

# EXTRACT FROM A LETTER

IN REPLY TO SOME QUESTIONS

# ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.



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# EXTRACT FROM A LETTER,

ETC.

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I BELIEVE that the bread remains simply and absolutely bread, and the wine, wine—that, physically, there is no change whatever in the elements.\* To seek for material and physical things in such a precious institution of the Lord is, to my mind, a poor and miserable manner of regarding it. I have a charming portrait of my mother, which reminds me of her just as she was. If I am told of the canvas or the colouring, I should feel that those who spoke thus knew nothing about it. That would not be my mother. That which is precious in it to me is my mother herself; and they turn my attention from her to the means employed to recall her to me; and the reason is, that they have no idea of what my

mother is to me. The portrait has no value except as far as it is a good representation of her who is not there. I say, it is my mother. I could not throw it aside as a mere piece of canvas; I discern my mother in it; I cherish this portrait; I carry it with me; but if I stop at the perfection of the painting as a work of art, the link with my heart is lost.

There is more than this in the Supper of our Lord, because the Lord is really present *with us* in it, ~~by the Spirit~~<sup>in spirit</sup>, according to the intention of the institution; and this is very precious. But it has pleased Him to give us a physical means by which we may be reminded of Him, so that I am authorized to speak of a portrait by way of comparison. I have still further authority to repel the idea of any physical change in the bread and wine, in that the Lord has said, in the 6th of John, which you have quoted, "The Spirit quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." The verses of this chapter, however, which speak of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, do not speak at all of the Lord's Supper, but of Christ:

I am, I do not say *persuaded*, but *sure* of this. The Supper speaks of that of which the chapter speaks; but the chapter does not speak of the Supper—the symbol—but of the thing symbolized. This is perfectly evident; one has only to read the chapter to see it. If the application that has been made of it to the Supper be correct, then not one of those who have partaken of it would be lost, and he who had not partaken of it would be lost, whatever he might be; and those who participate of it would not only be *blessed*, but they would be eternally saved (see verses 53, 54). Further, the Saviour says that it is of Himself, come down from heaven, that He speaks (not of the Supper)—of the same Person who will ascend up where He was before in heaven (verses 35—41, 48, 51, 58—62). The Supper presents Christ in only one of these conditions, but in that which is, so to speak, central: it presents us a dead Christ; but this foundation of all, this precious truth, which could be a motive even for the Father Himself to love Christ<sup>e</sup>—this fact that it is a dead Christ which is presented to us, is

the proof that we could not have a living Christ presented to us in the elements. This would be to deny the state of death, and to destroy the object and intention of ~~of~~ this institution. This institution presents to us the death of Christ—a dead Christ—His body broken and His blood shed; but there *exists no dead Christ*. He desires that we should *remember* Him: “Do this in remembrance of me;” but I do not speak of the remembrance of Christ living in heaven. I live by Him; He is my life; I enjoy communion with Him; I dwell in Him; He dwells in me: there is no separation. If, through my folly, communion is interrupted, it is no question of remembering Him, but of being with Him anew—with a Saviour who manifests Himself to us as He does not to the world. And see where these poor Roman Catholics (and I love them much) have been brought, by their material explanation of this precious institution. They wish it should be taken according to the letter (“the letter killeth”); so they take away, in the literal sense, the blood; they do not drink the cup; and this

is very important, because the fact that the blood is out of the body is the sign of death—of the efficacious work of Christ; we are reconciled, justified by the blood. In order to compensate for this loss, they teach that the body, soul, blood, and divinity of Jesus Christ are in the two kinds. Now, if the blood is *in* the body, there is no redemption; without their knowing it, their sacrament is a sacrament of the non-accomplishment of redemption. This is the effect of materializing this institution. There is no greater proof of the manner in which Satan sports with men, when they leave the Spirit for the flesh, than this fact, which is the centre of the Roman Catholic system. I affirm positively that their Eucharist is a sacrament, not of redemption, *but of non-redemption*. If you tell me that many among them think of the Saviour—of the efficacy of His *death*—I rejoice to believe it; but for this they must quit the materialism of their system for the thoughts of faith. They think, then, of a blood shed, and they drink it; they think of a Saviour dead, and a body broken, and they really eat His flesh. Satan

has not in this case--blessed be God!--been able to hide from their faith that which is denied in the form to which they attach so much value.

It is the same thing in the 6th of John as in the 3rd, where we are said to be born of water. If that is applied to baptism, then we are born of God by the water. It is the same system everywhere—a system which the enemy has introduced into the Church to destroy the necessity and the power of a real work in the heart, and to reduce Christianity to the level of Judaism—that is to say, to a religion of forms; adding to these forms a pretension, which is not found even in Judaism, to confer on man that which Christianity alone gives him. Baptism [they say] procures for us that of which John iii. speaks, whereas it is said, “we are cleansed by the Word.” (Eph. v. 26.) “The washing of water by the Word,” which reveals the Word living, dead, and raised again for us.

Now, do we by this diminish the importance or the sweetness of this institution? Quite the contrary; we hinder the material-

izing it, and we insist that the spiritual realization or that which it represents be in the heart, instead of that which is called an *opus operatum*, that which is purely material. We are united to a Christ glorified; this is the point of departure; there is no longer a dead Christ; death has no more dominion over Him. I enjoy communion with a glorified Christ; I am one with Him; I shall be like Him. I rejoice; my heart is full of love at the thought of seeing Him, at the hope of the glory of waking up in His likeness. Shall I, therefore, forget His death and His sufferings? God forbid! It is precisely this which unites us to Christ by the most tender affections. There where He had to suffer and to do everything, He was alone; my heart, at least, will be with Him. He does not ask me to be one with Him there; I could not have been. There He was willing to be alone—blessed be His name!—and He has accomplished all. But the heart which would give itself for me there, is the same which thinks of me now, and which loves me. In remembering His



death, His love, His suffering, what shall I say?—divine though human! I am united in heart with Him there, where He is—on high; it is not another person, another love. Whether in the Supper, where we remember Him in such a peculiar and touching way, or whether at other moments, when I think of His death, when I eat Him as dying for me, I am in communion with Him living, and I realize the love of Him who lives—that same love, that same heart of the Saviour: I dwell in Him, and He in me. It is not said exactly, “Do this in remembrance” of my death, but “of me.” Still we remember Him on the earth, in His incarnation, in His life of humiliation, and finally and specially as dead on the cross. I remember *Him!*—not Him in the heavens, but Him who lives in heaven as once humbled and dead for me; there is also a certain action of the heart,—we eat. In John v. the Son of God quickens whom He will: here we eat the bread come down from heaven; we eat His body, and we drink His blood.

It is most important to understand that

it is a dead Christ, who in this state exists no longer, because we cannot have any relation with a Christ living on the earth. If even as Jews we had had this relation, we should have been obliged to say with Paul, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." Death has put an end to all the relations of Christ with the world, according to the flesh, and He lives now as Head of a new race—the second man. Thus then, in John vi. 53, the Lord lays down, as a necessary condition of life, the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood—receiving Him in His death. Hence we remember Him before His resurrection; we are united to Him, as living, after His resurrection; as He has said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it *abideth alone*; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Thus our union is with a Christ glorified; we do not know Him otherwise: but the most powerful spring of affection for the heart is a Christ—man in the world, and a Christ dead. I am nourished by this; I eat it, and I live by this; but if we

wish to bring back, so to speak, a Christ such as He has been in this world, as present, we overthrow entirely the intention of this institution, and even Christianity itself. Every time that we eat this bread and drink this cup, we show the Lord's death till He come; but if we will introduce a living Christ to animate this dead one, so to speak, we destroy Him. Why then is it said, "They discern not the Lord's body"? What body? His dead body. A perfect love, His accomplished work, an obedience which was arrested by no difficulty, presents itself to our eyes! Is there anything else there but a dead body?.....If so, I know not where I am, nor what the Supper means. Do not animate it with the life that Christ had before death! His obedience was not yet finished, nor His work accomplished, nor His love perfectly demonstrated! Do not animate it with the life of a Christ now risen! You take Him from me as dead; death is no more there—death which is the basis of salvation, the proof of obedience, the glorification of God. Take not from me this death, this body *broken*, this blood

for ever shed, which tells me that all is accomplished, and—through the love of my Saviour—that sin is put away for ever. If you can lead me to grasp yet more firmly what is precious in this dead Saviour, in the death of Him who is the eternal Son of God; if you can make me eat Him with more faith, more spirituality, more divine intelligence, more heart; ah! I shall be very grateful to you; but let it be my dead Saviour that is left to me! When one is in communion with Him living, there is nothing so precious as His death; yes, precious even to God. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” For my spiritual intelligence it is the end, or rather the proof and the consciousness, that I have done with the first Adam; that the first creation no longer exists—blessed be God!—for faith; for the heart it is the tender and perfect love of the Saviour. I am no more either Jew or Gentile, or a man living on the earth; I am a Christian. The death of Christ, Head of all, has put an end to the first creation. He has introduced us into

the new creation as first-fruits united to Him.

I discern then the body of the Lord, but the body of the Lord *broken*—His blood shed—His death! It is not an ordinary repast, a simple remembrance, if you will, but an institution that Christ has given to His own; not that they may find in the elements anything else than the bread and the fruit of the vine, but that their faith may, in the sweetest way, by the power of the Holy Spirit, nourish itself by Jesus, by that which He has been for them when He died upon the cross—a work of which the efficacy remains eternally, even to the Father's eye, but of which the love is all for us. If I treat this memorial with lightness, I am guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, for it is that body and blood which are presented to me in it.

I doubt if there is any one in the world who enjoys the Lord's Supper more than I do (though I doubt not that there is with many more piety); but that which makes me enjoy it is that it presents to me the body and blood of my Saviour dead, and

consequently a perfect love and a perfect work. But He cannot be in His dead body which I discern there by faith. He is in me, that I may enjoy Him; if He is introduced living, that which I ought to discern no longer exists. All this is in connection with the fact of the entirely new position of the living Christ—a doctrine which Paul presents to us with such divine energy, and which the enemy has always sought to hide, even under the forms of piety, and for the preservation of which Paul has so struggled. What anguish he suffered from the efforts of the enemy to draw souls back to Judaism, as if they were still living in the world! “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

May God give us to discern yet more the body of Jesus,—to eat His flesh and to realize His death more! Yes! this death is precious. It meets us in our need just as we are, and it delivers us from it by introducing us there, where He is, in the power of a new life, which by His death knows not the old.

I have written you at much length. I

could willingly enlarge on this subject, for instead of thinking lightly of the Supper of the Lord, it is of all institutions the most precious to me; only to be so it must be a dead Saviour that is presented to me in it. I am living with Him now in heaven.

There is another aspect—the unity of the body—which I have not touched on, though it be a precious side of the truth of this institution of the Lord; but it is outside your question. I hope you may, at least, apprehend the ground of my thought, though I write in great haste.

*Translated from the French.*