

**COMPLETE PHILOSOPHICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL TREATISES
of
ANSELM of CANTERBURY**

Translated
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[THREE LETTERS ON THE SACRAMENTS]

THE SACRIFICE OF UNLEAVENED
AND LEAVENED BREAD.¹

(*Epistola de Sacrificio Azimi et Fermentati*)

Anselm, servant of the Church of Canterbury, to Walram, bishop of Naumburg.

To a knowledgeable man I speak briefly. If I were sure that Your Wisdom did not favor the successor of Julius Caesar and of Nero and of Julian the Apostate over the successor and Vicar of the Apostle Peter, most willingly would I greet you as “reverend and most beloved Bishop.” But since insofar as possible we ought not to fail anyone in the defense of the truth which you are seeking against the Greeks who have come to you, I have sent you the treatise which I published against them on *The Procession of the Holy Spirit*.

1

Now, about the sacrifice concerning which the Greeks do not hold the same opinion as do we: to many judicious Catholics, it seems that what the Greeks do is not contrary to the Christian faith. For [the Christian faith] consecrates bread—consecrating both unleavened and leavened bread. And when we read of the Lord (when He produced His body from bread) that “He took bread and blessed it,”² the word “unleavened” or the word “leavened” is not added. (Nevertheless, that He blessed unleavened bread is certain—not perhaps because what He was doing required this, but because the meal at which it was done had this custom.) And when elsewhere He called Himself and His flesh bread—[doing so] because just as a man lives temporally by means of common bread, so he lives eternally by means of this other bread—He did not specify unleavened or leavened, because both kinds are equally bread. For just as both the new man prior to sin and the man grown old in the leaven of sin do not differ [from each other] in substance, so unleavened bread and leavened bread do not differ in substance (as some people suppose they do). Hence, the Lord is seen to have called Himself and His flesh

¹Letter #415, written before December, 1105. ²Matthew 26:26.

bread and to have produced His Body from bread only for the following reason: [to indicate] that just as common bread, whether unleavened or leavened, gives transitory life, so His Body gives eternal life, irrespective of whether [the bread of His Body] is leavened or unleavened. Nevertheless, in the Law, where nearly every action bore a symbolic meaning, the eating of unleavened bread at Passover was commanded in order to indicate that the Messiah whom [the Jews] were expecting was going to be pure and sinless, and in order to admonish us who were to eat of His Body to be likewise free from all “leaven of malice and wickedness.”¹ However, now that we have passed from ancient foreshadowing to a new reality, now that we eat the unleavened flesh of Christ, we have no need of this former symbolism in the bread from which we produce this flesh.

2

Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that it is better to consecrate unleavened bread than to consecrate leavened bread—not only because to do so is much more suitable, pure, and exact, but also because the Lord did this. Hence, it is not to be passed over in silence that when the Greeks anathematize the “azimites”—for this is what they call us—they are anathematizing Christ. However, if they say that we judaize, let them likewise say that Christ judaized. And if they dare to claim that Christ produced His [eucharistic] Body from unleavened bread in order, because of Judaism, to observe the precept given regarding unleavened bread, then they err most egregiously, since they think that He infected such a pure newness with the leaven of obsolescence. Accordingly, it is evident that when He used unleavened bread for that consecration, He did not do so in order to observe the precept regarding unleavened bread. Rather, [He did so] either in order to approve the “azimites” while reproving the “fermentarians,” whose existence He foresaw, or else assuredly so that if indeed the fermentarians were approved He would approve the azimites as well.

3

As for their saying that we judaize: it is not true. For we con-

¹I Corinthians 5:8.

secrate unleavened bread not in order to observe the Old Law but in order to perform the rite more exactly and to imitate the Lord who performed it without judaizing. For when we do something which the Jews did to observe Judaism, then provided we do this not for the sake of Judaism but for some other reason, we do not judaize. For suppose that during the days of Passover someone eats unleavened bread—either because he has no other kind or because he prefers it to leavened bread. Or suppose that some man as a result of an ailment is required to circumcise his foreskin or that someone in order that his ox not go hungry does not muzzle it while it is threshing. No one except a fool would judge that someone doing these things is judaizing. Therefore, when we consecrate unleavened bread—not in order to signify through the symbol of unleavened bread that the Lord Jesus would be unleavened but in order to consecrate this bread into His Body by the working of divine power, even as He Himself did—we in no way thereby observe the oldness of the Law but we render honor to the truth of the Gospel.

Furthermore, when the Lord Jesus performed this rite and said to His disciples “Do this in remembrance of me”¹ if He had not wanted us (to whom He gave this commandment in [giving it to] the Apostles) to do this with unleavened bread, He would have forewarned us in [forewarning] the Apostles, and would have said, “Do not do this with unleavened bread.” Therefore, since in saying “Do this” He did not rule out unleavened bread, who is there whose intellect dares to rule out what the Lord Himself has done and to prohibit that which the Lord not only did not prohibit by any word but even prescribed by His action? And who, I say, but one who is “wiser than it behooves to be wise”² trusts so greatly in his own wisdom that he presumes even to make the following claim?: When the Lord said “Do this,” then just as we rightly understand it to mean “[Do] what I am doing,” so we must doubtlessly take it to mean “but not with that with which I [am doing it].”

Likewise, if we ought to perform the things of God by means of things which we deem to be the more suitable: since it is evident that the consecration we are discussing ought to be cele-

¹Luke 22:19. ²See Romans 12:3.

brated with respect to the substance of the bread, whether unleavened or leavened, what bread do we deem to be more suitable for producing the reality of the Lord's Body than that bread which the Old Law chooses for signifying, and which the Gospel chooses for exhibiting, this reality? Therefore, if we reply to the Greeks that we perform this rite with unleavened bread not because of any symbolism but for the aforementioned reasons, no basis can be discerned here upon which the Greeks [can] rightly judge us worthy of anathematization, or at least of reproach.

4

But if [the Greeks] say that we cannot consecrate unleavened bread without a symbolic meaning and that hereby we are proven to judaize, then it follows that they also are not able to use leavened bread for this rite without a symbolic sense. For by the word "leaven" both the Old Testament (*vetus scriptura*) and the New signify sin: the Old when it curses the eating of leavened bread during its Passover, and the New when it instructs us to feast during our Passover "not on the old leaven, nor on the leaven of malice and wickedness."¹ Moreover, we say that we do not judaize even if we subscribe to a symbolic significance in [the use of] unleavened bread. For we do not signify that the Messiah is going to come without the leaven of sin, as do the Jews; rather, as do Christians, we indicate that He has already come without sin. Hereby we are reminded to be unleavened, as is the Passover² of which we Christians partake. However, [the Greeks] profess themselves to be neither Jews nor Christians, in that they signify in the symbolism of leavened bread neither that God is going to come without sin (as do the Jews) nor that He has already come without sin (as do the Christians). Rather, they seem to favor the pagans, who think that Jesus was leavened by sin, as are other men.

But if [the Greeks] say that Christians ought not to use symbols because the old things (wherein symbols were necessary) have passed away,³ then let them deny (to mention only one point) that baptism is a symbol of someone's death and burial—thus contra-

¹I Corinthians 5:8. ² "the Passover...": viz., Christ. See I Corinthians 5:7. ³II Corinthians 5:17.

dicting the apostle who says: “All of us who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized into His death. For we are buried together with Him by baptism into death.”¹ Or if they concede to us the use of symbols except in the case of those things which the Old Law used symbolically (and thus [claim] that unleavened bread must not at all be used symbolically because it is used symbolically in the Old Law): let them not baptize in water (1) since “in Moses all our fathers were baptized in the cloud and in the sea”² (an event which we cannot deny to have occurred foreshadowingly) and (2) lest they appear to baptize with the baptism of John, who baptized in water. Therefore, if—even though that old baptism (which was a foreshadowing of this new baptism) was done in water—we are blameless for baptizing in water, which has a symbolic use: what is this “wisdom” of the Greeks? Because of the fact that the old Passover (through which our Passover was foreshadowed) was celebrated with unleavened bread, the “wisdom” of the Greeks abominates our sacrificing the Body of Christ (who is our Passover)³ with the symbol of unleavened bread—whether [we do so] in order to commemorate the fact that He whose Body we sacrifice was unleavened (i.e., free from the stain of sin) or whether [we do so] in order to be reminded that we who partake of His Body ought to be unleavened, in accordance with the words of the apostle. For the apostle says: “Purge out the old leaven so that you may be new dough, even as you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover is sacrificed. Therefore, let us feast not with the old leaven or with the leaven of malice and of wickedness but with the unleavened bread of purity and truth.”⁴

5

Therefore, whether our consecration of unleavened bread has a symbolic significance or whether it has no symbolic significance, the Greeks cannot at all show us to be blameworthy. Instead, either we alone act rightly and they act wrongly, or else if they act rightly we act more rightly and more correctly. Assuredly, when they set forth against us that which is recognized to count in no way against us or for them, they sufficiently manifest that they

¹Romans 6:3-4. ²I Corinthians 10:1-2. ³I Corinthians 5:7. ⁴I Corinthians 5:7-8.

have no rational basis to support their position and to defeat ours. For as I have read in your letter, they raise in objection against us the fact that the apostle says, "The letter kills but the Spirit makes alive,"¹ and that the Prophet Amos says "Offer a sacrifice of praise with leaven."² Thus, not rightly interpreting the words of the apostle, they try to show that the letter which the old Passover commands to be celebrated with unleavened bread kills us when we observe the letter by consecrating unleavened bread. For the apostle means that the letter kills in the case where it reveals sin by giving the command to turn aside from sin, because unless grace renders assistance in doing what is commanded, the letter causes a man to be disobedient and sinful. In his epistle to the Romans the same apostle exhibits this clearly when he says: "I did not know sin except because of the Law. For I would not have known lust unless the Law had said 'You shall not covet.' But sin, having been occasioned by the commandment, worked in me all forms of lust. For without the Law sin would have been dead. I was once alive without the Law; but when the commandment came sin revived, and I became dead. And the commandment that was meant to give life was found to be unto my death. For having been occasioned by the commandment, sin seduced me and by the commandment killed me."³ Thus, without the assistance of grace, the letter kills. But the Spirit makes alive, just as the same apostle said to Titus: "When the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared: God saved us—not by the works of justice which we have done but according to His mercy, by the laver of regeneration and of renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by grace we would be His heirs in accordance with our hope for everlasting life."⁴

And so, after [the apostle] said "Our sufficiency is from God, who has made us fit ministers of the new testament, not in the letter but in the Spirit,"⁵ he added: "For the letter kills but the Spirit makes alive." [It is] as if he were to say: "God has made us ministers of the new testament, which is not in a letter that kills, as was the old testament, but in a life-giving Spirit." But his fur-

¹II Corinthians 3:6. ²Amos 4:5. ³Romans 7:7-11. ⁴Titus 3:4-7. ⁵II Corinthians 3:5-6.

ther statement applies to both the letter that kills and the Spirit that gives life:

If the ministration of death, engraven with letters upon stones, was glorious—so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, a glory which was done away with—how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be more glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation is glory, much more the ministration of justice abounds in glory. For because of the more excellent glory, that which was glorious was not in this respect glorified. For if that which passes away is glorious, much more that which does not pass away is glorious. Having, then, such hope we experience great confidence, and are not like Moses, who placed a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the appearance of that which passes away. But the senses of the Israelites have grown dull. For until the present day, whenever the Old Testament is read this same veil remains and is not taken away (for in Christ it is taken away). And until the present day, when Moses is read a veil is placed over their hearts. But when [Israel] shall turn to the Lord, the veil will be removed. Now, the Lord is a spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But all of us who behold with unveiled faces the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, since we have this ministration in accordance with which we have obtained mercy, we faint not.¹

To these statements I think it superfluous to add anything about the letter that kills and the Spirit that gives life. Accordingly, it is quite evident that the objection which the Greeks raise regarding the letter that kills neither profits them nor injures us.

6

Now, as to what [the Greeks] quote from the prophet—“Come to Gilgal and do wickedly” and “Offer a sacrifice of praise with leaven”²—we must construe these words as having been spoken either by way of approving such a sacrifice or by way of reproofing it. Now, if the prophet prescribes this sacrifice, then (to speak in accordance with the Greeks) the letter kills them, for in observance of the letter they sacrifice with leavened bread. On the other hand, if these words were spoken in reproof, then how impudent it is of them to sacrifice what the prophet curses as a sac-

¹II Corinthians 3:7 - 4:1. ²Amos 4:4-5.

rifice! And how unreasonably they quote this text as an authority in their favor! But since the prophet associated this sacrifice with a wicked action, there is no doubt that he spoke these words not by way of commandment but by way of reproof. For he said: "Come to Bethel and do wickedly." And shortly thereafter, continuing his rebuke, he said: "And offer a sacrifice of praise with leaven." Therefore, let the fermentarians defend their position with rational considerations as strong as those with which the azimites corroborate theirs; or else let them cast away their own leaven and become azimites. Or if they cannot do the former and are unwilling to do the latter, let them at least not reproach the azimites.

7

On the third point of contention—as I understand it—you have written that the Greeks denounce our marriages in which blood relatives [from one clan] are joined in marriage with blood relatives from another clan. I see no authority or reason for their doing so. For if they forbid this from being done in their marriages, either they do not extend relationships unto the seventh generation as do we, or else what they prescribe is seen to be impossible to be observed. For in one clan there are often more than one hundred men and women seeking marriage. Accordingly, it would be necessary to find this many other clans from each of which one man or one woman would be selected, with each of whom would be conjoined one man or one woman from that one clan. Therefore, if the Greeks' marriages are entered into within seven generations, they are unquestionably abominable, and the Greeks ought not to reproach our marriages in which blood relatives are conjoined with blood relatives from a different clan (something which no authority and no rational consideration forbids). Or else, it is impossible (as I said) to observe what the Greeks prescribe: viz., to seek out, for marriages with the members of one clan, as many other clans as in this one clan there are men and women requesting marriages. Now, that which is done without any authority or any rational basis, and is even done against reason, is undoubtedly reasonably deemed worthy of rejection.

BISHOP WALRAM TO ANSELM¹
(*Epistola Waleramni Episcopi ad Anselmum*)

To the most serene Lord Anselm, most reverend archbishop of the holy church of Canterbury: Walram, bishop of Naumburg by the grace of God [offers] a servant's homage, constant prayers, and himself, completely devoted in all respects.

[When one is dealing] with Minerva, it is most foolish to suppose oneself to be versed in learned matters. Moreover, among distinguished men of learning it is not within my power to reason convincingly by the force of my arguments. But sighing with the prophet "Open my eyes and I will behold the wondrous things of Your law,"² with supreme devotion I lift up my eyes to the mountain of Your Highness,³ so that from thence help may come to me. Your help is "help from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."⁴ "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit,"⁵ so that it is thereby evident that from His fullness you search out even the deep things of God⁶ but that I in my smallness hear His voice but am utterly ignorant of "whence He comes or whither He goes."⁷

1

God is undivided trinity, and all who are in God are one in Him. Diversity in the Church is directly opposed to unity. And what proceeds against itself by dissension among its parts cannot remain standing for long. Now, Palestine believes one thing about the sacraments of the Church, Armenia another, and our Rome and three-part Gaul still another. Moreover, the Roman Church performs the mystery of the Lord's Body in one way, the Gallic Church in another way, and our Germany much more differently still. We have received from the ancient Fathers the rite of sacrifice, and I wonder greatly as to whence this novelty has crept into the house of the Lord. "Jesus Christ yesterday and today, He is forever," always one, always the same, undergoing no change.⁸ He who tends toward diversity dissents from Christ. Christ is the bread of angels⁹ who came down from Heaven and was made the

¹Letter #416, written before August, 1106. ²Psalms 118:18 (119:18). ³See Psalms 120:1 (121:1). ⁴Psalms 120:2 (121:2). ⁵I Corinthians 6:17. ⁶I Corinthians 2:10. ⁷John 3:8. ⁸Hebrews 13:8. ⁹See Psalms 77:25 (78:25).

bread of men, the food of the poor, and the fullness of those who reign with Him—so that those who worthily partake of Him live forever and ever. All of us who partake of one bread are, though we be many, one bread and one body in Christ.¹ Christ is the way on which we should walk, the one whom we should imitate. He who wanders away from Christ walks in peril. While sacrificing, let us do even what Christ did; for He has said: “Do this as often as you partake.”²

2

Indeed, the Armenians believe that with leavened bread they are offering a sacrifice of praise. But they are not walking with Christ in “newness of life.”³ True imitators of Christ ought to feast not on “the old leaven” but on the “unleavened bread of purity and truth.”⁴ “Even a little leaven corrupts the whole lump.”⁵ Insofar as possible let not the incorruptible Body of Christ be infected with any corruption. Let all such corruption be absent from the sacrifice of purity. Let those who long to put on the incorruption of Christ's Body strip themselves of the old man by means of the purity of the new sacrifice. In the production of the Body of Christ any substance except the substance that Christ sacrificed is unacceptable. And if I dare to say so, the rule for sacrificing—the rule He gave—must be kept.

3

We bless the bread separately and the chalice separately. The canons and the ancient Roman Ordo prescribe this—namely, that from the beginning, in the canon, we trace a particular cross over each. We hold this as a public and time-honored custom everywhere, “from generation unto generation,”⁶ and we are amazed at your diversity. Christ did this, and He commanded us to do it. “Do this,” He said, “as often as you partake.”⁷ Taking bread, He blessed it separately, and in like manner the chalice. He made a separate sign of the cross over each, as our Ordo—indeed, as the Roman Ordo—prescribes. And so our custom grew up from Him who is the same “yesterday and today and forever.”⁸ On the matter of individual signs of the cross the authority of Christ gives

¹I Corinthians 10:17. ²I Corinthians 11:25. ³Romans 6:4. ⁴I Corinthians 5:8. ⁵I Corinthians 5:6. ⁶Luke 1:50. ⁷I Corinthians 11:25. ⁸Hebrews 13:8.

approval to us. Now, I greatly wonder how the difference in sacrificing came about. There is “one faith, one baptism,”¹ one friend, spouse, and dove of Christ. It is greatly harmful to the unity of the Church to be at variance in the sacraments and to allow whatever one pleases.

4

Furthermore, several while consecrating cover the chalice from the beginning: some do so with a corporal, others with a folded cloth, according to the likeness of the shroud which, we read, was found in the sepulcher “not lying with the linen clothes, but apart, wrapped up in one place.”² Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life.”³ He is the way on which we ought to walk so that we may come to Him. “He who says that he abides in Christ ought to walk just as Christ walked.”⁴ None but true imitators of the Life come to the Life. The pascal Victim was immolated uncovered in body on the altar of the cross. He willed to be offered uncovered in body, who unveiled to His own all that He heard from the Father. In His immolation He revealed Himself “as He is”;⁵ and “with unveiled faces” we shall behold His glory, so as to be conformed to Him in all respects, “having been made like the body of His glory,” so that He may be all things to us in eternal bliss.⁶ And to use His own words: “It is finished.”⁷ He said this so that we would not doubt that “old things have passed away and that all things are new.”⁸ The veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom.⁹ And until this present day a veil is upon the hearts of the Jews,¹⁰ so that though having eyes they do not see and having ears they do not understand.¹¹ We, however, to whom God has revealed [these things] by His Spirit,¹² ought not to confound the mysteries of sacrificing but, following the example of the Lord Jesus, to make them clear. Let us not with Moses impose a veil as do the Jews; but offering with the Lord Jesus, let us strive to be conveyed from glory unto glory.¹³ Let Jesus, who was naked on the altar of the cross, appear naked on the altar of our immolation. What we proclaim in words, let us carry out by deeds. That bread is truly

¹Ephesians 4:5. ²John 20:7. ³John 14:6. ⁴I John 2:6. ⁵I John 3:2. ⁶II Corinthians 3:18. ⁷John 19:30. ⁸II Corinthians 5:17. ⁹Matthew 27:51. ¹⁰II Corinthians 3:15. ¹¹Romans 11:8. ¹²I Corinthians 2:10. ¹³II Corinthians 3:18.

the Body of Christ, and it ought to be sacrificed as being the sacrifice of Christ's body. Uncovered on the altar of the cross, Christ's body was wrapped in linens in the sepulcher. Naked in His suffering, He was wrapped up at His burial, through the devotion of His disciples. Burying [Him] as it was the custom of the Jews to bury, they evidenced their zealous devotion to their Master; but they were still ignorant of the truth of the sacrament. They buried Him as a Jew who resembled the Jews, because they had not yet carefully pondered the mystery of the cross. "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."¹ But the Spirit had not yet been given to them, because Jesus, crucified in His weakness, had not yet been glorified. But once glorified, Jesus put away the clothes of corruption; He took off corruptible things, having put on incorruption; He left the sepulcher and manifested His glory to those who loved Him. Why, then, by wrapping with a corruptible shroud do we proclaim, so to speak, Christ's weakness and His concealment in such darkness—when most truly we proclaim Him as the power of God and the light of the world? Let not that light from light² which enlightens every man³ be put in any way under the bushel of a shroud. Rather, just as He Himself—both priest and victim—offered Himself, so let our sacrifice too be offered to Him. Placed uncovered, let it shine forth in the house of Christ unto life for all. Our sacrifice will be most acceptable when it is similar to Christ's sacrifice.

Nevertheless, even we wrap the life-giving sacrifice—not at the beginning, as is your custom, but at the end, with Joseph and Nicodemus. That which is offered both with the appearance and with the reality of the original ought not to be at variance in regard to its immolation. He who differs in sacrificing does not walk as Christ Himself walked.⁴ But if in this part of the sacrifice the purity [of the sacrifice] is pled, it is very easy to safeguard, with us, the cleanliness by means of a protective cover—without at the beginning of the sacrifice deviating from a most ancient rite of the Church.

5

Let your eyes see my imperfection.⁵ And just as you are filled,

¹I Corinthians 2:10. ²See the Nicene Creed (325) and the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (381). ³John 8:12. ⁴I John 2:6. ⁵Psalms 138:16 (139:16).

as by the hands of the virtues, with the whole fullness of prudential knowledge, so may you have compassion on my extreme imperfection. The Catholic Church glorifies God in me because the grace of divine goodness is apparent in my transformation. “By the grace of God I am what I am.”¹ From Saul [I have been transformed to] Paul; from being an enemy of the Roman Church [I have been transformed to] its intimate friend, in highest favor with Pope Paschal, sharing the secrets of the cardinals. In this regard I am hopeful of prosperous success in all matters. Joseph was in the house of Pharaoh; I was in the palace of Emperor Henry. It was not iniquity or any sin of mine² if—banish the thought—I was like Nero the Incestuous or Julian the Apostate. Thanks be to God because under the rule of Your Holiness the wolf and the lamb pasture together, the lion and the calf lie down together, and a little child leads them.³ And because the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of justice,⁴ we praise the strength of God for the fact that the wild beasts have become tame out of fear of the Church and because they harm no one on the mount of the Lord’s powers. “The lion will roar; who will not be afraid?”⁵ But because the just man is bold as a lion:⁶ your heart, like the heart of strong-handed David himself, does not fear in such things but triumphs in all things by the power of God. May the Lord, who has anointed you with “the oil of gladness above your fellows,”⁷ crown you with “mercy and compassion”⁸ in the kingdom of blessedness.

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH⁹

(Epistola de Sacramentis Ecclesiae)

To my lord and friend Walram, venerable bishop of Naumburg by the grace of God: Anselm, servant of the Church of Canterbury [sends] greeting, reverence, prayers, and the affection of love.

I rejoice and thank God because, as you have written, the Catholic Church glorifies Him in you. For in your transformation the grace of divine goodness is apparent; and you enjoy friendship and close acquaintance with Lord Pope Paschal, so that now I am permitted to greet Your Holiness as a friend. As for the fact that

¹I Corinthians 15:10. ²Psalms 58:5 (59:3). ³Isaiah 11:6. ⁴Hebrews 1:8. ⁵Amos 3:8. ⁶Proverbs 28:1. ⁷Hebrews 1:9. ⁸Psalms 102:4 (103:4). ⁹Letter #417, written around 1107.

Your sublime Humility compares me to Minerva and calls me “Mountain”: I do not apply [these epithets] to myself, because I discern in myself no reason why they ought to be ascribed to me. However, I am obliged not to be ungrateful to Your Benevolence, since the abundance of your good will toward me produces these ascriptions. For those whom we love we are wont to regard more highly than they deserve. So my heart does not take pride in your praise, which does not apply to me; instead, it gratefully delights in your love, which ought always to be cherished.

1

Your Reverence asks about the sacraments of the Church, because they are not everywhere performed in the same way but are dealt with differently in different places. Assuredly, if they were celebrated in one way and with one mind throughout the whole Church, it would be a good and praiseworthy thing. However, there are many differences which do not conflict with the, fundamental importance of the sacrament or with its efficacy or with faith in it; and these cannot all be brought together into one practice. Accordingly, I think that these differences ought to be harmoniously and peaceably tolerated rather than being disharmoniously and scandalously condemned. For we are taught by the holy Fathers that, provided the unity of love is preserved within the Catholic faith, a different practice does no harm. But if one asks whence these different customs arise, I deem [the source to be] nothing other than the differences of human dispositions. Even though men do not disagree about the truth and validity of the sacrament, nevertheless they do not agree on the suitability and seemliness of the manner of administration. For what one person deems to be more suitable, another often deems to be less suitable. Now, I do not believe that to disagree concerning such differences is to wander from the truth of the matter.

2

To be sure, in sacrificing the Body and the Blood of the Lord some make one sign of the cross over each during the canon from the beginning, whereas others make one sign over each only when the bread or body is named individually and when the chalice or

blood is named individually. But these latter make one sign of the cross over both when the offering or victim is named—because just as Christ, who sacrificed Himself for us, is one, so there is one offering or victim which we offer in the bread and the wine. I do not see that in doing this these latter dissent more from Christ, who blessed each individually, than all those dissent who do not consecrate the chalice after a supper, as Christ did, and who do not always do it in the evening, as Christ did, and who call both together by one name—“offering” or “victim”—which Christ did not do. From this we may conclude that in such an action, provided we mutually preserve the truth of the thing, we may differ from one another without blame, since we differ from the very author of the sacrifice itself without offense.

Now, when we say “these gifts, these offerings, these holy sacrifices”—whether separate signs of the cross are made individually over the bread and over the wine, or whether both are consecrated together by one sign of the cross—I do not see in this diversity any reprehensible dissension, except that perhaps it is more fitting to sign both with one cross, even as both are consecrated with one word of blessing. For when we bless several men or bless distinct things collectively, we do not impart to each a particular sign of the cross, but we believe that a single sign of the cross suffices for all.

3

Some cover the chalice from the beginning—some with a corporal, others with a folded cloth—to keep it clean. They do not leave the chalice uncovered, as Christ was crucified uncovered in order (as you indicate) to show Himself revealed to the world. I do not see that they should be reproved on account of the nudity of Christ, which they do not signify while sacrificing, any more than because they do not show in the same sacrifice that He was crucified outside the city, outside a house, and under the open sky. Yet these things are not devoid of great significance. For “Christ, who suffered for us, leaving us an example so that we would follow in His footsteps,”¹ also gave us in these things an example of enduring incomparable contempt and poverty for the sake of jus-

¹I Peter 2:21.

tice. For He was held in such contempt and was judged to be so execrable that He was not deemed worthy to die inside any dwelling of men, or among any men except the execrable, or under any roof except the sky, from beneath which He could not be driven away. Thus, according to the prophet, He was regarded as “the scorn of men and the rejected of the people.”¹ Moreover, He was so poor that when He came into the world He was born not in His own house but in another's. And, once born, He was placed, for lack of a room, in the manger of brute animals. And living in the world, He had no place to rest His head. And dying, He had nothing with which to cover His nakedness. And dead, He had nothing with which to be enshrouded; and He had neither a sepulcher nor a place where His dead body could be reposit-ed.

One should imitate all these things in one's life by deeds, as reason demands, rather than signifying the nakedness of Christ by the nudity of the sacrifice. Nor can I imagine why one should see to it that the sacrifice not be covered with a cloth because Christ suffered naked, any more than that it not be performed under a roof or within a city because Christ suffered under the open sky outside the city. But if on account of the disturbances of the weather it is not the custom to offer it out from under a roof, there seems to be a similar reason for not leaving the chalice uncovered during the sacrifice because of certain inconveniences which can occur. Therefore, I consider it safer and more careful to cover the chalice—lest a fly or something unseemly fall into it, which to our knowledge has often happened—than to expose it, uncovered, to possible impurities.

These things I answer to Your Wisdom according to my way of thinking, rejecting no one's better reasoning. About those who sacrifice with leavened bread I have erstwhile sent you a letter.

¹Psalms 21:7 (22:6). Cf. Isaiah 53:3.