

# THE POLEMIC ABOUT UNLEAVENED BREAD: THE HISTORY, MEANING AND THE PECULIARITIES OF THE INTERPRETATION

## A POLÊMICA SOBRE O PÃO ÁZIMO: HISTÓRIA, SIGNIFICADO E PECULIARIDADES DA INTERPRETAÇÃO

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contra latinos") and Cardinal of the Roman Church Humbertus ("Adversus Graecorum calumnias", "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum").

**Keywords:** Patriarch Michael Cerularius. Controversy about unleavened bread. Azymes. Leo of Ohrid. Niketas Stethatos. Cardinal Humbertus. Ukrainian polemical literature.

**Resumo:** O artigo revela a história da polêmica entre a Igreja do Oriente e a Igreja do Ocidente a respeito da prática litúrgica do uso de pão sem fermento ("ázimos") no sacramento da Eucaristia. Para explicar a opinião de que a Igreja Católica permite o uso de pão fermentado pelos cristãos ortodoxos devido ao seu significado simbólico, foi feito um breve excursus histórico sobre a controvérsia dos pães ázimos. Essa disputa teve início na época do Patriarca Miguel Cerulário e precedeu o surgimento do "Grande Cisma". Cada uma das partes defendeu por muitos séculos a justeza exclusiva de sua tradição litúrgica. A publicação trata do conteúdo das primeiras obras polêmicas dos gregos contra os latinos e das respostas destes. Em particular, são revelados os detalhes da controvérsia e a fundamentação bíblica da prática eucarística segundo León de Ácrida ("De azymis et sabbatis"), Nicetas Pectoratus ("Libellus contra latinos") e o Cardeal da Igreja Romana Humberto ("Adversus Graecorum calumnias", "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum").

**Palavras-chave:** Patriarca Miguel Cerulário. Controvérsia sobre o pão ázimo. Ázimos. León de Ácrida. Nicetas Pectoratus. Cardeal Humberto. Literatura polêmica ucraniana.

## 1. Introduction

The problem that arises at the center of this study is to reveal the origins, key issues, as well as theological content of the polemic about unleavened bread, as well as to clarify how this controversy was reflected in Ukrainian literature.

The relevance of the topic is due to the fact that the use of unleavened and leavened bread in the Eucharistic practice of churches still remains a marker of confessional identity. In addition, the examination of the polemic about unleavened bread affords a unique opportunity to delineate how theological discourses intertwined with political and cultural dynamics, thereby influencing global processes in church history. At the same time, this issue remains insufficiently explored within Ukrainian church-historical scholarship, and the writings of early Ukrainian hierarchs, which condemn the traditions of Latin communion, have yet to be integrated into the broader academic discourse.

The purpose of this work is to analyze the principal stages surrounding the polemic about unleavened bread, with a particular emphasis on the seminal works of the most influential theologians from both the Roman and Constantinopolitan churches. Additionally, it aims to identify the peculiarities of their interpretations regarding the symbolism inherent in Eucharistic bread.

The research objectives include as follows:

- A comprehensive analysis of the theological arguments posited by the Eastern and Western Churches concerning the use of leavened versus unleavened bread within the sacrament of the Eucharist, drawing from polemical texts.
- Identification of the religious, historical, and symbolic foundations underpinning the rationale for the choice of Eucharistic bread in the writings of Leo of Ohrid, Humbert, and Niketas Stethatos.
- Assessing the impact of this controversy on the escalation of the conflict between Rome and Constantinople, alongside an elucidation of its significance in the context of the "Great Schism" (1054).

## 2. Theoretical framework and literature review

The study delves into the contentious issue about unleavened bread (Latin: azymes) – the unleavened bread utilized in the Eucharist, the preeminent sacrament within Christianity, from

which all others have meaning. The unleavened bread used by Catholics during communion stands in stark contrast to the leavened bread traditionally favored by the Orthodox Church. This debate over the permissibility of their respective usages in liturgical practices is emblematic of a broader polemic between the Eastern and Western churches, encompassing additional contentious subjects such as the "Filioque", clerical celibacy, the primacy of the Pope, etc. This controversy transcends mere theological discourse, intertwining with profound questions of ecclesiastical authority and identity.

The examination is grounded in historical, cultural, and confessional paradigms. The controversy regarding unleavened bread is perceived as a reflection of more profound divergences in the dogma and cultural practices between East and West, as well as a theological confrontation between Rome and Constantinople, which also exerted influence over the Kyiv Metropolis.

Among the seminal sources, the writings of the hierarchs from the Roman and Constantinople churches during the 11th century merit particular emphasis, notably: Leo of Ohrid's "De azymis et sabbatis", Niketas Stethatos's "Libellus contra latinos", as well as Cardinal Humbert's "Adversus Graecorum calumnias" and "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum". The above mentioned works were incorporated into the compendium "Patrologiae cursus completus", curated by Jacques Paul Min in the 19th century, which has become the most authoritative source corpus concerning the historical relations between the Eastern and Western churches.

A significant advancement in the discourse surrounding the polemic about unleavened bread in church history was achieved through the 19th-century publication by the French Catholic priest Jacques Paul Min of the theological and hierarchical writings from both Eastern and Western churches within the series "Patrologiae cursus completus". In Ukrainian historiography, scant attention has been devoted to the investigation of the unleavened bread controversy, resulting in a notable gap in this issue. The first comprehensive publications analyzing the aforementioned dispute in Ukraine emerged in the latter half of the 19th century. In contemporary scholarship, the history of ritual-dogmatic polemic between the East and the West, along with its implications, is most thoroughly explored in AVVAKUMOV's notable work (AVVAKUMOV, 2011). In particular, the scholar elucidated the origins of the controversy surrounding unleavened bread and also traced its influence on the church schism that occurred in 1054. The writings of the hierarchs of the Kyiv Metropolis, which address the polemic about unleavened bread, were also in the focus of SHEVCHENKO's attention. The researcher published a Ukrainian translation of a rare 11th-century treatise by Metropolitan George, entitled "Controversy with Latins", which critiques the

traditions of the Catholic Church concerning the sacrament of the Eucharist (SHEVCHENKO, 2001).

The polemic about unleavened bread, which emerged as a significant factor in the "Great Schism", continues to evoke considerable interest in contemporary historiography. SIECIENSKI (2022) contends that this dispute was equally pivotal as the "Filioque", as it pertained to the very essence of the sacrament. TREIGER (2022) agrees with the abovementioned scholarly view, underscoring that liturgical practice has consistently served as a hallmark of ecclesiological identity. Conversely, other scholars, such as KALDELLIS (2019), argue that this ritual distinction functioned primarily as a tool of political contention between Rome and Constantinople.

Interpretations regarding the profundity of the conflict have varied throughout history. SZEGVÁRI (2020) elucidates that within the Byzantine discourse of the 11th century, the Latin liturgy employing unleavened bread was perceived as a "foreign religion", with the rejection of leavened bread interpreted as a renunciation of the risen Christ. This notion is further corroborated by ALEXOPOULOS (2021), who points to the symbolic association between leaven and the life-giving essence of the Sacrament. However, as NOTHAFT *et al.* (2022) reveal, by the late Middle Ages the employment of unleavened versus leavened bread in the Eucharist had ceased to be a dogmatic issue, but only a ritual distinction. AVVAKUMOV (2011) emphasizes that during the dialogues of the 14th–15th centuries, Latins acknowledged both practices as legitimate, a conclusion that was also documented in the decisions of the Council of Florence in 1439. This stands in stark contrast to the notion of an insurmountable dogmatic divide within the conflict (BUZALIC, 2025). Concerning the personal responsibility of Michael Cerularius in instigating the "Great Schism", KALDELLIS (2019) attempts to rehabilitate the patriarch's name, asserting that the principal architects of the discord were his subordinates, notably Leo of Ohrid. Nevertheless, Kamas (2024) contests this viewpoint, deeming it superficial and superficial and overly indulgent.

Despite the extensive exploration of the subject, contemporary scholarship hardly cover the Ukrainian dimension of the polemic. The theological arguments posited by Leo of Ohrid, Niketas Stethatos, and Humbert have not been sufficiently examined or systematically compared. Our contribution to the critical analysis of these sources significantly enriches the understanding of the political and ideological underpinnings of the dispute.

### **3. Research design and methods**

#### **3.1. Research approach**

The present investigation adopts a qualitative-interpretative framework, employing an interdisciplinary methodology that combines historical-theological, cultural, and textual analyses. The principal emphasis lies in the interpretation of theological, historical, and rhetorical arguments articulated during the active phase of the polemic about unleavened bread in the 11th century. Methodologically, the study is grounded in the concept of cultural reception (reception history) and adheres to the principles of comparative studies.

#### **3.2. Data collection procedures**

The research material comprises primary sources authored by Latin and Greek polemicists. The foundational texts that underpin the discourse surrounding the controversy over unleavened bread, as well as the symbolism and interpretation of the utilization of unleavened versus leavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist, include "De azymis et sabbatis" by Leo of Ohrid, "Adversus Graecorum calumnias", "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum" by Humbert, as well as "Libellus contra latinos" by Niketas Stethatos.

Moreover, the writings of the hierarchs of the Kyiv Metropolis from the 11th century (George, Leontius, Ephraim) and Ukrainian chronicle artifacts have been incorporated into the analysis. Additionally, translations, commentaries, and critical editions have been utilized, particularly from the series "Patrologiae cursus completus", "Acta Conciliorum", alongside the scholarly contributions of contemporary Ukrainian and international researchers.

#### **3.3. Data analysis methods**

The present study employed:

- Historical-critical analysis – to examine the origin, chronology, and historical-cultural context of polemical works.
- Comparative textual analysis – to discern semantic and symbolic distinctions in the interpretation of the Eucharistic bread.
- Discursive analysis – to study the rhetorical strategies used by the parties to substantiate their positions.

### **3.4. Ethical considerations**

The research adheres to the principles of academic integrity: all sources are meticulously verified and pertain to reputable scientific publications; the author's viewpoints are cited with appropriate reference to the original sources; no distortion of theological concepts or biased interpretations of religious perspectives are permitted.

### **3.5. Limitations and frameworks**

The study does not comprehensively address the contemporary practices surrounding the use of Eucharistic bread in the Catholic and Orthodox churches—it concentrates on polemical artifacts from the 11th century. The scope of the source material is confined to the available works of Latin and Greek theologians in English and Ukrainian translations. The polemic about unleavened bread is primarily regarded as a theological-historical phenomenon and does not pertain to the current liturgical practices of the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

## **4. Results**

The use of unleavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist represents one of the few ritual distinctions between the Eastern and Western churches, which has been the focal point of a protracted theological polemic. This dispute, which escalated in the 11th century amid the struggle for ecclesiastical primacy between Constantinople and Rome, also permeated the Ukrainian territories – from the advent of Christianity in Rus' until the 17th century, particularly intensifying following the establishment of the Kyiv Metropolis. Subsequent to the decrees of the Ferrara-Florence Council in the 15th century, the conflict diminished in intensity. The earliest accusation against Latin Christians regarding the use of unleavened bread found in Ukrainian sources dates back to 986.

Specifically, this pertains to the chronicle narrative regarding Prince Volodymyr's choice of faith, as documented in the "Tale of Bygone Years" (The Rus' Chronicle, 1989). From the 11th century, we encounter the writings of Metropolitans Leontius, Ephraim, and George, wherein the doctrine of Rome is juxtaposed with that of Constantinople, and unleavened bread is condemned as heretical. The aforementioned historical texts exerted considerable influence on Ukrainian polemical literature. Accusations against the Latins concerning the use of unleavened bread were also articulated by theologians of the Kyiv Metropolis on the eve and following the Union of Brest (TKACHUK, 2011). Therefore, the examination of the origins of this enduring controversy

among Ukrainian hierarchs regarding unleavened bread, in light of historical sources, remains profoundly relevant.

The custom of using unleavened bread to commemorate the sacrament of the Eucharist was characteristic solely of one of the earliest Judeo-Christian communities, the Ebionites (SHEVCHENKO, 2004) (Hebrew: "אֲבִיּוֹנִים" – beggars). In the 7th century, this Ebionite tradition was adopted by the Roman Church, which had previously served communion with traditional wheat or leavened bread. The transition of Latins to unleavened bread did not escape the notice of the Greeks, for whom this change, along with the "Filioque", served as both a ritual and dogmatic pretext in their struggle against Rome for the canonical independence of the Church of Constantinople and its preeminence in the East (ERICKSON, 1970).

The tolerant attitude of the Greek clergy towards various types of ceremonial bread is indicated by the letter of Patriarch Photius to Catholicos of Armenia Zacharias: despite the use of unleavened bread in the Armenian Church, Photius refrained from voicing any objections. He similarly did not contest the use of unleavened bread in the Roman Church, as articulated in the "Circular Epistle to the Patriarchal Thrones of the East" (PHOTIUS, 1900) (867), which marked the inaugural polemical challenge to the ecclesiology of the West. This seminal work laid the groundwork for an enduring and uncompromising theological dispute between Rome and Constantinople, exacerbating the existing misunderstanding and ultimately culminating in the "Great Schism". A fervent controversy regarding unleavened bread erupted under Patriarch Michael Cerularius. In the 11th century, this ritual differentiation emerged as the principal subject of contention, overshadowing even the previously dominant dogmatic issue of the "Filioque", which had previously been the focal point of Patriarch Photius's concerns.

Figure 1 shows the historical dynamics surrounding the contentious debate over the use of unleavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which emerged as one of the main reasons for the division between the Eastern and Western Churches. The diagram delineates the main stages of the evolution of this polemic, its ideological and political contexts, and outlines its correlation with the theological disputes of the 11th century. Furthermore, it unveils the reception of this issue within the Ukrainian church space from the 11th to the 17th centuries.

The sequence of events depicted in the diagram substantiates that the polemic about unleavened bread was not merely an isolated ritual contention, but rather evolved into a manifestation of profound doctrinal and cultural-political divergences between Rome and Constantinople. Equally significant is its reception in Ukrainian territories, where it assumed a distinct connotation of national and religious identity in the context of the Orthodox-Catholic

confrontation. This perspective enables us to perceive the polemic about unleavened bread as a multifaceted phenomenon that intertwines dogma, politics, and cultural memory.

### "On unleavened bread and Sabbaths"

In the letter "De azymis et sabbatis" (LEO ACHRIDANUS, 1864), Leo of Ohrid, on behalf of Patriarch Michael Cerularius, addressed Bishop John of Trani (Ioannes Traniensis), urging him to condemn the Latin practice of using unleavened bread and observing fasting on Saturday. He deemed these actions as unlawful and reminiscent of Jewish customs, transgressing the decrees of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 1:11). He urged that such practices be relegated to the "wretched Jews" ("Azyma vero, et custodias Sabbatorum projicite miseris Judaei" (LEO ACHRIDANUS, 1864)). In the same treatise, the Latins are first called as "azimite heretics" (Greek: "ἄζυμος"), to which the Greeks retorted with the nickname "fermentariae".

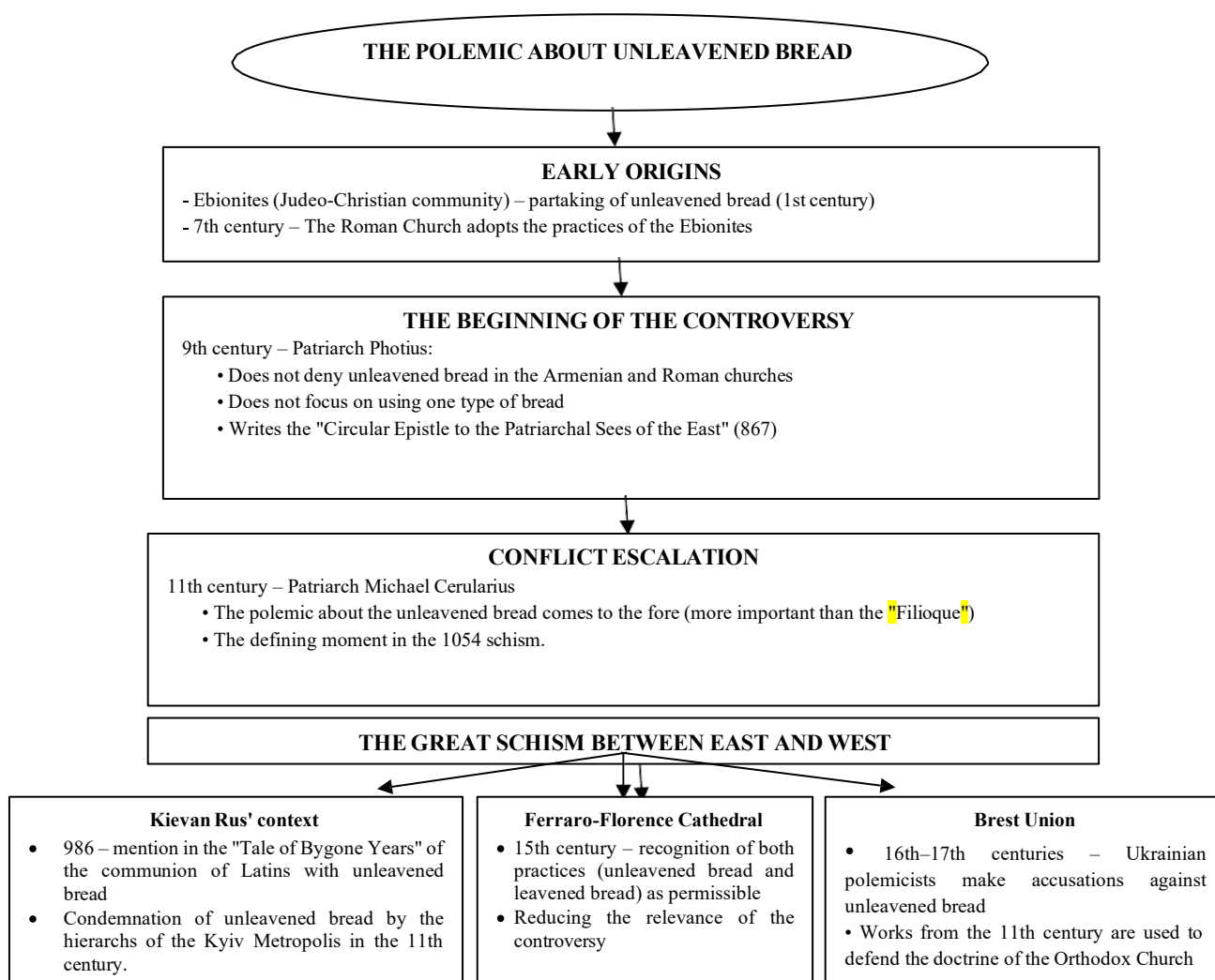


Figure 1. Historical dynamics of the polemic about the use of unleavened bread



\*Consolidated by the author

Leo of Ohrid substantiated the charge of heresy by interpreting a passage from the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 26:17–29), which, in his view, elucidates that after the Old Testament Passover, Jesus Christ commemorated the New Testament Passover—using leavened bread. He construed the term "ἄρτος" as denoting yeast bread, symbolizing life, Resurrection, and grace. Conversely, the polemicist posited that unleavened bread is akin to "stone, clay, dried mud", devoid of vitality and the emblematic significance of the New Testament (LEO ACHRIDANUS, 1864).

As an additional argument, Leo of Ohrid cited the Gospel parable of the leaven (Mt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20–21), interpreting it as evidence in favor of the use of leavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist. He identified the woman within the parable with the Church, and the three measures of flour as representative of the Persons of the Trinity. Such an interpretation, according to Leo of Ohrid, confirmed the superiority of the Eastern liturgical tradition (LEO ACHRIDANUS, 1864).

The content of the epistle "De azymis et sabbatis" demonstrates the nature and depth of the arguments posited by theologians of the Eastern Church in the contentious discourse regarding Eucharistic bread. In Leo of Ohrid's letter, unleavened bread acquires a profound symbolic significance, transforming it into a marker of religious identity. Consequently, the examined work serves not merely as an exemplar of medieval theological polemics but also as a vivid example of how ritual and dogmatic differences can evolve into instruments of conflict in inter-church confrontations.

### **"Adversus Graecorum calumnias"**

Pope Leo IX, outraged by the accusation of heresy from the Greeks, instructed his secretary, the Benedictine monk Cardinal Humbert, who had translated Leo of Ohrid's letter from Greek into Latin, to respond to Michael Cerularius' accusations. The response appeared in 1053 under the title "Adversus Graecorum calumnias" (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

In defending the Eucharistic practice of the West, Humbert first of all rejected the invectives of the Greeks about the Judaization of the Roman Church. This was manifested, in particular, in the fact that traditional bread was kept in the homes of Latins on the eve of Passover and they freely consumed it, which was forbidden to Jews under threat of death. In addition, on the 10th of Nisan the Romans did not select and separate a one-year-old lamb from the flock, according to the instructions of Moses, in order to slaughter it on the evening of Passover

on the 14th. Commenting on the arguments offered by Leo of Ohrid regarding communion with leavened bread, Humbert disagreed that any leavened bread is spiritualized. Only the bread of the Eucharist, filled with the warmth and Spirit of the Living God, is like this, which revives the soul from sins and gives life to the world. The polemicist considered endowing ordinary bread with the miraculous property of life-giving to be heretical sophistry, which likened the Greeks to the Manichaeans. Humbert called the conclusions of Leo of Ohrid's etymological observations on the word "άρτος" useless and unmotivated. He explained his opinion by saying that in the Holy Scriptures this word is used to refer to both leavened bread and unleavened bread, which the Greeks did not consider to be bread. It is also called heavenly manna in the Pentateuch – the angelic bread that God gave to the Israelites for food. So, the polemicist reasoned, if heavenly manna, which looks and tastes nothing like bread, is called "άρτος", then unleavened bread is even more so. Furthermore, in the books of the Old and New Testaments, "άρτος" is repeatedly used in reference to unleavened bread. As proof of this, Humbert cited the example of the unleavened bread of the offering, which in the Septuagint and the New Testament are called "άρτοι τοῦ προσώπου" (Ex. 25:30, Lev. 24:5, Mt. 12:4, Mk. 2:26, Lk. 6:4) (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

Defending the Latin custom of serving communion on unleavened bread, Humbert noted the fallacy of Leo of Ohrid's judgments about Jesus Christ's consumption of leavened bread at Passover. Such a statement by the Greeks, he wrote, contradicted the Gospel texts and, even more, presented the Savior as a violator of the Law, which was unacceptable. In the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 26:17), Mark (Mk. 14:1-12), Luke (Lk. 22:1-7) and John (Jn. 19:14) clearly states that Jesus Christ celebrated the Eucharist during the Passover (Unleavened Bread) days. Based on this instruction of the evangelists, Humbert pointed out the following detail to the Greeks: during the seven days of unleavened bread, the Jews were forbidden to eat leavened bread, and there was to be no leaven in their homes, so that they would remember their hasty exodus from Egypt and how God came to their aid so quickly that there was no time for the dough to ferment (RINEKER, MAJER, 1999). The polemicist emphasized the indication thereof as follows: the bread that Jesus Christ "broke and gave to the disciples" (THE BIBLIE, 2020) was unleavened, without yeast. Otherwise, the Lord would have been an apostate of the Law, yet He did not go beyond its limits by even an iota: "credendum etiam et praedicandum est Dominum Jesum nec unum iota aut unum apicem legis praeteriisse" (HUMBERTUS, 1853). To support his arguments, Humbert cited the words of Jesus Christ from the Gospel of Matthew, that He came not to destroy, but to fulfill the Law. Therefore, if He had eaten leavened bread on the eve of Passover, He would have disregarded the commandment of Moses and led His disciples into sin, which is why He died on the cross for

His own transgressions, not for the sins of all mankind. However, the Son of God "committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth" (THE BIBLIE, 2004) (1 Pet. 2:22). That is why the chief priests, scribes, and elders found no fault in Him and resorted to slander. Also, Judas, who was looking for a way to betray his Master, did not tell the Sanhedrin anything about the consumption of leavened bread in the Zion Upper Room, which would have been sufficient to condemn Him to death. Instead, Humbert quoted the words of the evangelist Matthew, Judas, "repenting, returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (THE BIBLIE, 2004) (Mt. 27:4). At the same time, the polemicist noted that in the story of the Apostle John about how Jesus Christ, having dipped the bread, gave it to Judas, the word "ἄρτος" is used, which, in view of the above, proves its application to unleavened bread (Jn. 13:26) (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

Leo of Ohrid's comparison of unleavened bread with dried mud caused considerable indignation in Humbert. The Catholic polemicist considered it extremely imprudent to call everything that lacks leaven and salt by that name. By analogy with unleavened bread, the theologian reproached his opponent, his offensive definition extended to disembodied angels and the souls of the righteous, which was sacrilege: "Ergo beati spiritus et animae justorum, sive ipsa quatuor elementa, ex quibus omnia visibilia existunt, lutum sunt: quoniam neque sal neque fermentum habent" (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

Humbert also disagreed with Leo of Ohrid's decoding of the allegorical content of the parable about the leaven. Such an interpretation, in the opinion of the polemicist, does not correspond to the teachings of the universal church. Humbert considered the Greeks' explanation of the images of a woman and three measures of flour as the Church and the Holy Trinity irrational. Suppose, he wrote, that the woman represents the Church, and the three measures of flour the Holy Trinity, but it is unclear where, when, and why the Church hid the leaven in the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, the very idea that the nature of an all-perfect, unchanging, and merciful God could be transformed by any process of growth was inherently heretical. In Humbert's understanding, the images of the Kingdom of Heaven, the woman, the leaven, and the three measures of flour depict the Church, Jesus Christ, the apostolic teaching, and the three sons of Noah, who represent the entire human race. According to this interpretation of the images of this parable, Jesus Christ said that the apostolic teaching would form a Church that would consist of different peoples (Mt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20–21) (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

Humbert used the method of their preparation to prove the superiority of using unleavened bread over leavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The polemicist explained

that the exclusive prerogative of "unleavened bread" over yeast bread is confirmed by the composition of their dough, because, as is known, the properties and nature of the river are the same as those of the source. To make leavened dough, Humbert said, grape wine foam, brewer's yeast, a decoction of boiled barley and peas, fig juice, or sour milk are added to flour. All of these products are considered impurities, and therefore the dough they are part of spoils quickly. The Apostle Paul also noted this in his Epistle to the Galatians: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (THE BIBLIE, 2004) (Gal. 5:9). Instead, the theologian wrote, in contrast to leavened bread, unleavened dough is prepared from refined flour and pure water without any impurities, which makes it better. In addition, this composition of the dough and the process of baking it over fire have a symbolic meaning, indicating the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ: grain bread is the body, water is the human soul, and fire is the divinity of the Savior: "Romana quippe et Occidentalis Ecclesia a ministris sacri altaris in secretario confectum offert azymum, quod ex grano frumenti et limpida lympha per ignem fuerit praeparatum, significans se in una mediatoris Dei et hominum, hominis Dei Jesu Christi, persona, tres perfectas credere et venerari substantias: humanam scilicet carnem, animam rationalem, et Verbum Dei Deum" (HUMBERTUS, 1853). Table 1 consolidates the key arguments Humbert uses to justify the legitimacy of Latin communion practice.

Table 1. Humbert's position and arguments in the treatise "Adversus Graecorum calumnias"

<b>Position</b>	<b>Main arguments</b>
Rejection of accusations of Judaization of the Roman Church	Latins do not observe Jewish rites, so accusations of Judaization are groundless.
Criticism of the idea that leavened bread is spiritual in itself	Only the Eucharistic bread is spiritualized by the action of the Holy Spirit; attributing miraculous power to ordinary bread is Manichaeism.
The broad semantics of the word "άρτος" in biblical texts	The word "άρτος" in the Bible means both leavened and unleavened bread, so it does not serve as an argument in favor of either side.
Biblical evidence of Jesus Christ's use of unleavened bread during the Last Supper	Jesus Christ celebrated the Eucharist during the days of unleavened bread, when leavened bread was forbidden, therefore he used unleavened bread.
The fallacy of Leo of Ohrid's allegorical interpretation of the parable of the leaven	The parable of the leaven does not concern the Holy Trinity, but the apostolic teaching and the salvation of mankind.
The benefits of unleavened bread dough and the symbolism of its ingredients	Leavened bread contains "impurities", while unleavened dough contains only water and flour, symbolizing the purity and divinity of Jesus Christ.

\* Consolidated by the author

An analysis of the arguments presented in the work "Adversus Graecorum calumnias" unveils the maturity of theological thought within the Western Church. Humbert not only refutes all allegations against Rome but also articulates a holistic understanding of the symbolism surrounding the unleavened bread as a representation of purity, deemed worthy for use in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

### **"Libellus contra Latinos"**

After Pope Leo IX refused to acknowledge Michael Cerularius as possessing authority over the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, and criticized him for adopting the title of "ecumenical bishop", he entrusted to a monk from the Monastery of Stoudios, a disciple of Symeon the New Theologian, Niketas Stethatos ("Στηθατος" means courageous) to respond to Humbert's treatise. Thus, in 1054, a concise polemical work entitled "Libellus contra Latinos" (NICETAS PECTORATUS, 1853) appeared, wherein considerable attention was devoted to refuting Humbert's arguments concerning the use of unleavened bread. In addition to the accusations previously made by Leo of Ohrid against the Latins, Niketas Stethatos added a new accusation regarding the imposition of celibacy.

Niketas Stethatos, ardently defending the liturgical tradition of the East, explained that leavened bread was far more intimately connected to the body of Jesus Christ, which believers consume during the Eucharist. He posited that the leaven within bread signifies its spiritual essence. The polemicist drew an analogy between leaven and a life-giving force that ferments kneaded dough, warms it, and loosens it. Conversely, unleavened dough is devoid of these manifestations of life, which is why the author denoted it as dead. To substantiate his claim that the communion bread must be leavened, Niketas Stethatos cited a fragment of the First Epistle of the Apostle John, which substantiates the consubstantiality of Jesus Christ with God the Father: "And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one" (THE BIBLIE, 2004) (1 Jn. 5:8). In the polemicist's interpretation, this Gospel verse referred to the Lord's Supper, during which believers partake of the life-giving spirit, water, and blood that were together in the crucified body of the Savior. Without elaborating extensively on the correlation between the evangelist's words and leavened bread, the Studite monk asserted that after the Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus Christ with a spear, blood and water flowed forth, while the Holy Life-giving Spirit remained within His body. Hence, in commemoration of the outpouring of blood and water from the crucified Savior's body – symbols of the profound mystery of humanity's union with God in baptism and communion – the Greeks, unlike the Latins, traditionally mingled the communion wine with water during the Proskomedia.

Niketas Stethatos did not consider the verse from the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:7–8), as cited by Humbert, wherein leaven is referenced in a pejorative context, as substantiation for the exclusive use of unleavened bread. The polemicist agreed that, in this case, leaven serves as a symbol of sin; however, he noted that the "apostle of the Gentiles" did not give any instructions regarding the type of bread to be employed during the Eucharist, thereby rendering the conclusions drawn by the Latins erroneous. By invoking the imagery of leaven – specifically, old, sour dough that was added to a fresh batch of bread – Niketas Stethatos suggested that the Apostle Paul sought to denounce the connection of the Christians of Corinth with sinful habits, which they had to break in order to be completely converted to a righteous life and emerge as a new creation in Jesus Christ (NICETAS PECTORATUS, 1853).

Niketas Stethatos claimed that the Last Supper took place on the 13th of Aviv, the eve of Passover. According to his calculations, Jesus Christ was crucified on the 14th of Aviv, the day designated for the slaughtering of the lamb by the Jews and the cleansing of their homes of leaven. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the 15th of Aviv. Thus, Niketas Stethatos concluded that Jesus Christ celebrated Passover with leavened bread on Thursday, the 13th of Aviv, prior to the adoption of unleavened bread (NICETAS PECTORATUS, 1853). Thus, the polemicist substantiated the superiority of leavened bread by presenting theological, symbolic, and liturgical evidence. Below are the key arguments of Niketas Stethatos, delineated as follows (Table 2).

Table 2. The principal arguments of Niketas Stethatos in his work "Libellus contra latinos" regarding the advantage of using leavened bread in the Eucharist

<b>Arguments</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Leavened bread is a symbol of the spiritualized body of Jesus Christ	Leaven is a symbol of life-giving power; leavened bread is closer to the living body of Jesus Christ, unlike the "dead" unleavened bread.
Unleavened bread is dead bread	Unleavened bread has no signs of life, so it is unsuitable as an image of the Risen Jesus Christ.
Interpretation of the New Testament verse 1 John 5:8	"Spirit, water, and blood" are evidence of the presence of divine fullness in leavened bread.
The rite of mixing wine with water at the Proskomedia	Adding water to the wine symbolizes the blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of Jesus Christ on the cross, emphasizing the mystical essence of the sacrament.
New Testament verses 1 Cor. 5:7–8 do not refer to the sacrament of the Eucharist	Paul the Apostle mentions leaven as a symbol of sin, but gives no instructions regarding the type of bread for the Eucharist.

Calculating the date of the Last Supper	Jesus Christ celebrated Passover on the 13th of Aviv, before the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that is, with leavened bread.
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\* Consolidated by the author

The arguments posited by Niketas Stethatos reflect a concerted effort not only to theologially validate the Eucharistic practices of the East, but also to present leavened bread as the sole authentic and proper element. His interpretation shifts the focus from a literal to a symbolic comprehension of the Eucharistic bread, thereby strengthening the ritual and dogmatic preeminence of the Eastern Church in the face of its confrontation with Rome.

### **"Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum"**

Humbert responded to Niketas Stethatos with the work "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum" (HUMBERTUS, 1853). He was overcome with indignation due to the occasionally perplexing and ambiguous reasoning presented of Studite monk. Consequently, in his writings, Humbert unabashedly expressed his emotions, repeatedly making disparaging remarks towards the opponent. Thus, he derisively compared him to Epicurus, called "the standard-bearer of plague doctrine and diabolical suggestion", a "Sarabite" – a monk without a monastery, a "foolish donkey", a "century-old cursed child", a "filthy and rabid dog", a "snake", a resident not of a monastery but of a brothel, etc. (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

Focusing primarily on the critique of Niketas Stethatos's arguments, Humbert scrutinized his interpretation of the verse from the First Epistle of the Apostle John (1 Jn. 5:8). He resolutely dismissed his opponent's assertion that the words of John the Theologian pertain to the Eucharistic bread, contending that such an interpretation distorts the essence of Holy Scripture. In his view, this verse alludes to baptism, which combines the action of the Holy Spirit, water, and the blood of Christ as stages of salvation.

Humbert challenged Niketas Stethatos's claim that at the moment of the spear's piercing the Holy Spirit resided in the lifeless body of Jesus Christ, labeling it a blasphemy that undermines the foundational truth of the Savior's death and resurrection. In contrast, the evangelists John (Jn. 19:30), Mark (Mk. 15:39), Luke (Lk. 23:46), the apostle Paul (Rom. 4:25), and the Creed unequivocally testify to His death and resurrection (HUMBERTUS, 1853; THE BIBLIA, 2004; The Book of Canons of the Holy Apostles, 2008).

Humbert condemned Niketas Stethatos's assertion that the blood and water flowing from the crucified Jesus Christ's corpse were lukewarm, deeming it a diabolical deception that

contradicts the Gospel of John (Jn. 19:28–37). In a dead body, blood and water could not possibly retain warmth; thus, Niketas Stethatos's symbolic interpretation of the Eucharistic bread is fundamentally flawed. Humbert emphasizes that the flowing of blood and water signifies the genesis of the Church – analogous to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

Furthermore, he refuted Niketas Stethatos's method for calculating the date of Passover, claiming that Jesus Christ celebrated it with Israel on the 14th of Aviv in strict adherence to the Law. Any deviation would render His sacrificial atonement invalid: "Christus nec unum iota aut apicem veteris legis resolvit..." (HUMBERTUS, 1853).

Thus, in his response to Nicetas Stethatos's work – "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum" – Humbert not only engages in an emotionally charged polemic with his opponent but also systematically dismantles his theological arguments. Table 3 delineates the principal provisions underpinning Humbert's position, along with his critical observations regarding Nicetas' interpretations of New Testament texts, liturgical practices, and the Christological doctrine of the East.

Table 3. The principal provisions of Humbert's polemic in the work "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum"

<b>Key controversial issues</b>	<b>Humbert's position</b>
Interpretation of the New Testament verse 1 John 5:8	Believes the verse refers to baptism, not the Eucharist: spirit – sanctification, water – washing, blood – redemption.
The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the dead body of Jesus Christ	Denies the assumption that the Holy Spirit was in the dead body of Jesus Christ: this contradicts the Gospels and the Creed.
The temperature of blood and water in the dead body of Jesus Christ	Considers it false that the blood and water in the dead body of Jesus Christ were warm – the body was dead and cold, which is confirmed by the Gospels.
The symbolism of the blood and water flowing from the pierced side of Jesus Christ	Explains the outpouring of blood and water as a symbol of the birth of the Church, similar to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib.
Passover date	Claims that Jesus Christ, without violating the Law, celebrated Passover with all Israel – on the 14th of Aviv, with unleavened bread.

\* Consolidated by the author

An analysis of Humbert's arguments reveals a consistent and comprehensive apologia for the theology of the Western Church. His critique of Niketas Stethatos not only exemplifies a fervent polemic but also reflects an earnest endeavor to uphold the integrity of Rome's doctrine amid growing tensions with Constantinople.



## 5. Discussion

Our study traces the origins of the polemic over the use of unleavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist and compares it with the conclusions of contemporary scholars. As GEREBY (2023) points out, the controversy regarding unleavened bread emerged primarily as a response to profound Christological disputes. We agree with this opinion; in particular, we confirm the significant influence of the polemic in shaping the dogmatic identity of the Eastern Church.

SZEGVÁRI (2020) argues that the issue of unleavened bread did not disappear after the 11th century, but rather persisted as a focal point of concern for successive generations of Orthodox hierarchs. Our research has likewise revealed traces of the polemic about unleavened bread in Ukrainian historiographical and polemical texts of the 10th–11th centuries. HAMADA (2023) points out that Byzantium, during the 7th to 11th centuries, used the argument of unleavened bread in disputes with the Armenians; we support this perspective, emphasizing the continuity of the polemical discourse regarding the Eucharistic bread.

The symbolism of bread was particularly significant. As NELSON (2024) elucidates, the Greeks associated leavened bread with the living body of Jesus Christ, whereas the Latins considered it a symbol of sinfulness. In our research, we trace this symbolism within the writings of Leo of Ohrid and Niketas Stethatos. The researcher clarifies that both sides interpreted the bread through the lens of their own distinct understandings of the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ—an assertion corroborated by our findings as well.

A substantial emphasis in the polemic was paid to biblical exegesis. NELSON (2023) shows that the Greeks interpreted leavened bread as a symbol of the Kingdom of God (Mt. 13:33), while the Latins, relying on a verse from the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 5:9), employed it as a counterargument against leavened bread. Our work provides illustrative examples of these interpretations as evidenced in the 11th-century texts. MITRALEXIS (2023) underscores that in this polemic about unleavened bread, the bread itself became an element of church identity. The rhetoric employed in these arguments is equally significant. Our research substantiates this—particularly in Humbert's fervent expositions concerning Niketas Stethatos, the perceived "uncleanness" of leaven, and the "blessing" bestowed upon unleavened bread.

The Ukrainian context of the polemic about unleavened bread is almost entirely absent from Western literature; thus, we augment the scholarship of DMYTRIV, KOPANYTSIA, and TOKARSKA (2024), who examine the image of the Eucharist in Ukrainian literature.

In summary, we align with the perspective of PETERS (2024) that the dispute over unleavened bread served as an indicator of the growing schism between East and West. However, in contrast to NELSON (2023), who perceives it as a trivial matter, we elucidate its profound dogmatic implications. The novelty of our research resides in the integration of liturgical, theological, and rhetorical analyses, with a particular emphasis on the Ukrainian context.

This study examined the historical backdrop and theological dimensions of the controversy regarding unleavened bread between the Eastern and Western Churches on the eve of the "Great Schism". An examination of the polemical writings of Greek and Latin theologians has unveiled the profound dogmatic, political, and cultural disparities underpinning this dispute. The overriding conclusion is that the controversy over unleavened bread represented for the Greeks not merely a theological dispute but also a crucial aspect of the struggle for the political and dogmatic sovereignty of the Church of Constantinople from Rome.

The contribution of the present study lies in its analysis of the polemic about unleavened bread through the lens of the Ukrainian church context, elucidating how this dispute became integral to the formation of the identity of the Kyiv Metropolis. An examination of chronicle sources and polemical compilations of 11th-century Ukrainian hierarchs that critique the Eucharistic traditions of the Latin theologians, in conjunction with the primary source texts of Michael Cerularius, Leo of Ohrid, Humbert, and Niketas Stethatos, offers a broader perspective on this controversy within the history of Christianity.

The strengths of this study are found in the comprehensive analysis of the writings of Greek and Latin polemicists, alongside a comparative evaluation of their arguments, which allows for the revelation of not only the dogmatic but also the cultural and political dimensions of the dispute between Rome and Constantinople. A notable aspect is the utilization of various sources, including Ukrainian historiographical and polemical works, which facilitates expanding the understanding of this issue in the East Slavic space.

One of the principal shortcomings is the limited access to certain texts that could enable a more nuanced analysis. For future inquiries into the polemic about unleavened bread, a deeper investigation into the works of Ukrainian polemicists from the 11th to the 17th centuries is recommended, as well as an exploration of their influence on the history of the Kyiv Metropolis and Ukrainian culture.

## 6. Conclusion

The polemic about unleavened bread between the Eastern and Western Churches in the 11th century was not merely a theological dispute; it also served as a mechanism for asserting their dogmatic identity and political influence. The present study analyzes the principal arguments advanced by Greek and Latin theologians, revealing ritualistic, dogmatic, cultural, and political divergences between the two church traditions. Particular attention is paid to the seminal works of Leo of Ohrid ("De azymis et sabbatis"), Niketas Stethatos ("Libellus contra latinos"), and Humbert ("Adversus Graecorum calumnias", "Responsio sive contradictio in eundem libellum"), which shed light on the essence and trajectory of the dispute, while also revealing the symbolic meaning of the Eucharistic bread in both churches. The content of these works suggests that the liturgical practice of the Western Church is grounded in biblical doctrine, and the very polemic about unleavened bread, which unfolded between the Greeks and the Latins on the eve of the "Great Schism", functioned for Constantinople as a ritualistic and dogmatic facade in its struggle for independence from Rome. This dispute similarly permeated Ukrainian polemical literature from the 11th to the 17th centuries.

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