

*In which is shown its true institution, benefit, and utility. MDXL*



*John Calvin*

## 1. REASON WHY MANY WEAK CONSCIENCES REMAIN IN SUSPENSE Short Treatise on the Supper of our Lord

**John Calvin**

### AS TO THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF THE SUPPER.

As the holy sacrament of the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ has long been the subject of several important errors, and in these past years been anew enveloped in diverse opinions and contentious disputes, it is no wonder if many weak consciences cannot fairly resolve what view they ought to take of it, but remain in doubt and perplexity, waiting till all contention being laid aside, the servants of God come to some agreement upon it. However, as it is a very perilous thing to have no certainty on an ordinance, the understanding of which is so requisite for our salvation, I have thought it might be a very useful labour to treat briefly and, nevertheless, clearly deduce a summary of what is necessary to be known of it. I may add that I have been requested to do so by some worthy persons, whom I could not refuse without neglecting my duty. In order to rid ourselves of all difficulty, it is expedient to attend to the order which I have determined to follow.

### 2. THE ORDER TO BE OBSERVED IN THIS TREATISE.

**First**, then, we will explain to what end and for what reason our Lord instituted this holy sacrament.

**Secondly**, What fruit and utility we receive from it, when it will likewise be shown how the body of Jesus Christ is given to us.

**Thirdly**, What is the legitimate use of it.

**Fourthly**, We will detail the errors and superstitions with which it has been contaminated, when it will be shown how the servants of God ought to differ from the Papists.

**Lastly**, We will mention what has been the source of the discussion which has been so keenly carried on, even among those who have, in our time, brought back the light of the gospel, and employed themselves in rightly edifying the Church in sound doctrine.

### **3. AT BAPTISM GOD RECEIVES US INTO HIS CHURCH AS MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY.**

In regard to the first article—Since it has pleased our good God to receive us by baptism into his Church, which is his house, which he desires to maintain and govern, and since he has received us to keep us not merely as domestics, but as his own children, it remains that, in order to do the office of a good father, he nourish and provide us with every thing necessary for our life. In regard to corporal nourishment, as it is common to all, and the bad share in it as well as the good, it is not peculiar to his family. It is very true that we have an evidence of his paternal goodness in maintaining our bodies, seeing that we partake in all the good things which he gives us with his blessing. But as the life into which he has begotten us again is spiritual, so must the food, in order to preserve and strengthen us, be spiritual also. For we should understand, that not only has he called us one day to possess his heavenly inheritance, but that by hope he has already in some measure installed us in possession; that not only has he promised us life, but already transported us into it, delivering us from death, when by adopting us as his children, he begot us again by immortal seed, namely, his word imprinted on our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

### **4. THE VIRTUE AND OFFICE OF THE WORD OF GOD IN REGARD TO OUR SOULS.**

To maintain us in this spiritual life, the thing requisite is not to feed our bodies with fading and corruptible food, but to nourish our souls on the best and most precious diet. Now all Scripture tells us, that the spiritual food by which our souls are maintained is that same word by which the Lord has regenerated us; but it frequently adds the reason, viz., that in it Jesus Christ, our only life, is given and administered to us. For we must not imagine that there is life any where than in God. But just as God has placed all fulness of life in Jesus, in order to communicate it to us by his means, so he ordained his word as the instrument by which Jesus Christ, with all his graces, is dispensed to us. Still it always remains true, that our souls have no other pasture than Jesus Christ. Our heavenly Father, therefore, in his care to nourish us, gives us no other, but rather recommends us to take our fill there, as a refreshment amply sufficient, with which we cannot dispense, and beyond which no other can be found.

### **5. JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT OF OUR SOULS.**

We have already seen that Jesus Christ is the only food by which our souls are nourished; but as it is distributed to us by the word of the Lord, which he has appointed an instrument for that purpose, that word is also called bread and water. Now what is said of the word applies as well to the sacrament of the Supper, by means of which the Lord leads us to **communion** with Jesus Christ. For seeing we are so weak that we cannot

receive him with true heartfelt trust, when he is presented to us by simple doctrine and preaching, the Father of mercy, disdainful not to condescend in this matter to our infirmity, has been pleased to add to his word a visible sign, by which he might represent the substance of his promises, to confirm and fortify us by delivering us from all doubt and uncertainty. Since, then, there is something so mysterious and incomprehensible in saying that we have **communion** with the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, and we on our part are so rude and gross that we cannot understand the least things of God, it was of importance that we should be given to understand it as far as our capacity could admit.

## 6. THE CAUSE WHY OUR LORD INSTITUTED THE SUPPER.

Our Lord, therefore, instituted the Supper, first, in order to sign and seal in our consciences the promises contained in his gospel concerning our being made partakers of his body and blood, and to give us certainty and assurance that therein lies our true spiritual nourishment, and that having such an earnest, we may entertain a right reliance on salvation. Secondly, in order to exercise us in recognising his great goodness toward us, and thus lead us to laud and magnify him more fully. Thirdly, in order to exhort us to all holiness and innocence, inasmuch as we are members of Jesus Christ; and specially to exhort us to union and brotherly charity, as we are expressly commanded. When we shall have well considered these three reasons, to which the Lord had respect in ordaining his Supper, we shall be able to understand, both what benefit accrues to us from it, and what is our duty in order to use it. properly.

## 7. THE MEANS OF KNOWING THE GREAT BENEFIT OF THE SUPPER.

It is now time to come to the second point, viz., to show how the **Lord's** Supper is profitable to us, provided we use it profitably. Now we shall know its utility by reflecting on the indigence which it is meant to succour. We must necessarily be under great trouble and torment of conscience, when we consider who we are, and examine what is in us. For not one of us can find one particle of righteousness in himself, but on the contrary we are all full of sins and iniquities, so much so that no other party is required to accuse us than our own conscience, no other judge to condemn us. It follows that the wrath of God is kindled against us, and that none can escape eternal death. If we are not asleep and stupified, this horrible thought must be a kind of perpetual hell to vex and torment us. For the judgment of God cannot come into our remembrance without letting us see that our condemnation follows as a consequence.

## 8. THE MISERY OF MAN.

We are then already in the gulf, if God does not in mercy draw us out of it. Moreover, what hope of resurrection can we have while considering our flesh, which is only rottenness and corruption? Thus in regard to the soul, as well as the body, we are more than miserable if we remain within ourselves, and this misery cannot but produce great sadness and anguish of soul. Now our heavenly Father, to succour us in this, gives us the Supper as a mirror, in which we may contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified to take

away our faults and offences, and raised again to deliver us from corruption and death, restoring us to a celestial immortality.

### **9. THE SUPPER INVITES US TO THE PROMISES OF SALVATION.**

Here, then, is the singular consolation which we derive from the Supper. It directs and leads us to the cross of Jesus Christ and to his resurrection, to certify us that whatever iniquity there may be in us, the Lord nevertheless recognises and accepts us as righteous—whatever materials of death may be in us, he nevertheless gives us life—whatever misery may be in us, he nevertheless fills us with all felicity. Or to explain the matter more simply—as in ourselves we are devoid of all good, and have not one particle of what might help to procure salvation, the Supper is an attestation that, having been made partakers of the death and passion of Jesus Christ, we have every thing that is useful and salutary to us.

### **10. ALL THE TREASURES OF SPIRITUAL GRACE PRESENTED IN THE SUPPER.**

We can therefore say, that in it the Lord displays to us all the treasures of his spiritual grace, inasmuch as he associates us in all the blessings and riches of our Lord Jesus. Let us recollect, then, that the Supper is given us as a mirror in which we may contemplate Jesus Christ crucified in order to deliver us from condemnation, and raised again in order to procure for us righteousness and eternal life. It is indeed true that this same grace is offered us by the gospel, yet as in the Supper we have more ample certainty, and fuller enjoyment of it, with good cause do we recognise this fruit as coming from it.

### **11. JESUS CHRIST IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS.**

But as the blessings of Jesus Christ do not belong to us at all, unless he be previously ours, it is necessary, first of all, that he be given us in the Supper, in order that the things which we have mentioned may be truly accomplished in us. For this reason I am wont to say, that the substance of the sacraments is the Lord Jesus, and the efficacy of them the graces and blessings which we have by his means. Now the efficacy of the Supper is to confirm to us the reconciliation which we have with God through our Saviour's death and passion; the washing of our souls which we have in the shedding of his blood; the righteousness which we have in his obedience; in short, the hope of salvation which we have in all that he has done for us. It is necessary, then, that the substance should be conjoined with these, otherwise nothing would be firm or certain. Hence we conclude that two things are presented to us in the Supper, viz., Jesus Christ as the source and substance of all good; and, secondly, the fruit and efficacy of his death and passion. This is implied in the words which were used. For after commanding us to eat his body and drink his blood, he adds that his body was delivered for us, and his blood shed for the remission of our sins. Hereby he intimates, first, that we ought not simply to communicate in his body and blood, without any other consideration, but in order to receive the fruit derived to us from his death and passion; secondly, that we can attain the

enjoyment of such fruit only by participating in his body and blood, from which it is derived.

## **12. HOW THE BREAD IS CALLED THE BODY, AND THE WINE THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.**

We begin now to enter on the question so much debated, both anciently and at the present time—how we are to understand the words in which the bread is called the body of Christ, and the wine his blood. This may be disposed of without much difficulty, if we carefully observe the principle which I lately laid down, viz., that all the benefit which we should seek in the Supper is annihilated if Jesus Christ be not there given to us as the substance and foundation of all. That being fixed, we will confess, without doubt, that to deny that a true communication of Jesus Christ is presented to us in the Supper, is to render this holy sacrament frivolous and useless—an execrable blasphemy unfit to be listened to.

## **13. WHAT IS REQUISITE IN ORDER TO LIVE IN JESUS CHRIST.**

Moreover, if the reason for communicating with Jesus Christ is to have part and portion in all the graces which he purchased for us by his death, the thing requisite must be not only to be partakers of his Spirit, but also to participate in his humanity, in which he rendered all obedience to God his Father, in order to satisfy our debts, although, properly speaking, the one cannot be without the other; for when he gives himself to us, it is in order that we may possess him entirely. Hence, as it is said that his Spirit is our life, so he himself, with his own lips, declares that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. (John vi. 55.) If these words are not to go for nothing, it follows that in order to have our life in Christ our souls must feed on his body and blood as their proper food. This, then, is expressly attested in the Supper, when of the bread it is said to us that we are to take it and eat it, and that it is his body, and of the cup that we are to drink it, and that it is his blood. This is expressly spoken of the body and blood, in order that we may learn to seek there the substance of our spiritual life.

## **14. HOW THE BREAD AND WINE ARE THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST.**

Now, if it be asked whether the bread is the body of Christ and the wine his blood, we answer, that the bread and the wine are visible signs, which represent to us the body and blood, but that this name and title of body and blood is given to them because they are as it were instruments by which the Lord distributes them to us. This form and manner of speaking is very appropriate. For as the **communion** which we have with the body of Christ is a thing incomprehensible, not only to the eye but to our natural sense, it is there visibly demonstrated to us. Of this we have a striking example in an analogous case. Our Lord, wishing to give a visible appearance to his Spirit at the baptism of Christ, presented him under the form of a dove. St. John the Baptist, narrating the fact, says, that he saw the Spirit of God descending. If we look more closely, we shall find that he saw nothing but the dove, in respect that the Holy Spirit is in his essence invisible. Still, knowing that this vision was not an empty phantom, but a sure sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit,

he doubts not to say that he saw it, (John i. 32,) because it was represented to him according to his capacity.

## 16. THE SACRAMENT IS REPRESENTED BY VISIBLE SIGNS.

Thus it is with the **communion** which we have in. the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. It is a spiritual mystery which can neither be seen by the eye nor comprehended by the human understanding. It is therefore figured to us by visible signs, according as our weakness requires, in such manner, nevertheless, that it is not a bare figure but is combined with the reality and substance. It is with good reason then that the bread is called the body, since it not only represents but also presents it to us. Hence we indeed infer that the name of the body of Jesus Christ is transferred to the bread, inasmuch as it is the sacrament and figure of it. But we likewise add, that the sacraments of the Lord should not and cannot be at all separated from their reality and substance. To distinguish, in order to guard against confounding them, is not only good and reasonable, but altogether necessary; but to divide them, so as to make the one exist without the other, is absurd.

## 16. THE PROPER BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST RECEIVED ONLY BY FAITH.

Hence when we see the visible sign we must consider what it represents, and by whom it has been given us. The bread is given us to figure the body of Jesus Christ, with command to eat it, and it is given us of God, who is certain and immu**table** truth. If God cannot deceive or lie, it follows that it accomplishes all which it signifies. We must then truly receive in the Supper the body and blood of Jesus Christ, since the Lord there represents to us the **communion** of both. Were it otherwise, what could be meant by saying, that we eat the bread and drink the wine as a sign that his body is our meat and his blood our drink? If he gave us only bread and wine, leaving the spiritual reality behind, would it not be under false colours that this ordinance' had been instituted?

## 17. THE INTERNAL SUBSTANCE IS CONJOINED WITH THE VISIBLE SIGNS.

We must confess, then, that if the representation which God gives us in the Supper is true, the internal substance of the sacrament is conjoined with the visible signs; and as the bread is distributed to us by the hand, so the body of Christ is communicated to us in order that we may be made partakers of it. Though there should be nothing more, we have good cause to be satisfied, when we understand that Jesus Christ gives us in the Supper the proper substance of his body and blood, in order that we may possess it fully, and possessing it have part in all his blessings. For seeing we have him, all the riches of God which are comprehended in him are exhibited to us, in order that they may be ours. Thus, as a brief definition of this utility of the Supper, we may say, that Jesus Christ is there offered to us in order that we may possess him, and in him all the fulness of grace which we can desire, and that herein we have a good aid to confirm our consciences in the faith which we ought to have in him.

## 18. IN THE SUPPER WE ARE REMINDED OF OUR DUTY TOWARDS GOD.

The second benefit of the Supper is, that it admonishes and incites us more strongly to recognise the blessings which we have received, and receive daily from the Lord Jesus, in order that we may ascribe to him the praise which is due. For in ourselves we are so negligent that we rarely think of the goodness of God, if he do not arouse us from our indolence, and urge us to our duty. Now there cannot be a spur which can pierce us more to the quick than when he makes us, so to speak, see with the eye, touch with the hand, and distinctly perceive this inestimable blessing of feeding on his own substance. This he means to intimate when he commands us to show forth his death till he come. (1 Cor. xi. 26.) If it is then so essential to salvation not to overlook the gifts which God has given us, but diligently to keep them in mind, and extol them to others for mutual edification; we see another singular advantage of the Supper in this, that it draws us off from ingratitude, and allows us not to forget the benefit which our Lord Jesus bestowed upon us in dying for us, but induces us to render him thanks, and, as it were, publicly protest how much we are indebted to him.

## 19. THE SACRAMENT A STRONG INDUCEMENT TO HOLY LIVING AND BROTHERLY LOVE.

The third advantage of the Sacrament consists in furnishing a most powerful incitement to live holily, and especially observe charity and brotherly love toward all. For seeing we have been made members of Jesus Christ, being incorporated into him, and united with him as our head, it is most reasonable that we should become conformable to him in purity and innocence, and especially that we should cultivate charity and concord together as becomes members of the same body. But to understand this advantage properly, we must not suppose that our Lord warns, incites, and inflames our hearts by the external sign merely; for the principal point is, that he operates in us inwardly by his Holy Spirit, in order to give efficacy to his ordinance, which he has destined for that purpose, as an instrument by which he wishes to do his work in us. Wherefore, inasmuch as the virtue of the Holy Spirit is conjoined with the sacraments when we duly receive them, we have reason to hope they will prove a good mean and aid to make us grow and advance in holiness of life, and specially in charity.

## 20. WHAT IT IS TO POLLUTE THE HOLY SUPPER. —THE GREAT GUILT OF SO DOING.

Let us come to the third point which we proposed at the commencement of this treatise, viz., the legitimate use, which consists in reverently observing our **Lord's** institution. Whoever approaches the sacrament with contempt or indifference, not caring much about following when the Lord calls him, perversely abuses, and in abusing pollutes it. Now to pollute and contaminate what God has so highly sanctified, is intolerable blasphemy. Not without cause then does St. Paul denounce such heavy condemnation on all who take it unworthily. (1 Cor. xi. 29.) For if there is nothing in heaven nor on earth of greater price and dignity than the body and blood of the Lord, it is no slight fault to take it

inconsiderately and without being well prepared. Hence he exhorts us to examine ourselves carefully, in order to make the proper use of it. When we understand what this examination should be, we shall know the use after which we are inquiring.

## 21. THE MANNER OF EXAMINING OURSELVES.

Here it is necessary to be well on our guard. For as we cannot be too diligent in examining ourselves as the Lord enjoins, so, on the other hand, sophistical doctors have brought poor consciences into perilous perplexity, or rather into a horrible Gehenna, requiring I know not what examination, which it is not possible for any man to make. To rid ourselves of all these perplexities, we must reduce the whole, as I have already said, to the ordinance of the Lord, as the rule which, if we follow it, will not allow us to err. In following it, we have to examine whether we have true repentance in ourselves, and true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. These two things are so conjoined, that the one cannot subsist without the other.

## 22. TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BLESSINGS OF CHRIST, WE MUST RENOUNCE ALL THAT IS OUR OWN.

If we consider our life to be placed in Christ, we must acknowledge that we are dead in ourselves. If we seek our strength in him, we must understand that in ourselves we are weak. If we think that all our felicity is in his grace, we must understand how miserable we are without it. If we have our rest in him, we must feel within ourselves only disquietude and torment. Now such feelings cannot exist, without producing, first, dissatisfaction with our whole life; secondly, anxiety and fear; lastly, a desire and love of righteousness. For he who knows the turpitude of his sin and the wretchedness of his state and condition while alienated from God, is so ashamed that he is constrained to be dissatisfied with himself, to condemn himself, to sigh and groan in great sadness. Moreover, the justice of God immediately presents itself and oppresses the wretched conscience with keen anguish, from not seeing any means of escape, or having any thing to answer in defence. When under such a conviction of our misery we get a taste of the goodness of God, it is then we would wish to regulate our conduct by his will, and renounce all our bygone life, in order to be made new creatures in him.

## 23. THE REQUISITES OF WORTHY COMMUNION.

Hence if we would worthily communicate in the **Lord's** Supper, we must with firm heartfelt reliance regard the Lord Jesus as our only righteousness, life, and salvation, receiving and accepting the promises which are given us by him as sure and certain, and renouncing all other confidence, so that distrusting ourselves and all creatures, we may rest fully in him, and be contented with his grace alone. Now as that cannot be until we know how necessary it is that he come to our aid, it is of importance to have a deep-seated conviction of our own misery, which will make us hunger and thirst after him. And, in fact, what mockery would it be to go in search of food when we have no appetite? Now to have a good appetite it is not enough that the stomach be empty, it must also be in good order and capable of receiving its food. Hence it follows that our souls



must pressed with famine and have a desire and ardent longing to be fed, in order to find their proper nourishment in the **Lord's** Supper.

#### 24. SELF-DENIAL NECESSARY.

Moreover, it is to be observed that we cannot desire Jesus Christ without aspiring to the righteousness of God, which consists in renouncing ourselves and obeying his will. For it is preposterous to pretend that we are of the body of Christ, while abandoning ourselves to all licentiousness, and leading a dissolute life. Since in Christ is nought but chastity, benignity, sobriety, truth, humility, and such like virtues, if we would be his members, all uncleanness, intemperance, falsehood, pride, and similar vices must be put from us. For we cannot intermingle these things with him without offering him great dishonour and insult. We ought always to remember that there is no more agreement between him and iniquity than between light and darkness. If we would come then to true repentance, we must endeavour to make our whole life conformable to the example of Jesus Christ.

#### 25. CHARITY ESPECIALLY NECESSARY.

And while this must be general in every part of our life, it must be specially so in respect of charity, which is, above all other virtues, recommended to us in this sacrament: for which reason it is called the bond of charity. For as the bread which is there sanctified for the common use of all is composed of several grains so mixed together that they cannot be distinguished from each other, so ought we to be united together in indissoluble friendship. Moreover, we all receive there one body of Christ. If then we have strife and discord among ourselves, it is not owing to us that Christ Jesus is not rent in pieces, and we are therefore guilty of sacrilege, as if we had done it. We must not, then, on any account, presume to approach if we bear hatred or rancour against any man living, and especially any Christian who is in the unity of the Church. In order fully to comply with our **Lord's** injunction, there is another disposition which we must bring. It is to confess with the mouth and testify how much we are indebted to our Saviour, and return him thanks, not only that his name may be glorified in us, but also to edify others, and instruct them, by our example, what they ought to do.

#### 26. ALL MEN IMPERFECT AND BLAMEWORTHY

But as not a man will be found upon the earth who has made such progress in faith and holiness, as not to be still very defective in both, there might be a danger that several good consciences might be troubled by what has been said, did we not obviate it by tempering the injunctions which we have given in regard both to faith and repentance. It is a perilous mode of teaching which some adopt, when they require perfect reliance of heart and perfect penitence, and exclude all who have them not. For in so doing they exclude all without excepting one. Where is the man who can boast that he is not stained by some spot of distrust? that he is not subject to some vice or infirmity? Assuredly the faith which the children of God have is such that they have ever occasion to pray,—Lord, help our unbelief. For it is a malady so rooted in our nature, that we are never completely cured until we are delivered from the prison of the body. Moreover, the purity of life in

which they walk is only such that they have occasion daily to pray, as well for remission of sins as for grace to make greater progress. Although some are more and others less imperfect, still there is none who does not fail in many respects. Hence the Supper would be not only useless, but pernicious to all, if it were necessary to bring a faith or integrity, as to which there would be nothing to gainsay. This would be contrary to the intention of our Lord, as there is nothing which he has given to his Church that is more salutary.

### **27. IMPERFECTION MUST NOT MAKE US CEASE TO HOPE FOR SALVATION.**

Therefore, although we feel our faith to be imperfect, and our conscience not so pure that it does not accuse us of many vices, that ought not to hinder us from presenting ourselves at the **Lord's** holy **table**, provided that amid this infirmity we feel in our heart that without hypocrisy and dissimulation we hope for salvation in Christ, and desire to live according to the rule of the gospel. I say expressly, provided there be no hypocrisy. For there are many who deceive themselves by vain flattery, making themselves believe that it is enough if they condemn their vices, though they continue to persist in them, or rather, if they give them up for a time, to return to them immediately after. True repentance is firm and constant, and makes us war with the evil that is in us, not for a day or a week, but without end and without intermission.

### **28. THE IMPERFECTIONS OF BELIEVERS SHOULD RATHER INCLINE THEM TO USE THE SUPPER.**

When we feel within ourselves a strong dislike and hatred of all sin, proceeding from the fear of God, and a desire to live well in order to please our Lord, we are fit to partake of the Supper, notwithstanding of the remains of infirmity which we carry in our flesh. Nay, if we were not weak, subject to distrust and an imperfect life, the sacrament would be of no use to us, and it would have been superfluous to institute it. Seeing, then, it is a remedy which God has given us to help our weakness, to strengthen our faith, increase our charity, and advance us in all holiness of life, the use becomes the more necessary the more we feel pressed by the disease; so far ought that to be from making us abstain. For if we allege as an excuse for not coming to the Supper, that we are still weak in faith or integrity of life, it is as if a man were to excuse himself from taking medicine because he was sick. See then how the weakness of faith which we feel in our heart, and the imperfections which are in our life, should admonish us to come to the Supper, as a special remedy to correct them. Only let us not come devoid of faith and repentance. The former is hidden in, the heart, and therefore conscience must be its witness before God. The latter is manifested by works, and must therefore be apparent in our life.

### **29. TIMES OF USING THE SUPPER.—PROPRIETY OF FREQUENT COMMUNION.**

As to the time of using it, no certain rule can be prescribed for all. For there are sometimes special circumstances which excuse a man for abstaining; and, moreover, we have no express command to constrain all Christians to use a specified day. However, if

we duly consider the end which our Lord has in view, we shall perceive that the use should be more frequent than many make it: for the more infirmity presses, the more necessary is it frequently to have recourse to what may and will serve to confirm our faith, and advance us in purity of life; and, therefore, the practice of all well ordered churches should be to celebrate the Supper frequently, so far as the capacity of the people will admit. And each individual in his own place should prepare himself to receive whenever it is administered in the holy assembly, provided there is not some great impediment which constrains him to abstain. Although we have no express commandment specifying the time and the day, it should suffice us to know the intention of our Lord to be, that we should use it often, if we would fully experience the benefit which accrues from it.

### 30. IMPROPRIETY OF ABSTAINING ON FRIVOLOUS GROUNDS. —PRETENDED UNWORTHINESS IN OURSELVES.

The excuses alleged are very frivolous. Some say that they do not feel themselves to be worthy, and, under this pretext, abstain for a whole year. Others, not contented with looking to their own unworthiness, pretend that they cannot communicate with persons whom they see coming without being duly prepared. Some also think that it is superfluous to use it frequently, because if we have once received Jesus Christ, there is no occasion to return so often after to receive him. I ask the first who make a cloak of their unworthiness, how their conscience can allow them to remain more than a year in so poor a state, that they dare not invoke God directly? They will acknowledge that it is presumption to invoke God as our Father, if we are not members of Jesus Christ. This we cannot be, without having the reality and substance of the Supper accomplished in us. Now, if we have the reality, we are by stronger reason capable of receiving the sign. We see then that he who would exempt himself from receiving the Supper on account of unworthiness, must hold himself unfit to pray to God. I mean not to force consciences which are tormented with certain scruples which suggest themselves, they scarcely know how, but counsel them to wait till the Lord deliver them. Likewise, if there is a legitimate cause of hindrance, I deny not that it is lawful to delay. Only I wish to show that no one ought long to rest satisfied with abstaining on the ground of unworthiness, seeing that in so doing he deprives himself of the **communion** of the Church, in which all our wellbeing consists. Let him rather contend against all the impediments which the devil throws in his way, and not be excluded from so great a benefit, and from all the graces consequent thereupon.

### 31. ABSTAINING BECAUSE OF PRETENDED UNWORTHINESS IN OTHERS.

The second class have some plausibility. The argument they use is, that it is not lawful to eat common bread with those who call themselves brethren, and lead a dissolute life— *a fortiori*, we must abstain from communicating with them in the **Lord's** bread, which is sanctified in order to represent and dispense to us the body of Christ., But the answer is not very difficult. It is not the office of each individual to judge and discern, to admit or debar whom he pleases; seeing that this prerogative belongs to all the Church in general,

or rather to the pastor, with the elders, whom he ought to have to assist him in the government of the Church. St. Paul does not command us to examine others, but each to examine himself. It is very true that it is our duty to admonish those whom we see walking disorderly, and if they will not listen to us, to give notice to the pastor, in order that he may proceed by ecclesiastical authority. But the proper method of withdrawing from the company of the wicked, is not to quit the **communion** of the Church. Moreover, it will most frequently happen, that sins are not so notorious as to justify proceeding to excommunication; for though the pastor may in his heart judge some man to unworthy, he has not the power of pronouncing him such, and interdicting him from the Supper, if he cannot prove the unworthiness by an ecclesiastical judgment. In such case we have no other remedy than to pray God that he would more and more deliver his Church from all scandals, and wait for the last day, when the chaff will be completely separated from the good grain.

### **32. EXCUSE, THAT HAVING ALREADY RECEIVED CHRIST, IT IS UNNECESSARY TO RETURN OFTEN TO RECEIVE HIM.**

The third class have no semblance of plausibility. The spiritual bread is not given us to eat our fill of it all at once, but rather, that having had some taste of its sweetness, we may long for it the more, and use it when it is offered to us. This we explained above. So long as we remain in this mortal life, Jesus Christ is never communicated in such a way as to satiate our souls, but wills to be our constant nourishment.

### **33. FOURTH GENERAL DIVISION.—ERRORS ON THE SUPPER.**

We come to the fourth principal point. The devil knowing that our Lord has left nothing to his Church more useful than the holy sacrament, has after his usual manner laboured from the beginning to contaminate it by errors and superstitions, in order to corrupt and destroy the benefit of it, and has never ceased to pursue this course, until he has as it were completely reversed the ordinance of the Lord, and converted it into falsehood and vanity. My intention is not to point out at what time each abuse took its rise and at what time it was augmented; it will be sufficient to notice articulately the errors which the devil has introduced, and against which we must guard if we would have the **Lord's** Supper in its integrity.

### **34. FIRST ERROR.**

The first error is this—While the Lord gave us the Supper that it might be distributed amongst us to testify to us that in communicating in his body we have part in the sacrifice which he offered on the cross to God his Father, for the expiation and satisfaction of our sins—men have out of their own head invented, on the contrary, that it is a sacrifice *by* which we obtain the forgiveness of our sins before God. This is a blasphemy which it is impossible to bear. For if we do not recognise the death of the Lord Jesus, and regard it as our only sacrifice by which he has reconciled us to the Father, effacing all the faults for which we were accountable to his justice, we destroy its virtue. If we do not acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the only sacrifice, or, as we commonly call it, priest, by

whose intercession we are restored to the Father's favour, we rob him of his honour and do him high injustice.

### **35. THE SACRAMENT NOT A SACRIFICE.**

The opinion that the Supper is a sacrifice derogates from that of Christ, and must therefore be condemned as devilish. That it does so derogate is notorious. For how can we reconcile the two things, that Jesus Christ in dying offered a sacrifice to his Father by which he has once for all purchased forgiveness and pardon for all our faults, and that it is every day necessary to sacrifice in order to obtain that which we ought to seek in his death only? This error was not at first so extreme, but increased by little and little, until it came to what it now is. It appears that the ancient fathers called the Supper a sacrifice; but the reason they give is, because the death of Christ is represented in it. Hence their view comes to this—that this name is given it merely because it is a memorial, of the one sacrifice, at which we ought entirely to stop. And yet I cannot altogether excuse the custom of the early Church. By gestures and modes of acting they figured a species of sacrifice, with a ceremony resembling that which existed under the Old Testament, excepting that instead of a beast they used bread as the host. As that approaches too near to Judaism, and does not correspond to our **Lord's** institution, I approve it not. For under the Old Testament, during the time of figures, the Lord ordained such ceremonies, until the sacrifice should be made in the person of his well-beloved Son, which was the fulfilment of them. Since it was finished, it now only remains for us to receive the communication of it. It is superfluous, therefore, to exhibit it any longer under figure.

### **36. THE BREAD IN THE SUPPER ORDAINED TO BE EATEN, NOT SACRIFICED.—ERRORS OF THE MASS.**

And such is the import of the injunction which Jesus Christ has left. It is not that we are to offer or immolate, but to take and eat what has been offered and immolated. However, though there was some weakness in such observance, there was not such impiety as afterwards supervened. For to the Mass has been wholly transferred what was proper to the death of Christ, viz., to satisfy God for our sins, and so reconcile us to him. Moreover, the office of Christ has been transferred to those whom they name priests, viz., persons to sacrifice to God, and in sacrificing, intercede to obtain for us grace, and the pardon of our offences.

### **37. ATTEMPTED DEFENCE OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.**

I wish not to keep back the explanations which the enemies of the truth here offer. They say that the Mass is not a new sacrificer but only an application of the sacrifice of which we have spoken. Although they colour their abomination somewhat by so saying, still it is a mere quibble. For it is not merely said that the sacrifice of Christ is one, but that it is not to be repeated, because its efficacy endures for ever. It is not said that Christ once offered himself to the Father, in order that others might afterwards make the same oblation, and so apply to us the virtue of his intercession. As to applying to us the merit of his death, that we may perceive the benefit of it, that is done not in the way in which

the Popish Church has supposed, but when we receive the message of the gospel, according as it is testified to us by the ministers whom God has appointed as his ambassadors, and is sealed by the sacraments.

### **38. ERRORS CONNECTED WITH THE ABOMINATION OF THE MASS.**

The common opinion approved by all their doctors and prelates is, that by hearing Mass, and causing it to be said, they perform a service meriting grace and righteousness before God. We say, that to derive benefit from the Supper, it is not necessary to bring any thing of our own in order to merit what we ask. We have only to receive in faith the grace which is there presented to. us, and which resides not in the sacrament, but refers us to the cross of Jesus Christ as proceeding therefrom. Hence there is nothing more contrary to the true meaning of the Supper, than to make a sacrifice of it. The effect of so doing is to lead us off from recognising the death of Christ as the only sacrifice, whose virtue endures for ever. This being well understood, it will be apparent that all masses in which there is no such **communion** as the Lord enjoined, are only an abomination. The Lord did not order that a single priest, after making his sacrifice, should keep himself apart, but that the sacrament should be distributed in the assembly after the manner of the first Supper, which he made with his apostles. But after this cursed opinion was forged, out of it, as an abyss, came forth the unhappy custom by which the people, contenting themselves with being present to partake in the merit of what is done, abstain from communicating, because the priest gives out that he offers his host for all, and specially for those present. I speak not of abuses, which are so absurd, that they deserve not to be noticed, such as giving each saint his mass, and transferring what is said of the **Lord's** Supper to St. William and St. Walter, and making an ordinary fair of masses, buying and selling them with the other abominations which the word sacrifice has engendered.

### **39. TRANSUBSTANTIATION.**

The second error which the devil has sown to corrupt this holy ordinance, is in forging and inventing that after the words are pronounced with an intention to consecrate, the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Christ, and the wine into his blood. First of all, this falsehood has no foundation in Scripture, and no countenance from the Primitive Church, and what is more, cannot be reconciled or consist with the word of God. When Jesus Christ, pointing to the bread, calls it his body, is it not a very forced construction to say, that the substance of the bread is annihilated, and the body of Christ substituted in its stead? But there is no cause to discuss the thing as a doubtful matter, seeing the truth is sufficiently clear to refute the absurdity. I leave out innumerable passages of Scripture and quotations from the Fathers, in which the sacrament is called bread. I only say that the nature of the sacrament requires, that the material bread remain as a visible sign of the body.

### **40. FROM THE NATURE OF A SACRAMENT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE VISIBLE SIGN MUST REMAIN.**

It is a general rule in all sacraments that the signs which we see must have some correspondence with the spiritual thing which is figured. Thus, as in baptism, we are assured of the internal washing of our souls when water is given us as an attestation, its property being to cleanse corporal pollution; so in the Supper, there must be material bread to testify to us that the body of Christ is our food. For otherwise how could the mere colour of white give us such, a figure? We thus clearly see how the whole representation, which the Lord was pleased to give us in condescension to our weakness, would be lost if the bread did not truly remain. The words which our Lord uses imply as much as if he had said: Just as man is supported and maintained in his body by eating bread, so my flesh is the spiritual nourishment by which souls are vivified. Moreover, what would become of the other similitude which St. Paul employs? As several grains of corn are mixed together to form one bread, so must we together be one, because we partake of one bread. If there were whiteness only without the substance, would it not be mockery to speak thus? Therefore we conclude, without doubt, that this transubstantiation is an invention forged by the devil to corrupt the true nature of the Supper.

#### **41. FALSE OPINION OF THE BODILY PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE SUPPER.**

Out of this fantasy several other follies have sprung. Would to God they were only follies, and not gross abominations. They have imagined I know not what local presence and thought, that Jesus Christ in his divinity and humanity was attached to this whiteness, without paying regard to all the absurdities which follow from it. Although the old doctors of Sorbonne dispute more subtly how the body and blood are conjoined with the signs, still it cannot be denied that this opinion has been received by great and small in the Popish Church, and that it is cruelly maintained in the present day by fire and sword, that Jesus Christ is contained under these signs, and that there we must seek him. Now to maintain that, it must be confessed either that the body of Christ is without limit, or that it may be in different places. In saying this we are brought at last to the point, that it is a mere phantom. To wish then to establish such a presence as is to enclose the body within the sign, or to be joined to it locally, is not only a reverie, but a damnable error, derogatory to the glory of Christ, and destructive of what we ought to hold in regard to his human nature. For Scripture everywhere teaches us, 'that as the Lord on earth took our humanity, so he has exalted it to heaven, withdrawing it from mortal condition, but not changing its nature.

#### **42. THE BODY OF OUR SAVIOUR IN HEAVEN THE SAME AS THAT WHICH HE HAD ON EARTH.**

We have two things to consider when we speak of our **Lord's** humanity. We must neither destroy the reality of the nature, nor derogate in any respect from his state of glory. To do so we must always raise our thoughts on high, and there seek our Redeemer. For if we would place him under the corruptible elements of this world, besides subverting what Scripture tells us in regard to his human nature, we annihilate the glory of his ascension. As several others have treated this subject at large, I refrain from going farther. I only

wished to observe, in passing, that to fancy Jesus Christ enclosed under the bread and wine, or so to conjoin him with it as to amuse our understanding there without looking up to heaven, is a diabolical reverie. We will touch on this in another place.

#### 43. OTHER ABUSES ARISING OUT OF AN IMAGINARY BODILY PRESENCE.

This perverse opinion, after it was once received, engendered numerous other superstitions. First of all comes that carnal adoration which is mere idolatry. For to prostrate ourselves before the bread of the Supper, and worship Jesus Christ as if he were contained in it, is to make an idol of it rather than a sacrament. The command given us is not to adore, but to take and eat. That, therefore, ought not to have been presumptuously attempted. Moreover, the practice always observed by the early Church, when about to celebrate the Supper, was solemnly to exhort the people to raise their hearts on high, to intimate, that if we would adore Christ aright, we must not stop at the visible sign. But there is no need to contend long on this point when the presence and conjunction of the reality with the sign (of which we have spoken, and will again speak) is well understood. From the same source have proceeded other superstitious practices, as carrying the sacrament in procession through the streets once a year; at another time making a tabernacle for it, and keeping it to the year's end in a cupboard to amuse the people with it, as if it were a god. As all that has not only been invented without authority from the word of God, but is also directly opposed to the institution of the Supper, it ought to be rejected by Christians.

#### 44. REASON WHY THE PAPISTS COMMUNICATE ONLY ONCE A YEAR.

We have shown the origin of the calamity which befell the Popish Church—I mean that of abstaining from communicating in the Supper for the whole period of a year. It is because they regard the Supper as a sacrifice which is offered by one in the name of all. But even while thus used only once a year, it is sadly wasted and as it were torn to pieces. For instead of distributing the sacrament of blood to the people, as our **Lord's** command bears, they are made to believe that they ought to be contented with the other half. Thus poor believers are defrauded of the gift which the Lord Jesus had given them. For if it is no small benefit to have **communion** in the blood of the Lord as our nourishment, it is great cruelty to rob those of it to whom it belongs. In this we may see with what boldness and audacity the Pope has tyrannized over the Church after he had once usurped domination.

#### 45. THE POPE HAS MADE EXCEPTIONS TO THE GENERAL RULES LAID DOWN BY OUR LORD.

Our Lord having commanded his disciples to eat the bread sanctified in his body, when he comes to the cup, does not say simply, “drink,” but he adds expressly, that all are to drink. Would we have any thing clearer than this? He says that we are to eat the bread without using an universal term. He says that we are *all* to drink of the cup. Whence this difference, but just that he was pleased by anticipation to meet this wickedness of the



devil? And yet such is the pride of the Pope that he dares to say, Let not all drink. And to show that he is wiser than God, he alleges it to be very reasonable that the priest should have some privilege beyond the people, in honour of the sacerdotal dignity; as if our Lord had not duly considered what distinction should be made between them. Moreover, he objects dangers which might happen if the cup were given in common to all. Some drop of it might occasionally be spilt; as if our Lord had not foreseen that. Is not this to accuse God quite openly of having confounded the order which he ought to have observed, and exposed his people to danger without cause?

#### **46. FRIVOLOUS REASONS FOR WITHHOLDING THE CUP.**

To show that there is no great inconvenience in this change, they argue, that under one species the whole is comprised, inasmuch as the body cannot be separated from the blood: as if our Lord had without reason distinguished the one from the other. For if we can leave one of the parts behind as superfluous, what folly must it have been to recommend them separately. Some of his supporters, seeing that it was impudence to maintain this abomination, have wished to give it a different colour, viz., that Jesus Christ, in instituting, spoke only to his apostles whom he had raised to the sacerdotal order. But how will they answer what St. Paul said, when he delivered to all the people what he had received of the Lord—that each should eat of this bread and drink of this cup? Besides, who told them that our Lord gave the Supper to his apostles as priests? The words import the opposite, when he commands them to do after his example. (Luke xxii. 19.) Therefore he delivers the rule which he wishes to be always observed in his Church; and so it was anciently observed until Antichrist, having gained the upper hand, openly raised his horns against God and his truth to destroy it totally. We see then that it is an intolerable perversion thus to divide and rend the sacrament, separating the parts which God has joined.

#### **47. THE BUFFONERY OF THE POPE IN REGARD TO THE SUPPER.**

To get to an end, we shall embrace under one head what might otherwise have been considered separately. This head is, that the devil has introduced the fashion of celebrating the Supper without any doctrine, and for doctrine has substituted ceremonies partly inept and of no utility, and partly dangerous, having proved the cause of much mischief. To such an extent has this been done, that the Mass, which in the Popish Church is held to be the Supper, is, when well explained, nothing but pure apishness and buffoonery. I call it apishness, because they there counterfeit the **Lord's** Supper without reason, just as an ape at random and without discernment imitates what he sees done.

#### **48. THE WORD OUGHT ALWAYS TO ACCOMPANY THE SACRAMENTS.**

The principal thing recommended by our Lord is to celebrate the ordinance with true understanding. From this it follows that the essential part lies in the doctrine. This being taken away, it is only a frigid unavailing ceremony. This is not only shown by Scripture, but attested by the canons of the Pope, (Can. Detrahe. i. 4,1,) in a passage quoted from St. Augustine, (Tract 80, in Joan.) in which he asks— “What is the water of baptism without

the word but just a corruptible element? The word (he immediately adds) not as pronounced, but as understood." By this he means, that the sacraments derive their virtue from the word when it is preached intelligibly. Without this they deserve not the name of sacraments. Now so far is there from being any intelligible doctrine in the Mass, that, on the contrary, the whole mystery is considered spoiled if every thing be not said and done in whispers, so that nothing is understood. Hence their consecration is only a species of sorcery, seeing that by muttering and gesticulating like sorcerers, they think to constrain Jesus to come down into their hands. We thus see how the Mass, being thus arranged, is an evident profanation of the Supper of Christ, rather than an observance of it, as the proper and principal substance of the Supper is wanting, viz., full explanation of the ordinance and clear statement of the promises, instead of the priest standing apart and muttering to himself without sense or reason. I call it buffoonery, also, because of mimicry and' gestures, better adapted to a farce than to such an ordinance as the sacred Supper of our Lord.

#### **49. THE CEREMONIES OF THE ANCIENT LAW, WHY APPOINTED. —THOSE OF THE PAPISTS CENSURABLE.**

It is true, indeed, that the sacrifices under the Old Testament were performed with many ornaments and ceremonies, but because there was a good meaning under them, and the whole was proper to instruct and exercise the people in piety, they are very far from being like those which are now used, and serve no purpose but to amuse the people without doing them any good. As these gentry allege the example of the Old Testament in defence of their ceremonies, we have to observe what difference there is between what they do, and what God commanded the people of Israel. Were there only this single point, that what was then observed was founded on the commandment of the Lord, whereas all those frivolities have no foundation, even then the difference would be large. But we have much more to censure in them.

#### **50. THE JEWISH CEREMONIES HAVING SERVED THEIR PURPOSE, THE IMITATION OF THEM ABSURD.**

With good cause our Lord ordained the Jewish form for a time, intending that it should one day come to an end and be abrogated. Not having then given such clearness of doctrine, he was pleased that the people should be more exercised in figures to compensate for the defect. But since Jesus Christ has been manifested in the flesh, doctrine having been much more clearly delivered, ceremonies have diminished. As we have now the body, we should leave off shadows. To return to the ceremonies which are abolished, is to repair the vail of the temple which Jesus Christ rent by his death, and so far obscure the brightness of his gospel. Hence we see, that such a multitude of ceremonies in the Mass is a form of Judaism quite contrary to Christianity. I mean not to condemn the ceremonies which are subservient to decency and public order, and increase the reverence for the sacrament, provided they are sober and suitable. But such an abyss without end or limit is not at all tolerable, seeing that it has engendered a thousand superstitions, and has in a manner stupified the people without yielding any edification.

## 51. THE DEATH AND PASSION OF OUR LORD THE PERFECT AND ONLY SACRIFICE.

Hence also we see how those to whom God has given the knowledge of his truth should differ from the Papists. First, they cannot doubt that it is abominable blasphemy to regard the Mass as a sacrifice by which the forgiveness of sins is purchased for us; or rather, that the priest is a kind of mediator to apply the merit of Christ's passion and death to those who purchase his mass, or are present at it, or feel devotion for it. On the contrary, they must hold decidedly that the death and suffering of the Lord is the only sacrifice by which the anger of God has been satisfied, and eternal righteousness procured for us; and, likewise, that the Lord Jesus has entered into the heavenly sanctuary in order to appear there for us, and intercede in virtue of his sacrifice. Moreover, they will readily grant, that the benefit of his death is communicated to us in the Supper, not by the merit of the act, but because of the promises which are given us, provided we receive them in faith. Secondly, they should on no account grant that the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Jesus Christ, nor the wine into his blood, but should persist in holding that the visible signs retain their true substance, in order to represent the spiritual reality of which we have spoken. Thirdly, they ought also to hold for certain, that the Lord gives us in the Supper that which he signifies by it, and, consequently, that we truly receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless they will not seek him as if he were enclosed under the bread, or attached locally to the visible sign. So far from adoring the sacrament, they will rather raise their understandings and their hearts on high, as well to receive Jesus Christ, as to adore him.

## 52. VIEW OF ENLIGHTENED CHRISTIANS IN REGARD TO THE SUPPER.

Hence they will despise and condemn as idolatrous all those superstitious practices of carrying about the sacrament in pomp and procession, and building tabernacles in which to adore it. For the promises of our Lord extend only to the uses which he has authorized. Next, they will hold that to deprive the people of one of the parts of the sacrament, viz., the cup, is to violate and corrupt the ordinance of the Lord, and that to observe it properly it must be administered in all its integrity. Lastly, they will regard it as a superfluity, not only useless but dangerous, and not at all suitable to Christianity, to use so many ceremonies taken from the Jews contrary to the simplicity which the Apostles left us, and that it is still more perverse to celebrate the Supper with mimicry and buffoonery, while no doctrine is stated, or rather all doctrine is buried, as if the Supper were a kind of magical trick.

## 53. LAST DIVISION.—RECENT DISPUTES ON THE SUPPER.

To have done, it is necessary to come to the last principal point, viz., the contention which has arisen in our time in regard to this matter. Now, as it is an unhappy business—the devil, no doubt, having stirred it up to impede, nay altogether to interrupt the course of the gospel—so far am I from taking pleasure in referring to it, that I could wish the remembrance of it were altogether abolished. Nevertheless, as I see many good

consciences troubled, because they do not know to what side to turn, I shall only say as much as may seem necessary to show them how they ought to decide.

#### **54. GOD SOMETIMES ALLOWS HIS OWN PEOPLE TO FALL INTO ERROR.**

First, I beseech all believers, in the name of God, not to be too much scandalized at the great difference which has arisen among those who ought to be a kind of leaders in bringing back the light of truth. For it is no new thing for the Lord to leave his servants in some degree of ignorance, and suffer them to have debate among themselves—not to leave them for ever, but only for a time to humble them. And indeed had every thing till now turned out to a wish without any disturbance, men might possibly have forgotten themselves, or the grace of God might have been less known than it ought. Thus the Lord has been pleased to take away all ground of glorying from men, in order that he might alone be glorified. Moreover, if we consider in what an abyss of darkness the world was when those who have shared this controversy began to bring back the truth, we shall not wonder that they did not know every thing at the beginning. The wonder rather is, that our Lord in so short a time enlightened them that they were themselves able to escape and draw others out of that sink of error in which they had been so long immersed. But no better course can be taken than to show how matters have proceeded, because this will make it appear that people have not so much cause to be scandalized at it as is commonly supposed.

#### **55. HISTORY OF THE CONTROVERSY ON THIS SUBJECT AMONG THE REFORMERS.—LUTHER.**

When Luther began to teach, he took a view of the subject which seemed to imply, that in regard to the corporal presence in the Supper he was willing to leave the generally received opinion untouched; for while condemning transubstantiation, he said that the bread was the body of Christ, inasmuch as it was united with him. Besides, he added similitudes which were somewhat harsh and rude; but he was in a manner compelled to do so, as he could not otherwise explain his meaning. For it is difficult to give an explanation of so high a matter without using some impropriety of speech.

#### **56. VIEWS OF ZUINGLIUS AND ECOLOMPADIUS.**

On the other hand arose Zuinglius and Ecolompadius, who, considering the abuse and deceit which the devil had employed in establishing such a carnal presence of Christ as had been taught and held for more than six hundred years, thought it unlawful to disguise their sentiments, since that view implied an execrable idolatry, in that Jesus Christ was worshipped as enclosed in the bread. Now, as it was very difficult to remove this opinion, which had been so long rooted in the hearts of men, they applied all their talents to bring it into discredit, showing how gross an error it was not to recognise what is so clearly declared in Scripture touching the ascension of Jesus Christ, that he has been received in his humanity into heaven, and will remain there until he descend to judge the world. Meantime, while engrossed with this point, they forgot to show what presence of Jesus

Christ ought to be believed in the Supper, and what **communion** of his body and blood is there received.

### 57. LUTHER IMPUGNS THEIR VIEWS.

Luther thought that they meant to leave nothing but the bare signs without their spiritual substance. Accordingly he began to resist them to the face, and call them heretics. After the contention was once begun it got more inflamed by time, and has thus continued too bitterly for the space of fifteen years or so without the parties ever listening to each other in a peaceful temper. For though they once had a conference, there was such alienation that they parted without any agreement. Instead of meeting on some good ground, they have always receded more and more, looking to nothing else than to defend their own view and refute the opposite.

### 58. ATTEMPTED RECONCILIATION.—CAUSE OF FAILURE.

We thus see wherein Luther failed on his side, and Zuinglius and Ecolompadius on theirs. It was Luther's duty first to have given notice that it was not his intention to establish such a local presence as the Papist's dream; secondly, to protest that he did not mean to have the sacrament adored instead of God; and lastly, to abstain from those similitudes so harsh and difficult to be conceived, or have used them with moderation, interpreting them so that they could not give rise to any scandal. After the debate was moved, he exceeded bounds as well in declaring his opinion, as in blaming others with too much sharpness of speech. For instead of explaining himself in such a way as to make it possible to receive his view, he, with his accustomed vehemence in assailing those who contradicted him, used hyperbolical forms of speech very difficult to be borne by those who otherwise were not, much disposed to believe at his nod. The other party also offended, in being so bent on declaiming against the superstitious and fanatical opinion of the Papists, touching the local presence of Jesus Christ within the sacrament, and the perverse adoration consequent upon it, that they laboured more to pull down what was evil than to build up what was good; for though they did not deny the truth, they did not teach it so clearly as they ought to have done. I mean that in their too great anxiety to maintain that the bread and wine are called the body of Christ, because they are signs of them, they did not attend to add, that though they are signs, the reality is conjoined with them, and thus protest, that they had no intention whatever to obscure the true **communion** which the Lord gives us in his body and blood by this sacrament.

### 59. DUTY OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD IN REGARD TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF TRUTH.

Both parties failed in not having the patience to listen to each other in order to follow the truth without passion, when it would have been found. Nevertheless, let us not lose sight of our duty, which is not to forget the gifts which the Lord bestowed upon them, and the blessings which he has distributed to us by their hands and means. For if we are not ungrateful and forgetful of what we owe them, we shall be well able to pardon that and much more, without blaming or defaming them. In short, since we see that they were, and

still are, distinguished for holiness of life, excellent knowledge, and ardent zeal to edify the Church, we ought always to judge and speak of them with modesty, and even with reverence; since at last God, after having thus humbled them, has in mercy been pleased to put an end to this unhappy disputation, or at least to calm it preparatory to its final settlement. I speak thus, because no formulary has yet been published in which concord is fixed, as is most expedient. But this will be when God will be pleased to assemble those who are to frame it in one place.

## 60. FRATERNAL CONCORD AMONG THE CHURCHES.

Meanwhile it should satisfy us, that there is fraternity and **communion** among the churches, and that all agree in so far as is necessary for meeting together, according to the commandment of God. We all then confess with one mouth, that on receiving the sacrament in faith, according to the ordinance of the Lord, we are truly made partakers of the proper substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. How that is done some may deduce better, and explain more clearly than others. Be this as it may, on the one hand, in order to exclude all carnal fancies, we must raise our hearts upwards to heaven, not thinking that our Lord Jesus is so debased as to be enclosed under some corruptible elements; and, on the other hand, not to impair the efficacy of this holy ordinance, we must hold that it is made effectual by the secret and miraculous power of God, and that the Spirit of God is the bond of participation, this being the reason why it is called spiritual.

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### HISTORICAL NOTE

Written in 1540, this was published in 1541. Beza calls it “*a little golden Treatise on the **Lord's** Supper for the use of his countrymen in French.*” It was afterwards translated into Latin by Galars and made such a contribution to common understanding that “*a termination of those most unhappy controversies, in which all the learned and all the good deservedly acquiesced, is chiefly to be ascribed under God to that treatise.*” Such was Beza's admiration for it.