

Letter 436: 20 February [1531], Strasbourg, The Strasbourg Preachers to Ambrosius Blaurer and the Preachers Assembled at Memmingen

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[*Summary*]: They would have liked to attend the meeting [in Memmingen] but were not authorized by the city council. They hope to meet in Ulm and later in Nürnberg [neither meeting took place]. To compensate for their absence they are sending the present statement of their beliefs. In turn, they ask for a detailed report about the meeting in Memmingen. It is of the utmost importance to reach agreement on the Sacramentarian question. They delineate their own position: “The true body of Christ is truly exhibited in the supper, but as food for the soul.” In support they cite biblical passages and refer to Oecolampadius’ collection of patristic passages, [*Quid de Eucharistia veteres...*, July 1530]. They follow traditional beliefs when they deny that the body of Christ is united with the bread in a natural manner and note that the body of Christ is in heaven. Christ offered up his body for our redemption and offers it to us in the Supper as nourishment for the soul. They remind the brethren that “whatever occurs in the mind can only be expressed through metaphor. When Christ decided therefore to call his flesh true food and to call the offering he made to the disciples during the Supper, an offering of his body and blood, why should we be reluctant to use these metaphors, as did Paul and the whole church of old, and why should we be reluctant to state that he is truly present and we are truly eating?” To avoid strife and giving offence, it is important to adapt one’s language to the understanding of one’s audience. The apostles showed a spirit of compromise, and they must do likewise. As long as they are permitted to interpret the presence of Christ in the bread as a Sacramentarian union, there is no reason for further dispute, “for we confess the Real Presence of Christ’s true body and our eating thereof.” As for Luther’s demand to include the formula *manducatio impiorum*, i.e. that the impious, too, eat the body of Christ, they may come to an understanding, if one distinguishes between sinners who believe in the sacrament and therefore receive the body of Christ, but not for their salvation, and non-believers who merely eat the bread. This needs to be discussed among them before they meet at Ulm, and with Luther before they meet at Nürnberg. Zwingli will not stand in the way of religious peace so long as it is stated that the body of Christ “is not localized in the bread” and Oecolampadius has already approved what they state here. Rites should be standardized as much as possible to show that they are all inspired by the same Spirit. Church discipline coupled with the authority to excommunicate, such as instituted in Basel, may be useful. They should also discuss a public creed to be taught in the catechism. They hope that Ambrosius [Blaurer], Simprecht [Schenk], and Konrad [Sam] will come to the planned meeting in Ulm.