

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

---

VOL. XIX.

APRIL, 1915.

No. 2.

---

## SCRIPTURE PROOF IN THE VIEW OF MODERNISTS.

That the views which modern critical theologians hold of the origin of the Scriptures practically destroy both the causative and the normative authority of the Bible, and render it useless—except in a secondary manner—for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, has been pointed out long ago by the opponents of modernism. It was reasonably claimed that men could not consistently collect proof-texts for divine things from the only Book in which those things are propounded, if they do not believe that Book to be divinely originated and divinely effectual. With the passing of the old Bible, plenary inspired and inerrant, the old *Schriftbeweis* must go; the support is knocked from under systematic theology; the study of Bible-history becomes a study of Hebrew folklore, and preaching from Bible-texts an act of pious reverence for the past.

What Bible Christians have anticipated and feared is declared with appalling candor by a representative of the critical school of modern Protestant theology. At the "January Conference" at Dorpat Prof. Dr. Karl Girgensohn, of the local university, spoke to the pastors present on "Scripture Proof, Formerly and Now, in Evangelical Dogmatics."<sup>1</sup> He beholds "a grave inner crisis" in Protestantism, "so powerful and thorough that disinterested bystanders—Catholic critics and

---

1) *Der Schriftbeweis in der evangelischen Dogmatik einst und jetzt.* Leipzig, 1914.

---

## THE EUCHARISTIC INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 6.

(Concluded.)

### 2.

The discourse of our Lord on the Living Bread was addressed to a sensation-hungry, miracle-hunting multitude, who loved the Lord, not for what He spoke to their spirits, but for what He could do for their bodies. (John 6, 26.) Driven by some utopian fancy of a life of ease and plenty under His rulership, they had hurried to find the Lord after He had withdrawn from them, because they looked upon Him as the fulfiller of their worldly hopes. The Lord tells them that He is indeed the divinely accredited Dispenser of the Father's bounties to sinners. He will give them bread, however, bread that remains, and that feeds unto the life everlasting. That would be bread worthy of a man's toil, v. 27. They stand abashed for a moment, and then demand to know in what way they are to toil for this bread of which He is speaking; what is the God-appointed way to obtain this remarkable bread, v. 28. Jesus tells them that it is not by "works," but by a "work," viz., by believing in Him whom the Father has sent, that they shall attain to the fruition of the Father's choicest gift to them, v. 29. In view of what follows, especially in vv. 37 and 44, it is not necessary to assume a paronomasia in the use of ἔργον as a qualifier of πίστις, in order to secure our Lord against the charge that He has declared faith man's own work. The very

contrast between "works" and "work" is sufficient to repel that thought. Not anything that they have been doing, or that they may imagine themselves to be able to do, will put them in possession of the Bread of Heaven. It is only when a new activity has begun in them, when their heart shall confidently have embraced Christ as the Supplier of the great wants of their sin-famished souls,—of which they are not now thinking, and which, indeed, they cannot put forth of themselves,—that they shall have the Bread which will feed them here and hereafter.

Thus there is seen even in this introductory colloquy the tenor of the whole discourse of the Lord: the necessity of faith in Him to obtain eternal life. The whole discourse has for its theme that statement which our Lord made when parting from His disciples: "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned," or this other: "Neither is there salvation in any other!" which was also made at the time, and is made ever since, as an appeal to man's faith in Christ Jesus.

The Lord's questioners felt that, with His demand of faith in Himself, He was claiming a vast authority, an authority that must totally eclipse that of their most highly revered prophet Moses. They are now drawing a parallel between Christ and Moses for the very practical purpose of establishing the higher credibility and greater authority of the new Galilean prophet. They do not deny that He has wrought a miracle, but they deny that on the one miracle of feeding five thousand with a handful of provisions such a sweeping claim could be safely set up as Christ had advanced. No, He could not claim yet to have wrested to Himself the glory of Moses. He had not even equaled the marvelous feat of bringing down a supply of manna from heaven for forty years, and supporting a whole nation on this food, not to speak of having surpassed Moses. Hence, His demand that they must espouse Him to the exclusion even of Moses is overdrawn, unreasonable, and must be disallowed. They are willing to consider Him great; they are ready to admire Him; they are inclined to expect great things

of Him; but as yet they see no "irresistible reason for invincible faith" in Him. He must do greater works than He has done so far if He wants their full allegiance, vv. 30. 31.

Christ meets their challenge with a twofold denial of fact: 1. It was not Moses at all who gave them the bread of which they are speaking; 2. that bread which Moses gave them was not the true bread. Thus He reduces their claims very appreciably on two points: the power of Moses is limited to that of an agent who acts with authority and power transferred to him from a higher source; the efficacy of the manna is limited to the satisfying of physical wants. The whole phenomenon in the desert which the fathers had witnessed was primarily aimed at the removal of natural troubles, and if the fathers would meditate upon it as they should, it was to foreshadow to them secondarily the greater gift of God, which in the fulness of time would descend to them out of the bosom of the Father to put an end to all their spiritual troubles. Christ implies that back of Moses and the manna stands Himself, and what Moses and the faithful in Israel had in their pious meditations grasped as a harbinger of the future Messiah had now been bodied forth out of the bourne of eternity in the person of the Christ. The inference which He leaves to them to draw is: If the fathers had willingly credited and relied on the type, how much greater reason did the present generation have to espouse the antitype! vv. 32. 33.

Assuming now that the view of the Eucharist which sees in it nothing but an emblematic exhibition of the instruments by which the world's atonement was wrought were correct, — which it is not, — would not that view have to succumb at this point to the force of the "deadly parallel"? The difference between Old and New Testament conditions is set forth as that between the shadow and the substance. In the eucharistic conception of John 6 it becomes reduced to the substitution of a new emblem for an old. This by the way.

The Lord had permitted His hearers to peer through the veil of Old Testament history. Moreover, the solemn tone in

which He spoke of the episode of the manna in connection with His own mission had cowed the arrogant spirit of the men who were questioning His authority. When they address Him again, it is, not as before as "Rabbi," but as "Lord" that they appeal to Him. A glimpse of His divinity had been afforded them, but as yet it was a dim notion of His sovereign majesty that they held, and of His mission they still had a confused idea. Their carnal mind again misinterprets the word "bread" which He had used in speaking of Himself in a carnal manner. They now beg for a perennial supply of that wonderful bread of which He had spoken. They slip back into their Jewish thought of the utopian kingdom of the Messiah, v. 34. And now the Lord reaches the climax of His self-revelation to them: in plain, direct terms He tells them that the Bread on which His discourse has turned is not anything that is to come from Him, not any substance that He may convey to them, not any provision that He may make for them, but the Bread is He Himself. Likewise, possession of this Bread is secured, not by any act of purchase, barter, trade, not by any exertion on their part tending to any physical appropriation of a substance, but by "coming to Him." Now, they had come to Him,—had they not? They had, and they had not. They had conveyed their bodies into His presence; they were standing before Him, arguing with Him. But their hearts were still far from Him; no spiritual approach to this heavenly Food of Souls had been effected at all when they had come posthaste from Bethsaida to Capernaum. Unnumbered leagues of unbelief still stretched between their carnal intellect and flesh-bound will and His blessed word and expiatory work. They had come faithless, and hence they must go without the Bread which He was offering them, vv. 35. 36.

Thus the argument in this second exchange of questions and answers has advanced a distinct step in clarity and precision. The cardinal thought of this entire discourse has come out more boldly: Believing in the Son of Man as descended from heaven, accepting Him as God's gift for the soul-hunger

of this perishing world, placing Him with the strongest assurance above anything that God had hitherto conveyed to sinners for their salvation,—that is the *conditio sine qua non* for entering into life everlasting. It is the general Gospel message, the ordinary evangelical order of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, that is here set forth in elaborate form and striking imagery.

Commentators have noted the absence of any connection between v. 36 and what follows. They have pointed to “a significant asyndeton” at this place. It is possible that at this point the Jews began to shrink back from the Lord, and, forming little groups, began to argue in an undertone that the statement which they had just heard from Christ could not possibly rest on fact; and that the words of the Lord in vv. 37 to 40 were spoken to the disciples, and a few who remained close enough to listen to Him. There had been a note of pain discernible in the Lord’s last utterance to the Jews: they had Him visibly before Him, they could watch and study at ease His wonderful activity, and with all the facility for faith which they were privileged to have they had so far remained unbelievers, because they willed not to believe. But from the sadness of this scene the Lord’s thought now reverts to the Father. His seeming failures in His ministration to men do not dim His clear perception of the Father’s will, which coincides perfectly with His own. Faith—coming to Christ—is due to the “drawing of the Father.” He gives to Christ every believing soul that embraces the Redeemer as a reward of His work. What the Father gives Him He will gladly accept and foster and cherish as a dearly bought treasure; even through the abyss of death and the corruption of the sepulcher will the power of His redemptive work accompany the believer, and will restore at the last day that union between the believer’s body and soul which death had disrupted. And if any will not to believe, He will not idly pine over their deplorable choice, the only one which they could make upon their own decision. He is certain that, in proclaiming what He has just proclaimed

to these Jews, the Father's will is being executed, and therewith His own. The Savior is being presented to sinners, and the Father's drawing is there; the soul-conquering power of the Gospel is being manifested, which will make the unwilling willing, the unbeliever, skeptic, and doubter a joyful believer in the Lord.

Also these remarks of the Lord aid the main thought of this discourse. His mind is here dwelling on the effects of the ministry of the Gospel among men, upon that which is going on wherever men are brought within ear-shot of the ministry of reconciliation. There is here not even the faintest trace of an allusion to eucharistic occasions in the Church. Not the despisers of the Sacrament, but the contemners of the Word of Life are here arraigned.

But, we are reminded, the contention that the Lord's discourse on the Bread of Life bears a eucharistic character rests chiefly on that part which begins after v. 41. And in this part, it is claimed, the eucharistic interpretation of this entire discourse becomes unavoidable because of the introduction of a new element: the flesh of the Son of God, which is to be eaten, and His blood, which is to be drunk. These remarks of the Lord are made to reflect backward on what He had before said concerning the Bread of Life. While admitting that in the preceding part of the discourse the Lord had represented Himself, His entire person and work, as the Bread of Life, and believing in Him as the mode and means for appropriating Him, the defenders of the eucharistic conception of John 6 claim that those earlier remarks must be understood in the sense of the later. Let us see.

A thoroughly rationalistic argument was in progress among the groups of Jews which had formed after the Lord's last remark. This man, whose natural antecedents and social standing was known to them, had claimed heavenly origin and a divine commission. How dare He set up such a stupendous claim? It is utterly absurd. They had not directly expressed their scruples to the Lord, yet He "answers" their murmurings.

They hear Him presently addressing them and charging them, not with ignorance, but with unwillingness to submit to the teaching of God, which, as professing believers in the written revelation of God, they should have felt it a duty to do. Point for point the Lord reiterates His former statements and for their comprehension and acceptance remands the Jews back to a rule of their creed. God had never engaged to consider them believers for accepting what commended itself to their reason or pleasure, but He had engaged to make them believers in matters that transcended their intellect and seemed offensive to them. Other believers than such there had never been before in the Church of God. The rule of the ages will not be varied to suit the present generation. Believers ever will have to be God-taught, not man-made. God has sent the Teacher of His unfathomable mysteries of saving grace among them, and has clothed Him with power and majesty, to accredit His teachings to them by means of His works. The true school of faith is thrown open to them; they have heard the primary lesson of faith from the Teacher's lips, and He will repeat it to them in still plainer terms: "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," vv. 41—50.

It was pointed out before that the Jews regarded the Bread of Life as something distinct from Christ Himself, for which He would merely act as the purveyor, and that Christ over against this notion stated again and again, and with increasing emphasis, that He was Himself that Bread, that the Jews would not get it from Him or through Him, but in and with Him. For to obtain the Bread they must come to Him and believe in Him. Moreover, while asserting His divine commission as the One whom the Father had "sealed," v. 27, and who "is of God, and hath seen the Father," v. 46, and while indicating His Messianic character as the Antitype of ancient type and the Fulfiller of prophecy, the Lord had not neglected to call attention to His humanity. He, as "the Son of Man,"

would give them the Bread of Life. The promised Messiah is theanthropic. His human nature was assumed for the ends of His Messiahship. He must live the life of a true man, being found in fashion as a man, that He may render that perfect obedience to the divine Law which man had omitted, and He must die the death of a true man, that He may cancel the guilt of many trespasses of the Law which man had committed. All this required that He have "flesh," a human body and soul, living a human life from the manger to the cross. The Messianic portrait would be incomplete without the Messiah's "flesh"; in fact, the Messiah as God alone would not be the Messiah whom the world had been taught to expect. And the surrender of His "flesh" in His sacrificial death constitutes His flesh the Bread of Life. Or, in other words, the Son of God incarnate made a sin-offering of Himself by bearing the world's sin in His own body on the tree, and the Christ who did this—and because He did this—is the Bread of Life; for it is His atonement which the soul of a believer appropriates as its life, according to the statement of Paul: "The life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me," Gal. 2, 20.

The additional remark, then, concerning His flesh, which the Lord makes in this section, does not carry His argument into a new territory, but merely expands and specializes what He has before said concerning Himself. Only by a rash and superficial exegesis can the term "flesh" in John 6 be taken as a reference to the Eucharist.

This holds good also with regard to the next section, vv. 52—59. It is true that the new phraseology which the Lord had adopted intensified the captiousness and opposition of the Jews: their "murmuring" now became a "striving." Taking the Lord's words about the eating of His flesh in a literal meaning, they reached a conclusion which amounted to cannibalism. Nowhere in this entire discourse had the Lord referred to the human mouth as the organ of eating, as little as He had indicated that the "coming to Him" was to be

a locomotive action to be performed by the feet. He had, by varying His terms, clearly shown that the coming, eating, etc., of which He spoke are acts of faith and synonymous with believing. Hence, the flesh of which He spoke could not mean the material body, and any other physical substance upon which a true act of eating could be performed He had not indicated. The eating in this discourse is not an eating of the sacramental element in the Lord's Supper.

The Lord interrupts the excited disputations of His listeners by reiterating all His former statements, and adding to the remark about His flesh a similar remark about His blood, thereby completing the description of His expiatory death. Just as little as the mention of the term "flesh" in the preceding section stamps this discourse eucharistic, so little does the mention of "blood" in this section. "Blood" here, as "flesh" before, is used metonymically; the cause is named for the effect, the redeeming instruments for the redemption. And as there is no physical substance indicated here which men are to drink, so there is here no reference to any physical act of drinking.

The discourse of the Lord in the synagog at Capernaum had a sequel in the circle of His immediate followers. They, too, murmured about "the hard saying" which they had heard, and were reprov'd. In this connection the Lord once more uttered words (v. 63) which have been strangely wrested from their context to support the eucharistic interpretation of John 6. "The flesh profiteth nothing,"—these words have been understood of the flesh of Christ, in flagrant contradiction to what the Lord throughout this discourse has said concerning the life-bestowing power of His flesh. Luther in his treatise on the Sacrament has spoken the last word on this mistaken interpretation.<sup>1)</sup> What the Lord warns His disciples against is a rationalistic interpretation of His teaching. His remark in

1) See St. L. Ed. XX, 762 ff.: "Dass diese Worte Christi: 'Das ist mein Leib,' etc., noch fest stehen," especially col. 823 ff. Also his treatise against Carlstadt: "Wider die himmlischen Propheten," XX, 263 ff.

v. 63 puts the last rivet into the claim that this whole discourse must be interpreted of the spiritual appropriation of His merits by faith, which appropriation is absolutely necessary for everybody who is saved, and occurs independently of the Eucharist wherever His Gospel is proclaimed and believed.

The entire claim, moreover, that John 6 bears a eucharistic character rests on a prolepsis. The Sacrament was not instituted until some time after this discourse at Capernaum had been spoken. But to assume a prolepsis in this discourse is impossible, because the Lord speaks of immediate needs of His hearers, and of a present means for supplying those needs. In so far as the spiritual eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of Christ, *i. e.*, the believing acceptance of His vicarious work, occurs also at the Sacrament, this text may now, after the Sacrament has been instituted, be employed to show wherein a salutary use of the Sacrament consists, but it does not refer to the substance of the Sacrament, which did not then exist, and cannot be used to define that peculiar sacramental eating and drinking which Paul describes in 1 Cor. 11.

To sum up, the eucharistic interpretation of John 6 is indefensible on the following grounds:—

1) It is true that Christ speaks, metaphorically, of the eating of His flesh (not body), and of the drinking of His blood. But it was not until a year later that He solemnly ordained that rite of which He said: "Do this in remembrance of Me." We have no record that after His discourse at Capernaum the Lord's Supper began to be celebrated by His disciples. And the record of the institution of the Lord's Supper states plainly that the Sacrament was instituted "in the night in which He was betrayed." Whatever, then, Christ meant in His discourse at Capernaum, He did not mean the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Those who appeal to John 6 as a *sedes doctrinae* of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper must grant, in order to hold their own ground, that the Lord's Supper was in existence before it had been instituted.

2) Where the three evangelists and St. Paul present the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, they speak of an eating and drinking of the body and blood of the Lord which may bring damnation, *viz.*, to an unworthy communicant, 1 Cor. 11, 29. Such a possibility is not even remotely considered in John 6. On the contrary, we are told in vv. 54, 56 that the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood of which the Lord speaks in this place is always salutary; it is always to the end of obtaining eternal life. Those who appeal to John 6 as a *sedes doctrinae* for the Lord's Supper must grant, in order to hold their own ground, that no person can commune unworthily.

3) In John 6 the Lord speaks of an eating and drinking that is absolutely necessary for salvation: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you," v. 53. But of the eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper Paul says 1 Cor. 11, 28: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," etc. Hence, persons who are not capable of self-examination are not admitted to the Lord's Supper. Those who appeal to John 6 as a *sedes doctrinae* for the Lord's Supper are forced to believe, if they will be true to their own arguments, that all believers who have not communed will be damned.

4) In John 6 our Lord speaks of His flesh and blood, but names no external elements by means of which these are to be taken, while those elements are named and exhibited in the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Those who appeal to John 6 as a *sedes doctrinae* for the doctrine of the Sacrament must do one of two things: either they must eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood without any external means like the anthropophagi, or they must admit that the words "eating" and "drinking," likewise the words "flesh" and "blood," in John 6, cannot be taken literally, but must be understood figuratively, *viz.*, for believing in the atoning sacrifice of Christ and those feasting on His merits with the mouth of faith.

D.