

ART. III.—CREDE ET MANDUCÂSTI.¹

“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”—JOHN vi. 53, 54.

THESE great words of our Saviour Christ were spoken, as we know, in the synagogue of Capernaum, and, according to verse 4 of the chapter, about the time of the third Passover in the ministry of our blessed Lord, His crucifixion as the very Paschal Lamb being coincident with the fourth Passover of His ministry, the events of which, together with the institution of the Lord's Supper, occurred more than a year after the discourse as recorded in John vi. was delivered.

That the first part of His great deliverance has reference rather to the manna, is suggested by the feeding of the five thousand and their anxiety about the meat that perisheth; and in this division of the chapter He therefore speaks of the Bread from heaven and of that same spiritual meat and same spiritual drink of which the faithful of old partook, for they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

It should never be forgotten that under the old law, whether in sacrifice or symbol, there was possible, and actually enjoyed by the faithful, that true participation in Christ whereunto in this chapter He opens wide the everlasting gates in the royal proclamation: “I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”

The hour had come; as clouds before sunshine, types had faded away in the presence of that wonderful One of whom they taught. The true (*ἀλήθινος*) Bread from heaven was before them; the Rock of Ages was now to be smitten for them. Let them drink and live! But the latter part of this discourse has more reference to the approaching Passover, to a Sacrifice, a Victim, a Paschal Lamb, to the body and blood of Christ crucified; and this second part He prefaces with the oft-repeated and illuminating sentence of verse 47: “He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.” After which He repeats, “I am the living bread,” and He adds the new statement: “The bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”; that is, not merely “flesh,” but “flesh given”; not merely “blood,” but “blood poured out.”

To this agree the words of administration in the Lord's

¹ Read at Clerical Meeting, May, 1898.

Supper, which are not "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul," but "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, *which was given* for thee, preserve," κ.τ.λ. It is therefore the body *given* for the life of the world, and the blood *shed* for you and many, which is the bread of life, and our Lord speaks not of the Incarnation, but of the Atonement, for which purpose of atoning death it was that He became incarnate.

The next step in the wonderful pronouncement is the two-fold statement in verses 53, 54; and I may here indicate the order of my argument in treating of these great words, to which, indeed, the text is applicable, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

(a) First, then, let us dwell on the distinction of tense in verses 53, 54, and on the absolutely continuous nature of the "eating" which is proposed to us.

(b) Then we must carefully consider what it is which is to be eaten and the error of some on this point.

(c) Lastly, let us examine what this great act of manducation is, and what results follow from it.¹

THE TENSES IN VERSES 53, 54.

I need not dwell on the general importance of tense in the New Testament, nor do more than allude to such texts as John xx. 23 and the words "have been and are remitted" and "have been and are retained"; Heb. viii. 3, "somewhat also to have once offered"—*i.e.*, at the time of the great sacrifice; Heb. x. 14, "them that are being sanctified"; 1 John i. 7, "cleanseth."

It is almost impossible to be original in the interpretation of John vi. on any principles of sound explanation; but the force of and the distinction of the tenses in these verses of which I speak have perhaps hardly received the notice to which these points are entitled.

The tense of the verbs "eat" (φάγητε) and "drink" in verse 53 is the aorist, the force of which would be that there must be some definite time, whether consciously realized or not in the life of each individual for the commencement of such "eating" and "drinking," explain these acts as we may. It is the aorist here which is significant, and we notice how that in the very next verse (the 54th) the tense abruptly changes (πρώγων), and after the statement in the aorist that unless there be some definite point of commencement of this "eating

¹ See Waterland on the Eucharist, Oxford edition, 1880, pp. 89-129.

and drinking," spiritual life cannot exist, we find the verbs in verse 54 asserting with all the emphasis of the Greek present that this "eating and drinking" is not a fitful act or one to be done at intervals, be they brief or protracted, but is absolutely continuous: "Whoso *eateth* My flesh . . . and drinketh . . . *hath* eternal life."

It is a continuous, unbroken act, as of the branches deriving continuous nutriment from the vine. It is a present salvation; neither life nor death can interrupt it; and, begun in the everlasting purpose of God before the foundation of the world was laid, is wrought out in time by His Spirit working in due season in the hearts and wills of His people; and when time is no more, it has its natural consequence, viz., everlasting life.

Flashes of the eternal glories gleam from this verse over the waves of this troublesome world, and enable us, as from Pisgah's heights of present salvation, to view that crowning day when we shall stand in our lot and put on the final and unfading garments of immortality; for Jesus said, "Whoso *eateth* My flesh and *drinketh* My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

Nor is the tense merely the present, indicative of a continuous act, but the word itself (*τρώγων*) is that which, above any other word, denotes a continuance of eating, as of chewing the cud; indeed, this is the first sense of the word in the lexicons. The "eating and drinking," therefore, here spoken of are not occasional acts, separated from each other by intervals of days or weeks or months, but are continuous, and are done—nay, must be done—every moment of the Christian's life. Each moment—as he writes, as he speaks, in business or in pleasure, alone or among his fellows; for without this he is lost, and with this eating he lives and by this drinking he is saved.

WHAT IS EATEN.

It is now necessary to direct attention to that which is the subject of this continuous "eating" and "drinking" here spoken of—viz., "the flesh and blood" of our Saviour Christ.

The ideas, the practices of the Passover are in His mind; the rite, the victim, the sacrifice are all in the minds of His hearers. He obviously speaks of a sacrificed, not a living, Victim as that which they are to feed upon. He speaks of His flesh bruised even unto death, and His blood shed upon the cross in death, when out of His side came blood, by which

precious blood-shedding alone we have remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven.

The "flesh" is mentioned separately and the "blood" is mentioned separately to impress upon us that what is here spoken of is Christ our atonement, Christ crucified, Christ our Passover slain for us, Christ in His death—for the death of Christ is a Christian's life—Christ upon the cross.

That which is spoken of is not the glorified body of Christ. It is the "flesh and blood" rent asunder in death. That which is spoken of is not union with the glorified body of Christ, of which there is *no mention* in the verse, but that which is set before us is participation in and appropriation of the precious death and passion of Christ our Paschal Lamb, crucified and slain.

It is not the Incarnation which is set here before us; it is not any reception of the glorified Saviour which is, or could by any possibility be, alluded to in the words, "Whoso eateth My *flesh* and drinketh My *blood*," but it is, in a word, the Atonement, "that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world" wrought out by the one oblation of our Saviour Christ once offered and finished upon the cross. The Incarnation is, of course, implied, but is only found in the passage as subsidiary to the Atonement. The Incarnation was visible to, and partly understood by, His believing disciples; the Atonement was at the time beyond their grasp, and here, therefore, He sets forth the absolute necessity of their participation in His death. The very Apostle who made the great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and thus by the confession of a true faith acknowledged his incarnate Lord, soon after spoke of His Master's atoning death, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee."

It was teaching on the Atonement which they needed, and which in this immortal chapter their Master gave them. Hence it is "the extension of the Atonement" which He sets before them, that, wide and deep as the sea of human sin might be, where sin abounded grace might much more abound "unto all and upon them that believe."

And it is by the mighty gift of "appropriating faith" that our Master and only Saviour provides for all believers a part and lot in the Atonement of which alone He said: "*Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life.*" "And we are in this action not only carried up to Christ (*sursum corda*), but we are also carried back to Christ, as He was at the very instant and in the very act of His offering. . . . If an host could be turned into Him now, glorified as He is, it would not serve. Christ *offered* is it, thither we must go. To

the serpent lifted up, thither we must repair, even *ad cadaver*" (Bishop Andrewes, quoted by Dr. Vogan "On the Eucharist," p. 104).

THE MEANING OF THE EATING AND OF THE DRINKING.

What, then, is this *eating* and what this *drinking*? What is the explanation of these acts, practised by and familiar to His hearers to express their participation in their own sacrifices and sin-offerings, as referred to Christ our Passover, slain for us? What great act of manducation is here meant, without which a man is lost, and a partner in which a man is saved? The broad statements of verses 53, 54, may be summed up, and are so by Waterland, to the effect that "all that feed on what is here mentioned have life, and all that do not feed thereupon have no life."

THE REFERENCE OF THE EATING AND THE DRINKING.

Does our blessed Lord mean by these statements of the widest character to refer primarily and directly to the Sacramental feeding in the Lord's Supper? Where, then, in this chapter is the institution, the giving of thanks, the breaking of bread, the foundation of the new covenant? On these grounds alone the reference cannot be primarily to the Lord's Supper. Nor is it true that all who receive the Communion have life, unless we put in the restriction of "worthy," and such like. "Much less is it true," says Waterland, "that all who never have or never shall receive it have not life, unless we make other restrictions and exceptions as to good men of old, infants, the invincibly ignorant and others, idiots, and those in utter darkness from no fault of theirs. And an interpretation which must be clogged with such a multitude of restrictions to make it apply at all cannot be the correct one."

Nor is the reference to the Lord's Supper possible for those who hold that it is the glorified body of Christ which is received in the Sacrament, since, as above noticed, that which is set before us for eating and drinking in John vi. is the actual "flesh given" and "the blood shed" *in death*, of our Saviour Christ, words which exclude a living and glorified body. Furthermore, the reception of the Sacrament is not, and cannot be, the continuous act referred to in the words, "Whoso *eateth* My flesh and *drinketh* My blood," and emphasized by the remarkable change of tense seen in verses 53, 54.

Nor is the same permanency attached in any part of Scripture to the reception of the Sacrament as is asserted of this "eating" and of this "drinking," for in the mighty words, "hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last

day," there is the undoubted and unmistakable ring of the final preservation of the saints.

Is there not, then, any other interpretation which will suit the breadth and length and depth of this great chapter? "Yes, and it is this," says Waterland. "All that finally share in the death, passion, and atonement of Christ are safe, and all that have not a part therein are lost. All that are saved owe their salvation to the salutary passion of Christ, and their partaking thereof, which is feeding upon His flesh and blood, is their life," so that "whether before Christ or since, whether in covenant or out of covenant, whether here or hereafter, no man ever was, is, or will be accepted but in and through the grand propitiation made by the *blood* of Christ."¹

That which is "eaten" is Christ Himself, in His whole person and passion: "I am the bread of life"; and more particularly as regards His body to be broken and His blood to be shed for making an atonement, "so that," to use Waterland's words, "*the fruits of His death* are what we are to receive as our spiritual food. . . . His passion is our redemption and by His death we live."

Here, following Waterland and Westcott, I would draw a careful distinction between interpreting and applying. The language of our Lord does not, and cannot primarily, refer to or be *interpreted* of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; but whether it can be *applied* to the faithful in the Lord's Supper is another question which for the present I reserve until we further consider the nature of the manducation.

That this "eating" is continuous and unbroken in the believer, and that the subject of this manducation is the actual body and blood which was crucified of Christ our Saviour, imperatively demands the solution that here we are in the presence of the greatest spiritual act of which the soul of man is capable. It has no qualification, such as "worthily." Eating is life in this case, and the act of eating is *not* a passive one. It is not a mere "receiving," and that which is treated of, though described under the veil of human language, through which we but dimly discern the essence of things, is a spiritual act which requires the positive and combined operation of the intellect, the will, and the heart.

If the subject of this "eating" be Christ on the cross; if this "eating" be life, and only life, and also eventual resurrection; if this "eating" be *continuous*, and therefore to be performed at every moment and crisis of daily life, the "eating" must be that supreme act of "faith in His blood" of which Paul speaks in Rom. iii. 25: "Whom God hath set

¹ Waterland, "Eucharist," p. 91.

forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood for the remission of sins that are past," and of which Augustine says: "Crederet enim in eum, hoc est manducare panem vivum. Qui credit, manducat."¹ And so clearly did Augustine and Jerome interpret John vi. of *spiritual feeding* at large that they asserted that this eating was done by the patriarchs of old, and is now eaten not only in the Supper but also in the Sacrament of Baptism.

Augustine says the same spiritual meat means that which we also eat, for "there were those in the desert who understood what they ate, by whom Christ was more tasted in the heart than the manna in the mouth. . . . So also the same drink, 'for the Rock was Christ.' Therefore they drank the same drink as we do, but spiritual—i.e., that which is taken by faith, not that which is drunk by the body."

Furthermore, it is to be noted that the difficulty which was felt by some as to the Lord's words had no reference to the meaning of the expressions "eating" and "drinking." Their real difficulty was that neither the Jews nor His Apostles had any comprehension of the fact which Moses and Elias spoke of in the Holy Mount; that is, of His approaching vicarious death as the very Paschal Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world—of Christ, our sacrifice. Versed as they were in sacrificial rites, they knew that "eating" the sacrifice, sometimes dispensed with and sometimes performed, was but the outward expression of the worshipper's heart—identification as a sinner with his sacrifice; the outward expression, but not the actual appropriation, of the value thereof; for in that case the "eating" of the sin-offering could not possibly have been omitted (Heb. xiii. 10, 11).

That "eating," then, which every Jew, taught by sacrifice and type, understood to mean soul-appropriation, not of transitory promises, but of Him afar off whose day Abraham saw and was glad; that "eating" which our Saviour speaks of as capable of being done in the then present, a year before the institution of the Supper; that "eating" which Jerome and Augustine ascribe to the faithful of old; that "eating" which is not always done when the Sacrament of so great a thing is eaten; that "eating" which is always life, and only life; that "eating" which, as no oral eating can possibly be, is here by our Lord stamped as continuous, can be no bodily or interrupted act, can refer to no reception at intervals by the mouth, which, even if it were possible, would not bring the body and blood of Christ one whit closer to the soul—for is anything really closer to the soul that is merely brought

¹ "In Johann.," Tract xxvi., 1.

into the mouth and stomach?—but must be that faith, active and appropriating, not merely receptive—the gift of God—which reaches back through the centuries to Calvary, and, knowing no obstacle in time or space, there finds its rest at the foot of the cross, where, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the Son of man is lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

THE EATING AND DRINKING ARE “APPROPRIATING FAITH.”

This faith *appropriates* all that belongs to Christ—“His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His precious death and burial.” It *appropriates*—for this is the essence of all “eating”—in a word, *Christ crucified*. It is a stupendous spiritual act of the soul; it is no physical or bodily eating; it is an act of faith: “Ut quid, paras dentes et ventrem,” “Crede et manducâsti.” “Believe, and thou hast eaten, and continuest to eat.”¹

Here it is to be noted that the figure is not in the words “flesh” and “blood,” but, as perhaps has been already made plain, in the words “eating” and “drinking.”

The error of some is to interpret the expressions of the glorified body of Christ, an error which ignores the exclusive reference of the passage to Christ our Passover slain, and then places the glorified body in the mouth, or, by a monstrous self-contradiction, the actual body and blood “after the manner of a spirit” in the digestive apparatus of the communicant, a contact which in no way affects the character. To the former, it may be said, the “eating” does not refer to the glorified body at all, but to that body in which He atoned for us. To the latter, it should be replied, the “eating” is not a bodily act; it is an act of faith which vitally affects and transforms the whole moral nature.

We must further inquire in what sense the soul can be said to feed upon a body. Let me answer in the words of Archbishop Sharp: “The body of Christ can no otherwise be a food for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls than only as the virtue and effects of Christ’s sacrifice upon the Cross are communicated to it, nor is the soul capable of receiving those benefits otherwise than by faith; so that the body and blood of Christ, in the sense of our Church, are the benefits of Christ’s passion.” And so Cranmer,² in a passage applicable both to John vi. and to the Communion: “Moreover, when I say that the body of Christ is present in them that worthily receive the Sacrament, lest any should think

¹ Aug., Tract xxv., 1.

² Preface to “Answer to Gardiner.”

that I mean that, though Christ is not corporally in the outward visible signs, yet He is corporally in the persons that duly receive them, this is to advertize the reader that I mean no such thing; but my meaning is, that the force, the grace, the virtue and benefit of Christ's body that was crucified for us and of His blood that was shed for us be really and effectually present with all them that duly receive the Sacraments." And in another place he bears testimony to the wide application of the "eating" in John vi., in the words: "Romanists say that good men eat the body of Christ and drink His blood only when they receive the Sacrament. We say they eat, drink, and feed on Christ continually as long as they are members of His body." They say that the fathers and prophets of the Old Testament did not eat the body nor drink the blood. We say that they did eat His body and drink His blood, though He was not yet born or incarnate. And it is observable that St. Paul, instead of saying, "Ye do show the Lord's body broken and blood shed," says, "Ye do show the Lord's death till He come," which makes it plain that "body broken and blood shed" are equivalent to the single word "death," *with its fruits*. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ means, *therefore*, to take by an act of faith a portion in the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, "for there is no kind of meate that is comfortable to the soul but only the death of Christe's blessed body, nor no kynde of drynke that can quenche her thirst but only the bloude-sheddyng of her Saviour Christ, which was shed for her offences."¹

There is no support for the carnal materialism which would have us believe that the flesh and blood of Christ are absorbed into the human constitution.² Nor would the addition of the words "by faith" make such a doctrine more possible either without the elements, as in this chapter, or with the elements, as in the Lord's Supper. That which is "eaten" is the benefits of His passion, the value, virtue, and efficacy thereof, and the "eating" is faith. Faith, God-given, is more than the hand which takes; it is the appropriating faculty, *Qui credit, manducat*. This spiritual manducation is the vital act which underlies the whole of a Christian's life, and it is of this spiritual "eating" our Saviour speaks in this chapter.

It will be remembered that in the Gospel St. John nowhere speaks of the outward rites of the Sacraments; but he *does* treat of the great spiritual facts to which they refer. In the third chapter he speaks of regeneration; and in this chapter

¹ Cranmer, "First Book on the Sacrament," p. 40, P.S.

² See Vogan, "On the Eucharist," pp. 130-134.

he speaks of that deep celestial truth to which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper refers back. The sixth chapter of John, therefore, though primarily referring to the great spiritual act of which I have spoken, is undoubtedly *applicable* to that holy ordinance which refers back to the great truth of which it is "the Divinely appointed and concrete expression," and in which, by the faithful, the very same sacred "eating" is effected as our Saviour speaks of long before its institution.

Sacred "means" are given to us, precious signs and pledges are given to, not offered by, us, in the bread and wine; but they are "moral means"—*i.e.*, means to our faith, and not physical means; they are a Divine elevation or platform, a *Ποῦ στῶ* given to raise our hearts from grovelling materialism to Him, who the night He was betrayed *gave* to us for this use these His creatures of bread and wine, but whether before, at, or after the Lord's Supper, "the mean whereby the body and blood of Christ is received, is faith."

I have said that the "eating" of John vi. does not refer to the glorified body of Christ; and, following Waterland, I now say that a clear distinction must be observed between "manducation" and "union." The one refers to the crucified, the other to the risen and glorified, Saviour. The *consequence* of "faith in His blood," of partaking of His sufferings, is union with Him. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him, and "he that 'eateth' Me, even he shall live by Me."

Some, with Augustine, make the union with Christ precede the manducation. Augustine says: "Non vere edit corpus Christi qui non est de corpore Christi"; but, notwithstanding this, manducation comes first in natural order, since our participation in the reconciliation of the Cross through "faith in His blood" must be the foundation of all our spiritual life, and precede the blessings and privileges which flow from it. But this union with Christ, transcending as it is, must not be regarded as merely a dream, too bright, too good to be true, but is an actual reality of the benefits of His passion, in whom all the promises of God are "yea" and "Amen."

The conclusions, therefore, to which we are led are as follows:

1. The "eating" of John vi. 54 is always "life," and ends in life; and this "eating" is continuous, and will continue as long as the Christian is in Christ, which is for ever.

2. That which is to be "eaten" is not the glorified body of Christ, nor can there be any allusion to the glorified body of our Lord in the expression, "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood," language which clearly refers to Christ crucified.

3. This act of manducation is, therefore, "faith," "appro-

priating faith," *Qui credit, manducat*; and the object of it is the passion, the death, and the fruits thereof, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the appropriating and receiving the grace and virtue of Christ's body broken and His blood shed being, of course, the ultimate meaning of "eating His body and drinking His blood" as above explained by Cranmer.

4. The whole chapter has reference to this daily, hourly, unbroken, continuous act of the soul, and not primarily to the Holy Communion.

But at the Lord's Supper, which clearly refers to this spiritual act of the faithful soul, there is, of course, by the faithful the very same "eating" as is here spoken of, and is always and continuously done by all believers at, after, and before the sacred ordinance, uplifted and helped in this Holy Sacrament by Divinely-appointed "means" and signs and pledges, *the mean* paramount and supreme being at all times and invariably faith.

This God-given faith neither creates nor believes "any corporal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood . . . which are in heaven, and not here," nor requires for its operation Christ to be in the mouth, as some by strong delusion suppose. The faithful soul reaches *backwards* to the cross, and *appropriates to itself the efficacy of Christ's passion*, which is the only way in which the spirit of man *can* "eat the flesh and drink the blood" of our Saviour Christ, and *therefore upwards* to Him glorified, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit attains to union, not with His glorified body, but with Him glorified, as will be manifested when He returns to reign:

"Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee?
O height, O depth of love!
Thou One with us on Calvary,
We one with Thee above!"

But no mere human words may conclude this paper. May we who, unworthy, except through Him, who is Jehovah Tsidkenu, have ventured to approach the ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat, join hereafter in the great anthem of all the redeemed: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and honour and blessing, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people. *"Αμην."*

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