

## **“A Living Correspondence”**

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On the eve of His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the feast of the Passover with His twelve apostles. At its conclusion our Savior and Redeemer inaugurated a new feast—the Holy Supper—to be observed in the new Church that He was about to establish. It is altogether fitting that we should periodically examine what this feast means and what its effects are with the humble and repentant communicant.

### **The Conjunction of the Lord with a Person**

In general, by the Holy Supper is meant the conjunction of the Lord with a person who is in love to the Lord and charity to the neighbor. This conjunction is signified by the Holy Supper because of the particular signification of the two elements that are involved—the bread and the wine.

In the sacrifices of the Jewish Church, flesh and blood represented the Lord Himself as to His Divine Human, so, too, the bread and wine in the Holy Supper are called His flesh and blood and signify the Lord as to His Divine Humanity. The bread, called His flesh, stands for His Divinely Human love, which is infinite love toward the whole human race. It also signifies a person's reciprocal love to the Lord and toward the neighbor—in short, all good affections with angels and people. The wine served in the Holy Communion, called the Lord's blood, stands for or signifies the Lord's Divine wisdom or the truths of faith as they are received by people who are in love to the Lord and in charity toward the neighbor. Thus it may be said that the “body” or bread signifies all celestial things—all things relating to love—and the “blood” or wine, all spiritual things—all things relating to truth or wisdom. Hence the eating and drinking of the elements signifies the appropriation or reception of these by a person for the nourishment of his spirit. This is clearly taught in John 6:27-35,47-51.

Partaking of the Holy Supper, therefore, signifies the Lord's operation of implanting in the mind of a person all the good affections and all the truths of faith that he is capable of receiving. It is because of this comprehensive meaning of the “bread” and “wine”—because they signify the Lord's Divine love and Divine wisdom and all good affections and truths of faith from the Word with angels and people—that the Holy Supper is the most holy thing of the Church.

But just to relate what the Holy Supper, the elements in it, and the partaking of it, represent and signify does not explain its vital use—what the Holy Communion actually may cause in the person participating. If the latter is not done, we might be left with the thought that the Holy Supper is purely symbolic, merely an acting out in externals of what the Lord causes in the mind or spirit—in internals.

### **A Living Correspondence**

The sacrament of the Holy Supper carries with it a living correspondence. In other words, those who worthily approach the holy table and partake of the bread and wine served in the natural world, simultaneously partake of the celestial and spiritual things represented by the bread and

wine, even though the people may be entirely unaware of this. For the word “correspondence” means an acting together. When a worthy person reverently eats of the unleavened bread and drinks the wine, the spiritual counterparts of these elements—the affection for what is good and the affection for what is true—are appropriated by his spirit. While nourishing his body, he is nourishing his spirit. The natural food is served by the priest. The spiritual nourishment is given by the Lord, through the presence and consociation of angels.

So it happens that the “bread” and the “wine” in the thought of the person are perceived by the angels. The angels, however, do not give attention to the “bread” and “wine” themselves. The sensations of material things in the minds of people are merely symbols in the speech of angels, in much the same way as the letters of the alphabet are symbols in the words of our speech. When a humble communicant thinks of bread and wine, angelic spirits immediately perceive or think about the spiritual things which these elements represent. The angels are stimulated to reflect on the thousands of aspects of the Lord’s love toward angels and people, and on all the myriads of things which enter into the life of charity for the neighbor. Finding supreme delight in reflecting on these things, they are moved to draw spiritually close to the person at the Communion table. In drawing near they bring with them the sphere of their heavenly affections. This sphere affects the spirit or mind of a person, imprinting upon it and infilling it with all the particular loves and delights which this sphere contains. This is accomplished according to the ability of the individual to receive the sphere—that is, according to his charity and faith.

### **A Casket of Precious Stones**

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church illustrates this process in the following teaching. It is said that the communicant’s thoughts may be compared to those of a person who takes a casket in which are arranged precious stones, pearls, and diadems, in his hand and throws it upward to heaven. In its ascent it opens, and its precious contents reach the angels, who are deeply delighted as they examine them. Their delight is communicated to the person, bringing about association and an interchange of perceptions. The passage continues:

*For the sake of this association, and at the same time, conjunction with the Lord, the Holy Supper was instituted in which [by correspondence] the bread becomes Divine good, and the wine Divine truth, both from the Lord. Such correspondence exists from creation to the end that the angelic heaven and the church on earth, and in general, the spiritual world and the natural world, may make one, and that the Lord may enter into conjunction with both at the same time (True Christian Religion 238).*

Thus it is that the bread and wine received in the Holy Supper may effect conjunction with heaven, and through heaven, with the Lord. This conjunction is possible, we are told, even where a person partakes of the elements in simplicity, being unaware of their spiritual meaning but being in a state of reverence because he knows that the Communion is holy and is taken by his Lord’s command, in remembrance of the Lord’s redemption. Nevertheless, the Word teaches us that if a person instead of bread perceived love to the Lord, and instead of wine, love toward the neighbor, he would be in thought and perception like that of the angels, who would then

approach nearer to him, till at last they could consociate their thoughts, but only so far as the person was at the same time in good [as to his love and life] (see *True Christian Religion* 721).

### **Universal Gates to Heaven**

Because of the presence and association of angels that is possible in the Holy Supper, the Heavenly Doctrine states that, as baptism is the first universal gate—the gate for introduction into the Church—so the Holy Supper is the second universal gate, “by which every person who allows himself to be prepared and led by the Lord is admitted into and introduced into heaven” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3316:3).

The Holy Supper is an introduction into heaven because to enter into association with angels, and to perceive their love and something of their wisdom in one’s mind, *is* heaven. Further, it is conjunction with the Lord as to His Divine Human, because heaven, in essence, is the Lord’s Divine love and wisdom (or good and truth) appearing in a Divinely Human form. Thus, when a person, through the Holy Supper, receives heaven into his mind, he also receives the Divine Humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason the Heavenly Doctrine teaches that the whole of the Lord’s redemption is in the Holy Supper, and it is given to the worthy recipient. To be redeemed, inwardly considered, is to receive the Divine Human of the Lord, the love and truth of the risen Lord.

When the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is considered in this light we may understand why the Heavenly Doctrines teach that it is the holiest thing of the Church and of worship. It is so holy because it is a natural ultimate into which all things of the Lord and of heaven are gathered. In short, it is whole, perfect, complete, as is no other external thing of the church or of worship.

In conclusion, it is to be carefully observed that the celestial and spiritual things received by a person in the Holy Supper are not necessarily consciously perceived while he is still in this world. All that a person in this world may perceive is a certain obscure feeling of delight, of peace, of contentment, and perhaps also a developing insight into the deeper truths of the Lord’s Word as they apply to his life. Most of the celestial and spiritual treasures received in the Communion will be clearly and fully recognized only after the death of the material body. Then the person will begin to experience, with growing clarity and joy, all the good affections and thoughts he had formerly received. Then he will begin to understand and delight in all the Divine truths in a heavenly light. Their beauty will be unfolded to him to all eternity, as he discovers ever new applications of them in his life among angelic companions in some heavenly society.

When we know of the holiness of the Lord’s Supper and, worthily, repentantly, we enter His church and approach His table, we can in heart and mind join with the Psalmist who wrote, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’ Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is joined together” (Psalm 122:1-3).

Amen.