

SHORT TREATISE ON THE SUPPER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

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 Galers 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.

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

Page two

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.