

# Some Answered Questions, The Bread and the Wine

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



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## The Bread and the Wine

Question: Christ said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." What is the meaning of this utterance?

Answer: By this bread is meant the heavenly sustenance of divine perfections. In other words, whoso partakes of this sustenance—that is, whoso acquires the outpouring grace of God, draws illumination from His light, and obtains his portion of the perfections of Christ—will attain everlasting life. What is meant by blood, likewise, is the spirit of life, which consists in divine perfections, heavenly splendours, and eternal grace. For all the parts of the body acquire the substance of life from the circulation of the blood.

In John 6:26 it is said: "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." It is evident that the loaves of which the disciples ate, and with which they were filled, were the heavenly grace, for in verse 33 of the same chapter it is said: "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." It is evident that the body of Christ did not descend from heaven but came from the womb of Mary: What descended from the heaven of God was the spirit of Christ. The Jews, presuming that Christ was speaking of His body, objected, as is recorded in verse 42 of the same chapter: "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"

Consider how evident it is that what Christ intended by the heavenly bread was His spirit, His manifold grace, His perfections, and His teachings; for in verse 63 of the aforementioned chapter it is said: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."



TRANSLATION

It has therefore been made evident that the spirit of Christ was a celestial bounty which descended from heaven, and that whosoever receives the outpourings of this spirit—that is, embraces its heavenly teachings—will attain everlasting life. Thus it is said in verse 35: “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”

Observe that He expresses “coming to Him” as eating, and “believing in Him” as drinking. It is therefore clearly established that the heavenly sustenance consists in the divine bounties, spiritual splendours, heavenly teachings, and all-embracing truths of Christ, and that to eat means to draw nigh unto Him and to drink means to believe in Him. For Christ had both an elemental and a heavenly body. The elemental body was crucified, but the heavenly one is alive, eternal, and the source of everlasting life. The elemental body was His human nature and the heavenly body His divine nature. Gracious God! Some imagine that the bread of the Eucharist is the reality of Christ, and that the Divinity and the Holy Spirit have descended into it and are present therein, whereas when once the Eucharist is taken, in a few minutes it is wholly disintegrated and entirely transformed. How then can such an error be conceived? I beg the forgiveness of God for such a grave delusion!

The purport of these words is that, through the manifestation of Christ, the sacred teachings, which are everlasting grace, were spread abroad, the lights of guidance shone forth, and the spirit of life was conferred upon human realities. Whosoever was guided aright found life, and whosoever remained astray was overtaken by everlasting death. That bread which came down from heaven was the celestial body of Christ and His spiritual elements, of which the disciples ate and through which they attained everlasting life.

The disciples had taken many meals from the hand of Christ; why then did the last supper come to be distinguished? It is thus evident that by the heavenly bread is meant not this material bread but the divine sustenance of the spiritual body of Christ, that is, the divine grace and the heavenly perfections of which His disciples partook and with which they were filled.

Consider likewise that when Christ blessed the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying, “this is My body”, He was visibly and distinctly present with them in person and in body, and was not transformed into bread and wine. Had He become the bread and wine itself, He could not have remained distinctly present before them in body and in person.

It is therefore clear that the bread and wine were symbols, meaning: My grace and My perfections have been given you, and since you have partaken of this manifold grace, you have attained everlasting life and received your share and portion of the heavenly sustenance.