic bread home with them for breaking their fast later in the day, after the evening meal.¹⁰⁹ There is indeed evidence that the bread was sometimes consumed privately at home. In *Ad Uxorem*, for example, Tertullian writes:

*Non sciet maritus quid secreto ante omnem cibum gustes? Et si sciuerit panem, non illum credet esse, qui dicitur?*¹¹⁰

Will your husband not know what you taste secretly before all food? And if he will have known that it is bread, will he not believe that it is that [bread], which it is said [to be]?

¹⁰⁸ Tert. *De Oratione*. 19.1-4.

¹⁰⁹ McGowan, "Rethinking Agape and Eucharist in Early North African Christianity," 170-172.

¹¹⁰ Tert. *Ad Uxorem* 2.5.3.

Tertullian argues that Christian wives will have a difficult time hiding their faith from non-Christian husbands, since the husbands will know that their wives are secretly eating the eucharistic bread before their meals. This seems to confirm the practice of private consumption of the consecrated bread.¹¹¹ If Christians were simply taking the eucharistic elements home with them for later consumption, however, why would attending the morning prayers be a concern to those fasting? It seems more likely that the morning service involved both consuming the eucharist at that time (i.e. *accepto*) and saving some bread for later in the evening (i.e. *reservato*) when the fast would be formally broken. Supporting this idea is Tertullian's argument that the eucharist brings Christians closer to God and that standing at the altar (perhaps the altar where the eucharist was received, although this is unclear) will make the station more solemn. Why would he need to defend the eucharist as being beneficial on the days of stations if the fasters were not going to partake of it before the normal time in the evening? For Tertullian, the eucharistic food had a special status which exempted it from the normal ban on food during fasting. If the fasters came to the *sacrificiorum orationes* ("prayers of sacrifice") and partook of the eucharist, they would not be eating a meal or consuming regular bread, but would instead be participating in a sacred ritual (here called a *sacrificium* instead of a *sacramentum*)¹¹² and consuming the *corpus Domini* ("body of the Lord"). Thus, as

¹¹¹ See also *De Corona* 3.4 and the mention of bread and wine that are *nostri* ("our own"), perhaps also a reference to the practice of individuals bringing some of the consecrated eucharistic food home with them.

¹¹² It should be noted that Tertullian may be using the term *sacrificium* to refer to the morning prayers as a sacrifice rather than the eucharist. He calls prayers sacrifices in other places as well, including in *Apologeticum* 30.5, in *De Exhortatione Castitatis* 11.2, and in *De Oratione* 28.1 & 28.3, where he explains what he means by referring to prayer as sacrifice: *Haec est enim hostia spiritalis quae pristina sacrificia deleuit... Nos sumus ueri adoratores et ueri sacerdotes, qui spiritu orantes spiritu sacrificamus orationem hostiam Dei propriam et acceptabilem.* ("For this is the spiritual victim which abolished the former sacrifices... We are the true worshippers and the true priests, who, praying in spirit, sacrifice prayer in spirit as a victim fitting and acceptable to God.") Pagan sacrifice has been replaced by prayer, which acts as a spiritual victim instead of a fleshly victim. Therefore we should be careful before assuming that the

Tertullian argues, it is actually a good thing for them to attend the early gathering on stational days.

As the preceding discussion has demonstrated, Tertullian uses the term *eucharistia* to describe the bread and wine which were consumed as part of a sacrament honoring the command given by Christ at the Last Supper to eat bread (which he called his body) and wine (which he called his blood) in remembrance of him. In understanding the eucharist as instituted by Christ and the bread and wine as sacred, Tertullian follows the lead not only of the Gospels but also of Paul in I Corinthians. The eucharist is therefore not the meal or gathering at which the consumption of the bread and wine occurred, but the actual consecrated food itself. This food held a special status which distinguished it from regular meals, as shown by Tertullian's belief that eating it would not break a fast and his claim that it had to be received from the hands of church leaders and could not be allowed to fall on the floor. I therefore argue that it is neither anachronistic nor misguided to say that Tertullian viewed the food elements as imbued with Christ's presence. Exploring what exactly the nature of that presence is will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

Christ as Spiritually Present in the Eucharist

Recall from Chapter 1 that Tertullian considered the *spiritus* ("spirit") to be a separate entity from the *anima* ("soul") until around the time that he wrote *De Anima*. He also understood both *spiritus* and *anima* to be non-physical entities and regularly opposed them to the physical substances of *corpus* and *caro*. Additionally, he was uncomfortable

word *sacrificium* in *De Oratione* 19.1-4 says something significant about the eucharist. It is a term that Tertullian regularly associates with prayer. See also McGowan, "Rethinking Agape and Eucharist in Early North African Christianity," 170, which notes that Tertullian is using the term sacrifice in *De Oratione* 19.1-4 "metaphorically" in the context of communal prayer.

with associating the term *corpus* with Jesus in his earlier texts unless he was talking specifically about the allegory of Christ's body as bread. Thus, as we will see, his theology of eucharistic presence in the early part of his career fits with his understanding of Christ's incorporeality and the distinction between the spiritual and the physical.

One of the earliest (if not *the* earliest) of Tertullian's texts to contain the term *eucharistia*, and perhaps one of the most informative about the practice of the sacrament in his time, is *De Oratione*. The term appears twice, although it has been contested whether the second instance is actually referring to the sacrament or not.¹¹³ The first instance of the term *eucharistia* is found in a passage which has already been mentioned, *De Oratione* 19.1-4, which concerns receiving the eucharist on stational, or fasting, days

¹¹³ The disputed passage is Tert. *De Oratione* 24.1: *Omni, inquit, loco, quem opportunitas aut etiam necessitas importarit. Neque enim contra praeceptum reputatur ab apostolis factum, qui in carcere audientibus custodiis orabant et canebant Deo, apud Paulum, qui in nauī coram omnibus eucharistiam fecit.* ("In every place, he says, which opportunity or even necessity brought about. For the thing done by the apostles, who were praying and singing to God in prison with the guards listening, is not considered to be contrary to the command, nor [the thing done] with Paul, who gave thanksgiving in the ship before everyone.") Tertullian is responding to questions about the discrepancy between Paul's command to pray in all times and places, and Matthew 6:5-6, which discourages public prayer and commands Christians to pray privately in their rooms. It is important not to read too much into Tertullian's terminology as he is quoting from Acts, which states that Paul εὐχαρίστησεν. But what did the term mean in Acts? There is some disagreement on this point. Modern English translations tend to interpret εὐχαρίστησεν as "he gave thanks," but there are those who argue that the scene is meant to represent the Last Supper and that the readers of Acts would have understood it as such. One older English translation of *De Oratione* even interpreted *eucharistiam fecit* in the passage above as "he celebrated the Eucharist."¹¹³ The relevant passage in Acts 27:33-36 may be helpful: Ἄχρι δὲ οὗ ἡμέρα ἡμελλεν γίνεσθαι παρεκάλει ὁ Παῦλος ἅπαντας μεταλαβεῖν τροφῆς λέγων· Τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτην σήμερον ἡμέραν προσδοκῶντες ἄσιτοι διατελεῖτε, μηθὲν προσλαβόμενοι· διὸ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς μεταλαβεῖν τροφῆς, τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τῆς ὑμετέρας σωτηρίας ὑπάρχει· οὐδενὸς γὰρ ὑμῶν θριξ ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἀπολεῖται. εἶπας δὲ ταῦτα καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαρίστησεν τῷ θεῷ ἐνώπιον πάντων καὶ κλάσας ἤρξατο ἐσθίειν. εὐθυμοὶ δὲ γενόμενοι πάντες καὶ αὐτοὶ προσελάβοντο τροφῆς. ("Just when day was about to arrive Paul was encouraging everyone to partake of food, saying: "Since the fourteenth day from today, waiting, you have been continuing without food, having taken none; therefore I encourage you to partake of food, for it exists for your well-being; for none of you will lose a hair from your head." Having said these things and taking bread he gave thanks to God in front of everyone and having broken it he began to eat. Becoming cheerful everyone also took food themselves.") Paul does break bread in the scene, which may support the Last Supper interpretation, but he then offers it to everyone on board to eat, not all of whom are Christians, saying that they have gone hungry and must eat now to survive. This suggests, on the contrary, that it may have simply been a normal meal. Tertullian holds the eucharist to be a sacred and reverent act, and he never indicates that non-Christians could be permitted to partake of it. More than likely he uses the term *eucharistia* in this passage only because he is quoting the original Greek from Acts.

(see p. 39-40). I have already discussed how this passage indicates that Tertullian believed the eucharistic food was considered distinct from unconsecrated food and should therefore be permitted during a fast. But it can also provide insight into the question of Christ's presence in the eucharistic elements and what Tertullian thought the nature of that presence might be.

In *De Oratione*, Tertullian refers to the act of taking the eucharist as *accepto corpore Domini* ("receiving the body of the Lord"). But, as argued in Chapter 1, *corpus* is a rather complicated term in Tertullian's texts. An earlier section of *De Oratione*, in which Tertullian discusses each part of the Lord's Prayer in detail, will help to interpret what he means. In the following passage, he analyses the part of the prayer which requests *panem nostrum quotidianum* ("our daily bread"):

Sed quam eleganter diuina sapientia ordinem orationis instruxit, ut post caelestia, id est post Dei nomen, Dei uoluntatem et Dei regnum, terrenis quoque necessitatibus petitioni locum faceret! Nam et edixerat Dominus, Quaerite prius regnum et tunc uobis etiam haec adicientur. Quanquam PANEM NOSTRVM QVOTIDIANVM DA NOBIS HODIE spiritaliter potius intelligamus. Christus enim panis noster est, quia uita Christus et uita panis. (Ego sum, inquit, panis uitae et paulo supra: Panis est sermo Dei uiui, qui descendit de caelis), tunc quod et corpus eius in pane censetur (Hoc est corpus meum). Itaque petendo panem quotidianum perpetuitatem postulamus in Christo et indiuiduitatem a corpore eius. Sed et qua carnaliter admittitur ista uox, non sine religione potest fieri et spiritalis disciplinae.¹¹⁴

But how elegantly did divine wisdom arrange the order of the prayer, so that after the heavenly things, that is after the name of God, the will of God, and the kingdom of God, he might also make a place for a request for earthly necessities! For the Lord had also decreed, "Seek first the kingdom and then these things will be sent to you also." Although let us rather understand "Give us today our daily bread" spiritually. For Christ is our bread, since Christ is life and bread is life. ("I am," he said, "the bread of life" and a little above [that]: "Bread is the speech of the living God, who descended from heaven"), since then his body is also discerned in bread ("This is my body"). Therefore by seeking daily bread we request perpetuity in Christ and undividedness from his body. But because the

¹¹⁴ Tert. *De Oratione*. 6.1-3.

word [i.e. “bread”] is also permitted [to be understood] carnally, it is not able to come about without the religious matter of spiritual discipline.

Tertullian brings the eucharist into the picture by quoting the language Christ used when breaking bread at the Last Supper (i.e. *Hoc est corpus meum*).¹¹⁵ It is evident here that Tertullian’s understanding of Christ’s presence in the bread is separate from the concept of bread as physical sustenance. He says that it is *also* possible for the word *panis* (“bread”) to be interpreted *carnaliter* (“in a fleshly way”), not that such an interpretation is the only one. In fact, his initial interpretation of Christ’s body in bread is *spiritaliter* (“spiritual”).

At this point in his career (after the writing of *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum*, but before the writing of *De Carne Christi* and *De Anima*), Tertullian, as stated earlier, viewed the body and flesh as distinct entities from spirit and soul. He would eventually declare that the soul has body, but at the time when *De Oratione* was written, he regularly contrasted *corpus* and *caro* with *spiritus* and *anima*. The above passage is a good example of this contrast; Tertullian gives separate *spiritaliter* and *carnaliter* interpretations of the relevant section of the Lord’s Prayer. His discussion of Christ as bread is limited to the *spiritaliter* interpretation. In other words, bread that provides physical nourishment is not the same as bread that is the body of Christ. This fits very nicely with the previous discussion about how Tertullian felt that the bread of the eucharist, which is the *corpus Domini*, was not the same as normal bread. The daily bread of the Lord’s Prayer can be understood both *spiritaliter* and *carnaliter*, but Tertullian is

¹¹⁵ See n. 97 for evidence that Tertullian understands the sacrament of the eucharist as part of the Last Supper tradition, practiced in honor of Christ’s command to take and eat his body and drink his blood in remembrance of him.

clear that Christ's presence in the bread vis-à-vis the Last Supper, and therefore also the eucharist, is to be understood exclusively *spiritualiter*.

I also noted earlier that the treatises written roughly between 197-203 C.E., including *Adversus Iudaeos*, *De Idololatria*, and *De Oratione*, associate the word *corpus* with Jesus particularly when discussing the symbolic interpretation of his body as bread.¹¹⁶ In earlier texts, Tertullian seemed uncomfortable with the idea of Christ having a *corpus* and it was not until later, in texts such as *De Carne Christi* and *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, that he equated *corpus* with *caro* and thus confirmed that Christ had both. Tertullian uses the term *corpus* to discuss the eucharist in these earlier texts largely because of the biblical passages about the Last Supper and the allegory of Christ's body as bread that he is referencing, not because of a belief that the bread is literal human flesh. As *De Oratione* informs us, Christ's presence in the meal is purely spiritual, and, at this point, spiritual things are distinctly separate from fleshly things. Consuming the eucharistic bread is a way to remain in a state of *indivinitas* ("undividedness")¹¹⁷ from Christ's body, probably intended to bring to mind Paul's message that Christians are all members of the body of Christ¹¹⁸ and that the Lord's Supper is meant to be shared by Christians in order to "bring about their unity with the

¹¹⁶ See p. 8-9.

¹¹⁷ This word appears to be a neologism of Tertullian. It appears only in his texts and in Boethius in the fifth century C.E. (TLL)

¹¹⁸ See 1 Corinthians 12:12-13: Καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἓν ἐστὶν καὶ μέλη πολλὰ ἔχει, πάντα δὲ τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος πολλὰ ὄντα ἓν ἐστὶν σῶμα, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός · καὶ γὰρ ἓν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν ("For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body although being many are one body, so also is Christ; for we all were baptized in one spirit into one body.") and Ephesians 4:15: ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ, Χριστός ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἑνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξήσιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ. ("But speaking truthfully in love we will grow in all things toward him, who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted together and brought together through every ligament of support according to the activity in proportion to the part of each one, brings about the growth of the body toward its own building-up in love.").

risen Lord, as well as the community among themselves.”¹¹⁹ Yet, because of Tertullian’s own discomfort with the idea of a corporeal Christ at this point in his career, the body which Christians desire to remain in a state of *indivinitas* from cannot be a physical one.

Therefore in *De Oratione*, the reception of *corpus Domini* during the eucharist is meant to be understood symbolically. Because Christ said at the Last Supper that the bread was his body, and because Christians are members of Christ’s body (again, this is *not* a physical human body), taking the eucharist brings us closer to Christ in a spiritual sense. Through it we also receive physical nourishment (hence the ability to interpret it both *spiritaliter* and *carnaliter*, and the argument that taking the eucharist before the end of stations will bind Christians closer to God). *De Oratione* therefore displays an understanding of the eucharistic meal as sacred and distinct from normal meals consumed purely for sustenance, and indicates a theology of Christ’s presence in the food elements in a spiritual, but not physical, sense. Physically, the eucharist was only bread and wine, but it was still revered as a consecrated substance because the *spiritus* of Christ was present within it, providing spiritual nourishment to all who partook.

Christ as Physically Present in the Eucharist

As Tertullian’s ideas of *spiritus* and *anima*, as well as his understanding of the nature of Christ, became more physical, so too necessarily did his concept of Christ’s presence within the eucharistic food. Several of his later texts use terminology associated with flesh, feeding, and other physical substances and acts in connection with the eucharist, demonstrating this development.

¹¹⁹ Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering*, 108. See also 1 Corinthians 11:33: Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί μου, συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε (“So, my brothers, coming together to eat you should take it with one another.”).

For example, in *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* Tertullian describes the doctrine of the Christian church at Rome, which was founded by Peter and carried the authority of the original apostles and from which, he claims, heresies have now arisen:

*Unum Deum Dominum nouit, creatorem uniuersitatis, et Christum Iesum ex uirgine Maria filium Dei creatoris, et carnis resurrectionem, legem et prophetas cum euangelicis et apostolicis litteris miscet, et inde potat fidem; eam aqua signat, sancto spiritu uestit, eucharistia pascit, martyrium exhortatur et ita aduersus hanc institutionem neminem recipit.*¹²⁰

[The church at Rome] knows one Lord God, the creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus the son of the creator God [born] from the virgin Mary, and the resurrection of the flesh, and it mixes together the law and the prophets with the evangelical and apostolic letters, and from these it drinks its faith; [the church] marks [i.e. faith] with water, clothes it with the holy spirit, feeds it with the eucharist, encourages martyrdom and thus has accepted no one who is against this institution.

Borrowing from Paul the concept that the church is a body and personifying faith as something that needs clothing and nourishment, Tertullian states the church *eucharistia pascit* (“feeds [its faith] on the eucharist”).

Tertullian’s choice of terminology is notable. Here he chooses to use *pascere* as the verb of feeding. As will be discussed later (see p. 52-53), Tertullian nearly always uses *vesci* to describe the physical act of eating. *pascere* has a wider variety of meanings, often closer to “to supply with food” or “to nourish” than to “to eat.”¹²¹ It is unclear which he means by *pascit*, but considering the context of the metaphor (i.e. faith personified), it is likely meant in the sense of receiving nourishing food, a sort of in-

¹²⁰ Tert. *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*. 36.5.

¹²¹ The verb *pascere* is primarily used to describe the feeding or pasturing of animals, but when used in the context of humans usually refers to the receiving of nourishment or the supplying of food. Occasionally *pascere* is used as a synonym for *vesci*, but such a use is very rare in early and Classical Latin. It becomes more common in late Latin, with Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, and other Christian authors all using it to mean the same thing as *vesci* (i.e. the physical act of eating or consuming). Yet, although Tertullian uses *pascere* in multiple ways throughout his texts (to describe the feeding of animals, the nourishment of humans, and the act of eating), it most often should be translated as “to nourish” or “to feed” rather than “to eat.” Tertullian uses *pascere* as a synonym for *vesci* only in *Ad Nationes*. Throughout the majority of his texts, the verb of consuming is *vesci*, which is far more restricted in meaning. (TLL)

between meaning that is not quite figurative and yet not quite the actual act of eating food. There are, however, several examples of Tertullian using the verb *pascere* for figurative eating or nourishment.¹²² *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, which Barnes dates to just before the publication of *De Carne Christi*, may have been written while Tertullian was still unsure about the corporeality of Christ, which could explain why he uses a term which does not implicitly have the connotation of literally consuming a physical substance. Perhaps we should not read into the use of *pascit* too much, but it is still notable that Tertullian has started to use terminology which is related, if somewhat ambiguously, to physical consumption when discussing the eucharist.

The five books against Marcion and his teachings provide information about the nature of Christ and the sacrament of the eucharist, and they were certainly written later in Tertullian's career. Tertullian has quite a lot to say about the body and flesh of Christ in these texts, largely because one of Marcion's teachings was that Christ had no physical body. In refuting him, Tertullian goes on at some length about proof of Christ's corporeality. In Book 3, he uses the concept of Christ's body as bread to prove the prediction of Christ's death in the Old Testament:

*Sic enim deus in evangelio quoque vestro revelavit, panem corpus suum appellans, ut et hinc iam eum intellegas corporis sui figuram pani dedisse, cuius retro corpus in panem prophetes figuravit, ipso domino hoc sacramentum postea interpretaturo.*¹²³

For so God revealed in your gospel [i.e. Luke], calling his own body bread, so that from this you might understand that he has given the figure of his body to bread, whose body the prophet [i.e. Jeremiah] in past times represented as bread, with the Lord himself to interpret this sacrament afterwards.

¹²² For example, in *De Oratione* he writes that prayer, as the Christian alternative for a sacrificial victim, is figuratively "fed on faith" (*fide pastam, pastam* being the perfect passive participle of *pascere*).

¹²³ Tert. *Adversus Marcionem*. 3.19.4

As Bradshaw points out, the terms *figuram* and *figuravit* refer to Jeremiah's "prophetic prefiguration" of Christ's death with an image of wood (the cross) and bread (Christ's body), rather than indicating that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are only figuratively his body and blood.¹²⁴

Even more informative is a passage from Book 4 which uses the Last Supper as evidence for the reality of Christ's flesh and blood:

*Professus itaque se concupiscentia concupisse edere pascha ut suum (indignum enim ut quid alienum concupisceret deus), acceptum panem et distributum discipulis corpus suum illum fecit, Hoc est corpus meum dicendo, id est figura corporis mei. Figura autem non fuisset nisi veritatis esset corpus: ceterum vacua res, quod est phantasma, figuram capere non posset. Aut si propterea panem corpus sibi finxit quia corporis carebat veritate, ergo panem debuit tradere pro nobis. Faciebat ad vanitatem Marcionis, ut panis crucifigeretur. Cur autem panem corpus suum appellat, et non magis peponem, quem Marcion cordis loco habuit? Non intellegens veterem fuisse istam figuram corporis Christi, dicentis per Hieremiam, Adversus me cogitaverunt cogitatum, dicentes, Venite coniciamus lignum in panem eius, scilicet crucem in corpus eius. Itaque illuminator antiquitatum quid tunc voluerit significasse panem satis declaravit corpus suum vocans panem. Sic et in calicis mentione testamentum constituens sanguine suo obsignatum, substantiam corporis confirmavit. Nullius enim corporis sanguis potest esse nisi carnis. Nam et si qua corporis qualitas non carnea opponetur nobis, certe sanguinem nisi carnea non habebit. Ita consistet probatio corporis de testimonio carnis, probatio carnis de testimonio sanguinis... Ita et nunc sanguinem suum in vino consecravit, qui tunc vinum in sanguine figuravit.*¹²⁵

Therefore having declared that he wished with an eager desire to eat the Passover feast as his own (for it is not fitting that God would desire something foreign [to him]), he made that bread, received by and distributed to the disciples, his own body by saying, "This is my body," that is, the form of my body. But there would have been no form unless there were a body in reality: on the other hand an empty thing, which is a phantom, would not be able to take a form. Or if therefore he imagined the bread as a body for him since he was lacking a body in reality, thus he ought to have given up bread for us. It would add to the falsehood of Marcion, that bread was crucified. But why does he call his own body bread, and not rather a melon, which Marcion had in place of a heart? Not understanding that that form of the body of Christ [i.e. bread] was ancient, speaking through Jeremiah, "Against me they conceived an idea, saying, 'Come, let us throw wood on his bread'," of course meaning the cross on his body. Therefore the illuminator of

¹²⁴ Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 94-95.

¹²⁵ Tert. *Adversus Marcionem*. 4.40.3-6.

ancient things declared sufficiently what he then wished the bread to have signified, calling his own body bread. Thus also establishing a testament sealed by his own blood by the mention of a cup, he confirmed the substance of his body. For no blood is able to be of a body unless it is [a body] of flesh. For even if some condition of non-fleshly body is placed before us, certainly it will not have blood if it is not of flesh. Thus proof of the body exists from the evidence of the flesh, and proof of the flesh from the evidence of the blood...So also he consecrated his own blood in wine, who then represented wine as in his blood.

By again understanding *figura* and *figuravit* as indicating the prefiguration of future events (i.e. that Christ's body would hang on a cross and his blood would be spilled), we can see that this passage indicates a physical presence of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine of the Last Supper. In particular, Tertullian states that Jesus *corpus suum illum fecit* ("made that [bread] his own body") by saying it was so and that he *sanguinem suum in vino consecravit* ("consecrated his own blood in the wine").¹²⁶ It is also notable that he says Jeremiah's bread *significasse* ("signified") Christ's own body as bread at the Last Supper, suggesting that what was prefigured by the prophet had become reality.

If we take into account the study of terminology in Chapter 1, it becomes even more plausible that Tertullian is describing a physical presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the eucharist. It has already been shown that at the time Tertullian wrote *De Oratione*, he believed in a spiritual presence of Christ within the eucharistic bread. By the time he wrote the latter books of *Adversus Marcionem*, he had come to understand *spiritus* as a corporeal entity equivalent with *anima*. If he already believed that Christ's spirit was present within the meal, it is not a big step to understand that presence as physical rather than spiritual in accordance with his belief in a corporeal spirit.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 95 also mentions the significance of what Tertullian says here, noting "Tertullian's apparent belief that it was the words of Jesus that made his bread the body at the Last Supper."

¹²⁷ I reject Wilhite's claim that Tertullian does not equate the idea of corporeality with being "tangible or material" (David E. Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity: An Introduction to a Unique Context and*

Consider also the previously discussed passage from *De Corona*. The eucharist is referred to as a *victus* (“nourishment”). Previously, in *De Oratione*, Tertullian carefully distinguished between the eucharistic bread in its *carnaliter* use as physical nourishment and in its *spiritaliter* use as a method of growing closer to Jesus. Now Tertullian conflates the two ideas, stating that it is both a sacrament commanded by Christ and a nourishing food. This does not mean that Tertullian suddenly thinks of the eucharistic elements as regular food instead of consecrated objects filled with Christ’s presence, but rather that he now sees that presence as having physicality (because he now views Christ as having a physical *corpus* and his *spiritus* as being corporeal), meaning there is no need to distinguish between *spiritaliter* and *carnaliter* interpretations of the eucharist any longer.

A brief passage from *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* supports a physical interpretation as well:

*Caro corpore et sanguine Christi vescitur ut et anima de deo saginetur.*¹²⁸

The flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ so that the soul also might be fattened on God.

The use of the verb *vesci* for the act of eating in this passage is significant. Throughout his body of work, Tertullian almost always uses the verb *vesci* to refer to the physical act of consuming food, rather than some sort of spiritual nourishment. It is the verb he chooses to discuss the accusations of eating infants in *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum*, and it is also used in *De Pallio* and *De Fuga in Persecutione* in the context of the literal

Tradition (New York: Routledge, 2017), 132). As demonstrated in Chapter 1, by the time that Tertullian indicates his Stoic belief in a corporeal soul, he has also stated that *corpus* and *caro* are the same substance. Surely it cannot be argued that flesh is not something tangible or material.

¹²⁸ Tert. *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*. 8.3.

consumption of food.¹²⁹ In his earlier texts, such as *De Oratione*, Tertullian talked about receiving the body of Christ (i.e. *accepto corpore Domini* in *De Oratione* 19.4) and being spiritually nourished by Christ in the bread of the eucharist, but he never used the language of feeding, including the verbs *vescor* and *pascere*, to describe the act. In fact, as I have already mentioned, he separated the concepts of eucharistic food as physical sustenance and eucharistic food as the body of Christ. It is significant that such terminology starts to show up abundantly in connection with the eucharist in Tertullian's later texts. Tertullian now saw Christ's presence in the meal as physical and substantial in a way that he hadn't in his earlier texts.

Finally, let us examine a second passage in *De Pudicitia* which mentions the eucharist and strongly associates the sacrament with physically nourishing food and the physical act of eating.¹³⁰ Tertullian is attempting to interpret the parable of the prodigal son to support his stern point of view on the matter of re-admitting sinners to the church:

*Recordatur patris Dei, satisfacto redit, uestem pristinam recipit, statum scilicet eum, quem Adam transgressus amiserat. Anulum quoque accipit tunc primum, quo fidei pactionem interrogatus obsignat, atque ita exinde opimitate dominici corporis uescitur, eucharistia scilicet.*¹³¹

He [i.e. the prodigal son] remembers his father God, he returns with satisfaction, he receives his former clothing, and doubtless that position which Adam having transgressed had lost. He also first receives the ring then, with which, having been interrogated, he seals the pact of faith, and so from then feeds on the abundance of the body of the Lord, the eucharist of course.

The eucharist is the body of Christ, and Christians are fed on it. Tertullian again uses the verb *vesci* to describe the act of consuming the eucharistic, which is strongly associated

¹²⁹ Tert. *Ad Nationes*. 1.7.31, 1.15.6, & 1.15.8. *Apologeticum* 8.2. *De Pallio*. 3.3. *De Fuga in Persecutione* 11.3. One exception is in *De Cultu Feminarum* 1.8.5, where *vesci* is used to describe a sacrificial fire being fed (“*ignis qui vescitur*”). This is still a physical act, however, and the fire is still consuming something just as a living thing would consume food. Thus the point, that Tertullian uses *vesci* literally and not figuratively, still stands.

¹³⁰ For the first passage in *De Pudicitia* which uses the term *eucharistia*, see p. 38-39.

¹³¹ Tert. *De Pudicitia*. 9.16.

with a physical act. Note the prevalence of food and eating-related terminology throughout Tertullian's telling of the prodigal son story:

*Hanc itaque prodegit longe a Domino moribus iactus inter errores et inlecebras et libidines saeculi, ubi fame ueritatis compulsus tradidit se principi huius aevi. Ille eum praefecit porcis (ut familiare id daemonum pecus pasceret), ubinec illi compos esset uitalis esca simulque alios uideret in opere diuino abundantes pane caelesti.*¹³²

Therefore he wasted this [wisdom], thrown far from the Lord by his habits among the wanderings and attractions and pleasures of the world, where driven by a hunger for truth he handed himself over to the chief of this age. That man placed him in command of pigs (so that he might feed this herd familiar to demons), in which place he would not be master of life-giving food and at the same time would see others amid divine work overflowing with heavenly bread.

In this description of the prodigal son, Tertullian uses *fames* (“hunger”), *pascere* (“to feed”), *esca* (“food”), and *panis* (“bread”), all food-related terminology and all in line with the parable as told in Luke's gospel. In Luke, the son wastes his father's money (“διεσκόρπισεν τὴν οὐσίαν”), becomes destitute and hungry (“ἐγένετο λιμὸς ἰσχυρὰ...καὶ αὐτὸς ἤρξατο ὑστερεῖσθαι”), resorts to feeding pigs (“καὶ ἔπεμψεν αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς ἀγροὺς αὐτοῦ βόσκειν χοίρους”), remembers that his father's workers have plenty of bread (“ἔφη · Πόσοι μίσθιοι τοῦ πατρὸς μου περισσεύονται ἄρτων, ἐγὼ δὲ λιμῶ ὧδε ἠ ἀπόλλυμαι”), and finally returns home, where his father treats him to a feast (“εἶπεν δὲ ὁ πατήρ...καὶ φαγόντες εὐφρανθῶμεν”).¹³³

Tertullian's use of language relating to food, hunger, and eating in the passage from *De Pudicitia* can partly be explained by examining his source; the same language is in the biblical parable of the prodigal son (both in the original Greek, as above, and in the

¹³² Tert. *De Pudicitia*. 9.15.

¹³³ Luke 15:11-24.

Old Latin texts).¹³⁴ Tertullian is using the son as a metaphor for those who attempt to return to the church after committing serious sins. His intent is made clear by the use of *fames* and *panis*; Tertullian's man is hungry for *veritas*, rather than actual food, and the bread that he desires is described as being *caelestis*. Thus, in the world of the metaphor, the sinner returning to church is the prodigal son, God is the welcoming father, Christians are the well-fed workers, and truth is the food which the son lacks. It is tempting, therefore, to claim that the passage cannot be taken literally and that the act of feeding on Christ's body must also be metaphorical. But, if that is true, why is it specified that the sinner who has been readmitted to the church feeds on the eucharist, which is an actual (not metaphorical) act of consumption, as was made evident in the other passage from *De Pudicitia* already discussed? To complete the metaphor, the returning sinner should be said to feed on God's truth or wisdom, not actual food. Tertullian has already stated earlier in the same text that the eucharist is not only food, but a particularly important food which Christians should never eat alongside fornicators and idolaters.¹³⁵ Therefore Tertullian brings his language out of the figurative and back into the literal by not only stating that the repentant sinner *vescitur* ("feeds") on the *dominici corpus* ("body of the Lord"), but also confirming that he means a literal act of feeding by adding *eucharistia scilicet* ("the eucharist of course"). Therefore, with its abundance of physical food and eating-related language, *De Pudicitia* helps to support the conclusion that, in his later texts, Tertullian conceives of Christ as physically present in the eucharistic meal.

¹³⁴ The *Vetus Latina* text of Luke's Gospel, as preserved in the *Codex Bezae* (MS Nn.2.41), says that the prodigal son *in agros pascere porcos* ("feeds the pigs in the fields"), fears that he will die from *fame* ("hunger"), and sees that his father's workers *abundant panibus* ("overflow with bread"). This is very similar to the language Tertullian uses to discuss the passage, and he may very well have been inspired by existing Latin translations of the Bible in addition to the Greek text. (*Codex Bezae*, University of Cambridge Digital Library, <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-NN-00002-00041/478>.)

¹³⁵ See Tert. *De Pudicitia* 18.7-8 and the discussion of it on p. 38-39.

The final question which might be asked is whether Tertullian believes that the physical presence is Christ's actual body and flesh or rather the corporeal manifestation of his spirit. Unfortunately this question may not be answerable. It is perhaps easier to believe that Tertullian always interpreted the eucharist as filled with Christ's spirit and that the only change over time was in his concept of the corporeality of the spirit. I am not sure, however, that it really matters or, for that matter, that Tertullian would have had a ready answer to such a question; either way, by the latter part of his career, he believed in Christ's physical presence in the eucharistic food.

Conclusion

The study of Tertullian's theology of the eucharist has regularly been overlooked by scholars, both those who study Tertullian and North African Christianity and those who study the history of the eucharist. Some have claimed that there is little information to be gleaned about the eucharist from his texts, while others have focused only on the practical information that he provides. Those who have ventured to make conjectures have either barely hinted without further elaboration at the possibility that Tertullian believed in Christ's presence in the food, or have dismissed the idea out of hand as anachronistic or impossible to know. But armed with an in-depth knowledge of how Tertullian uses language related to the body, flesh, spirit, and soul of Christ, and spurred on by a refusal to let him remain silent on the subject any longer, I have shown in this chapter that Tertullian does demonstrate a clear and consistent understanding of the eucharist over the course of his career (with one major development).

For Tertullian, the term *eucharistia* referred specifically to the bread and wine of the eucharist which were the body and blood of Christ. Although he participated in

communal evening gatherings at which substantial eucharistic meals may have been consumed, the way in which he discusses the sacrament makes it evident that he felt the significance of the eucharist lay in the holy consecration and consumption of the food elements rather than in the celebration of the communal meal. He indicates reverence toward the eucharistic bread and wine and states (at different times) that they provide nourishment (sometimes spiritual, sometimes physical) for individual Christians and for the faith of the church, as well as unity with Christ. They can provide all of these things because they are imbued with Christ's presence. Following along with the developments noted in Chapter 1, Tertullian initially conceived of Christ as spiritually present within the meal, providing a spiritual nourishment which was separate from the physical nourishment which food gives. But later on, by the time he had written texts such as *De Carne Christi* (in which he declares that *corpus* and *caro* are the same and that Christ has both) and *De Anima* (in which, similarly, he declares that *spiritus* and *anima* are the same and that they are corporeal), he began to talk about the eucharist with increasingly physical language, using words related to flesh and eating in large quantities which he had not used previously and thus showing that he now felt that the significance of the eucharist and Christ's presence within it were physical in nature.

The discovery that Tertullian had formulated a theology of "real presence" (if I may be permitted to use the phrase) as early as the beginning of the third century adds to our rather sparse knowledge about the practice and significance of the eucharist in the earliest centuries of Christianity. It might also help us to better understand the sources from which later North African authors, such as Cyprian, got their own ideas about the eucharist. Although time and the focus of this paper do not permit, I hope to someday

extend this study to include Tertullian's successors in the world of North African Christianity in the hopes of following some threads that extend all the way from the first major Latin Christian author.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I would like to pose one final question before concluding this study: why does Tertullian's understanding of the physical and the spiritual, and as a result his eucharistic theology, change over the course of his career? A second thesis would be needed to do this question justice, but I would like to point out a few thoughts that struck me over the course of my research. Mostly importantly, I have noted the major influence that genre and audience had on the arguments which Tertullian chooses to use in his texts. The *Apologeticum*, for example, one of his earliest texts, relies very little on arguments from scripture and Christian tradition, presumably because Tertullian purports to be defending himself against a non-Christian audience. Might his North African pagan audience and their social and cultural background have had anything to do with Tertullian using the term *caro*, but not *corpus*, in relation to Christ in this text? Similarly, might Tertullian's decision to write texts refuting fellow Christians with whom he disagreed have contributed to the developments of some of his beliefs? In order to effectively show that his enemies were wrong, Tertullian needed to dig deep into scripture and potentially reconsider some of his own ideas based on what he found. For example, as previously mentioned, the necessity of polemicizing against Marcion, who did not believe in a corporeal Christ or a resurrection of the flesh, may have influenced Tertullian's decision to emphatically declare that Christ had a physical body which was also physically resurrected from the dead. Further study of the factors which influenced Tertullian will

have to wait for a future project, but it is an interesting question to ponder in the meantime.

The goal of the present project was twofold: to trace Tertullian's use of a specific set of terminology (*corpus*, *caro*, *spiritus*, and *anima*) throughout his body of work, and to gain insight into his eucharistic theology. I have argued that Tertullian initially kept the concepts of body, flesh, spirit, and soul distinct from one another but that, by the time he wrote *De Carne Christi* and *De Anima*, he had conflated *corpus* with *caro* and *spiritus* with *anima*, and had declared that the *spiritus* (and therefore also the *anima*) was corporeal. Using this information alongside an examination of the passages in Tertullian's texts which mention the eucharist, I determined that he conceived of the eucharistic food as consecrated and filled with the presence of Christ. That presence, which at first he believed to be purely spiritual and non-physical, later developed greater physicality as Tertullian's beliefs about Christ's body and the nature of the spirit did likewise.

My study would not have been possible without the use of a methodology which has been sadly underutilized in previous work on Tertullian. Scholarship on Tertullian has long been plagued by arguments over details of his life and chronology and by the tendency to split his career into pre- and post- Montanist phases.¹³⁶ Scholars have also regularly based their claims about Tertullian's thoughts and theology on passages picked out of one or two of his texts, overlooking context and connections with his other texts.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Fortunately, recent work has moved away from talking about Tertullian's supposed "conversion" to Montanism. See Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 108-116 for a discussion of Tertullian's relationship with Montanist thought and other common misunderstandings about Tertullian.

¹³⁷ See, for example, the scholars cited on p. 29-30, most of whom make claims about Tertullian's eucharistic beliefs based on just one or two passages (or occasionally a small handful of passages) in which he mentions the sacrament. Although the eucharist is only mentioned by name a few times in Tertullian's

I hope to have shown that there is a wealth of information available about Tertullian's beliefs and contributions to early Christian thought if we choose to focus on philology rather than chronology, and to see how his ideas shift and change (or, in some cases, do not do so) from one text to another rather than treating his relatively large body of work as one undifferentiated whole. In fact, tracing developments in Tertullian's use of specific terminology can help to support arguments about the proper chronological order of his texts. As more work continues to be conducted on Tertullian, both by myself and others, it is my hope that we will keep in mind the importance of considering the philological and terminological choices of the man who founded Latin Christian literature.

extant works, I hope this paper has made it clear that those passages cannot be read and understood in isolation.

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