

ART. II.—NOTES ON THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF
ST. JOHN.

II.

THE relation between the teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum and the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ is both obvious and intimate. Is it a primary or a secondary relation? In other words, are we to read the discourse as a direct revelation on the Sacrament as its proper subject, or as the revelation of a transcendental truth, in itself independent of the Sacrament, but of which the Sacrament, when instituted, is the expression and application?

We have now read the discourse in the latter sense, being led to do so by the following reasons:

1. To this effect is the guidance of Scripture, which dissociates the discourse from the institution. St. John, who gives the discourse, does not mention the institution, though giving an ample report of other incidents on the evening on which it took place; and in his narrative the discourse occurs a year before the institution. The separation is distinct.

2. A discourse on the Sacrament (not then existing) would have been entirely irrelevant to the audience addressed—even the best part of them—and would have been quite out of place in that stage of our Lord's teaching, in which foundations and outlines of essential truth are being laid down.

3. The discourse is, on the face of it, the declaration of a great spiritual truth concerning the communication and sustenance of eternal life, as mediated by the Speaker in His own person, and as received on the part of man by responsive spiritual acts—coming and believing—without any suggestion of external ordinance or visible sign.

4. It is evident that the universal denial, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves," and the universal assertion, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," if limited to the sacramental act, would not be true without great reservations and exceptions imported into them.

5. Finally, such a limitation to an ordinance and an act seems precluded by the canon of interpretation given at the end, which declares that "it is the Spirit which quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing," and that all "the words which have been spoken are spirit and are life."

These considerations forbid us to interpret the discourse by the Sacrament, but they teach us to interpret the Sacrament by the discourse, since the one is the promulgation of a

general principle of spiritual life, and the other is the creation of a particular instance under it. The relation between the two is fundamental, consisting in the same mystery delivered by the same authority. The authority is the same—that of Jesus Christ in person. His own lips spake the word in the synagogue at Capernaum, and that in the upper chamber at Jerusalem. In both cases there is one voice and one mind. The mystery is the same; taking that word in its Scriptural sense of a hidden truth revealed, a fact in the purpose and government of God, not discovered or discoverable, but disclosed by His Word. Here it is that of the incarnate Son, as the bread of life for man; in His human nature, through the medium of His flesh and blood, made the source and sustenance of life in the Spirit. This mystery, set forth in the discourse, is *assumed* in the words which institute the Sacrament. Yet, further, the participation by man in this bread of life is declared, in the discourse, to be personal, individual, voluntary, by an action of faith which takes, receives, and appropriates the virtue of the flesh and blood of Christ, as the act of eating and drinking appropriates the nourishment that is in food. In the Sacrament, this similitude is no longer a parable, the bodily act giving effect to the spiritual intention; so that there is simultaneous reception of the sign and participation in the thing signified.

We have thus recognised the close relation between the discourse and the institution as being (1) by the same authority—that of the Lord Himself; (2) on the same subject—the participation of Christ's flesh and blood; and (3) with the same demand for personal appropriation of the benefit. It remains to note the differences by which the relation is modified. These are noticeable in three respects:

1. There is the difference between a truth revealed and a means ordained. In the discourse the truth is set forth in the abstract, without complication with methods, persons, or circumstances, and there the affirmations or denials of eternal life are unreserved and absolute. It is otherwise with the ordinance, which is in the region of the concrete and the actual, where human variations and uncertainties come in, and the universal assertions of the discourse do not unreservedly apply. On the other hand, the ordinance has its proper office, not explicitly mentioned in the discourse, being instituted, not primarily for exhibition of truth which it records, but for the conveyance of grace which it imparts—viz., the truth and the grace of Christ incarnate, the food of the soul. It is instrumental, as well as symbolic, and that in virtue, not of the faith of the recipient, but of the institution of Christ. Faith takes and receives; but it can only take and receive

what is given; and the grace of participation is given for all time, and also given on each occasion by the instituting words: "Take, eat; this is My body. Drink ye all of it; this is My blood of the Covenant." The recitation of the institution is therefore the canon of consecration, and every communion is an association with the original act and moment, as is expressed in the name, now too seldom used, "the Supper of the Lord."

2. There is a difference of idea, one that is predominant in the institution being scarcely traceable in the discourse—the idea, that is, of death and sacrifice. The institution of the Sacrament takes place between the Passover, with its historic and prophetic meanings, and the death in which they are fulfilled. That which is eaten is the "body (given or broken) for you," that which is drunk is the "blood shed for you (for many) unto remission of sins"; and the ordinance remains for ever a commemoration of *the sacrifice of the death of Christ*, and a participation in the same. The discourse has no word on death or sacrifice. Only it is said, "Yea, and the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world." And there follow words which declare this flesh to be meat indeed and this blood to be drink indeed for life eternal, and then open into loftier regions of thought on the life which is in the living Father, which is derived to the Son, and imparted to those who feed on His flesh and blood by the action of that faith which the discourse throughout demands.

3. We have further to note a difference of language in the general revelation of the mystery in the discourse, and the particular application of it in the institution of the Sacrament. The *πρωγείν τὴν σάρκα* in the former is changed in the latter to *φαγεῖν τὸ σῶμα*, the feeding on the flesh into the eating the body. On such a subject, difference of wording is difference of intention. When it is said, *λάβετε φάγετε* ("Take, eat"), a definite act is enjoined; and it might have seemed natural to use the former language of eating the flesh. But this is avoided. Another word is used: "This is My body." So St. Paul says, "The bread which we break is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" and dwells afterward on the significance of the word. Now, whereas in daily life the eating of flesh is a common act and an accustomed expression, while the eating of a body is neither one nor the other, it follows that the avoidance of the one word and the employment of the other, in the case of the Holy Sacrament, must have intentional significance. We observe that in the human constitution flesh is the material substance, and body the entire organism; and therefore we have the right to say first that the one expression presents to the mind a more entire Christ than the other does, a Christ complete in the

frame and constitution which He took for our sake, in which His personality was expressed and His work on earth was done. Secondly, we may say that the word used in the institution applies to the death of sacrifice more fitly than that used in the discourse. The bodies of beasts were offered in sacrifice, not their flesh, and the blood which was shed in the act was that which vitalized the body, and was regarded as "the life thereof." So the truth of sacrifice is affirmed in "My body, which is given for you," and "My blood, which is shed for you for remission of sins." And in like manner it is said, "He reconciled us in the body of His flesh through death" (Col. i. 22), and "Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). Marvellous words! which in their conciseness recall the lifting-up and exposure of the sacred form by the manner of death inflicted, and at the same time affirm the voluntary sacrifice for us and for our sins. Yet, further, we observe that "communion of the body" has a more figurative character than would belong to "communion of the flesh," and gives less occasion for materialistic conceptions, such especially as transubstantiation. A change of the substance of bread into that of flesh is more possible to the imagination than its change into a body. Hence there is in some quarters a disposition to use the one expression as simply an equivalent for the other; and preachers will sometimes insist on the words of John vi. 23, 24, not as having application to the Sacrament, but as definitely spoken concerning it.

There is a passage in our Communion Office which is an interesting illustration of the difference. In the Prayer of Humble Access we say: "Grant us, gracious Lord, so to eat the FLESH of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His *body*, and our souls washed through His most precious blood." This is not a mere variation of wording, but a helpful distinction of thought. There is a departure from the language of the institution and of the whole service, and an adoption of the language of the discourse, in order to fix the mind on the spiritual act which is there impressed. The prayer is not that we may so receive the consecrated elements, but that, in so doing, we may so perform the inward and spiritual act of feeding by faith on the flesh and blood of the Son of God, that the sanctifying consequences of the reception may follow, as in that case they surely will. Indeed, it may be said that this prayer is an implicit commentary on the words of the discourse, and on their relation to the Holy Communion in the sense in which the subject has been treated here.

We have, then, in the Lord's words on the first occasion, a

disclosure of the mystery of His manifestation in the flesh while it is yet in progress; in His words on the second occasion a completion of the same when it reaches its close.

When that manifestation was passing before the eyes of men, they saw only the appearance, but knew not what it meant. When the third year came, it was time to lift the veil a little, though the light must fall on minds offended or perplexed. Yet there must be the witness that the flesh and blood are intermediary for communication of life to the world, because the human is the incarnation of the Divine. Through the same medium by which the life is given must it also be sought and received; and the believer eats the flesh of Christ and drinks His blood, while he derives from his Saviour, as thus manifested, food and nourishment for his soul and supplies of a life which, without it, he has not in himself.

A year later the brief history reaches its close in the cross and passion, the predestined goal and consummation of the manifestation in the flesh, achieving, in the mystery of the will and love of God, the redemption of man and the reconciliation of the world. This, which could not be prematurely told in the discourse, but which may be read (as we say) between the lines as present to the consciousness of the speaker, is in the words of the institution revealed, and at the same time expressed in a commemorative act for ever. The commemoration is made a participation. The spiritual eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood enjoined in the discourse is to be realized in a sacramental eating of the body as given for us, and drinking of the blood as shed for remission of sins. Thus partaking in what He wrought for us in the flesh, we are made sharers in His present life in glory: "We dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us."

To this review certain reflections may be added:

1. The action of the faith which spiritually feeds on Christ, as taught in the discourse, is in the institution for ever linked with the sacramental reception, yet not necessarily restricted to it. We can say the grace of participation is here, but we cannot say it is nowhere else. There is danger, we know, in a universal negative, and such propositions as "Nulla salus extra ecclesiam," and "No grace without the Sacraments," incur that danger. We hold with perfect confidence, we teach with unhesitating authority, the efficacy of the means ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; but we know not in what other ways His grace may act in making men participants in Himself. In the one case we can affirm positively; in the other we cannot affirm at all, but neither can we deny.

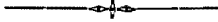
2. Another thought follows on the study of these profound and pregnant sayings. We reflect on the obligation of a

dutiful adherence to the lines which have been drawn by Jesus Himself, and how dangerous it must be to pass their limits by inferences of our own. The Twenty-eighth Article quietly observes, "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, lifted up, carried about or worshipped." The statement could not be disputed; but it has been said that though these things are not by Christ's ordinance, they are to be done as practical inferences from His words, which make the bread and wine His body and blood. If the elements are thus transmuted, they are to be offered, and they ought to be worshipped. Hence the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Adoration of the Host. These, as we have them before us in Roman Christianity, are not incidental observances. They constitute a great scheme of worship and a conspicuous character of religion, one confessedly not given by the Lord's words, but derived from a materialistic interpretation of them, and then, by inference from that interpretation. Warrant or suggestion from His own lips they have none. In the discourse the flesh and blood of the incarnate Word are presented as the living bread, food which the believing soul appropriates. In the institution the relation of the elements to the sacred body and blood is to be realized in the acts: "Take, eat; this is My body. Drink ye all of it; this is My blood: do this for My memorial." The relation is given for the purpose of the rite, and the purpose of the rite, as defined by the Lord, is communion and commemoration. These are also eucharistic in the very highest sense, both in respect of the fact commemorated and of the grace communicated, demanding and inspiring thanksgiving and praise. So it is of the entire act of faith and worship, of remembrance and reception, that we say at the close, "O Lord our heavenly Father, we Thy humble servants entirely desire Thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."

NOTE.—With reference to the sentence in the Prayer of Humble Access, it may be allowable to record a personal recollection connected with the comment given above. Forty years ago I was conversing on these topics with a friend, a distinguished scholar, devout thinker, and much-loved man, too soon removed into the world where such questions are no more. The subject at the time was the relation of the Body and Blood of Christ to the sacramental signs after consecration; and the question arose whether the union between the two was such that the Body and Blood would be received by one who should communicate without the spiritual qualifications, and consequently without the sanctifying effects. My friend said that his mind had been then determined in the affirmative by what appeared to him to be the teaching of the Church, as implied in the final prayer before consecration. The petition is, he said, that "we may so eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood that our sinful bodies

may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood," and that implies that a communicant does eat the flesh and drink the blood; even if he does not *so* do it (in such a manner and spirit) as would be followed by the sanctifying effects. I do not remember my answer, but the observation remained on my mind for after-consideration, with the result that the expression was seen to lead to a conclusion contrary to that which had been suggested; the change of language in this single instance being an adoption of the Lord's word at Capernaum, with the implication that the spiritual act then required is necessary to make the sacramental act a reception of the sacred Body and Blood.

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ART. III.—CHALDEAN PRINCES ON THE THRONE OF BABYLON.

III.

THE origin and rise of Nabopolassar are subjects that have been much discussed. According to Abydenus, as quoted by Eusebius, he was the Assyrian General sent to Babylon by Sarakos—*i.e.*, Sin-shar-ishkun, the last King of Assyria—to stem the invasion of a host numerous as the locusts that came up from the sea, who on his arrival at that place immediately revolted and turned his arms against his master. This account, as Tiele observes, is by no means a mere fabrication.¹ The locust army coming up from the sea is the rising of the Chaldean tribes, eager to shake off the yoke of Assyria. But that Nabopolassar was an Assyrian General, or an Assyrian by race, seems very improbable. He must rather be looked upon as a Chaldean, appointed by Assurbanipal to the governorship of Babylon. That the Assyrian King should make such an appointment is not so strange as it might appear at first sight. Assurbanipal was doubtless enraged beyond measure with the Babylonians for siding with his rebellious brother, Shamash-shum-ukin. In that rebellion, as we have seen, the Chaldeans were largely mixed up, and amongst them Nabû-bel-zikri, the grandson of Merodach-baladan. Nevertheless, there is evidence that after the death of Nabû-bel-zikri the Assyrian King made overtures to the men of the "Country of the Sea," the leading Chaldean tribe, as though by their means he would hold down the Babylonians. Such, at least, appears to be the intention of the following curiously-worded proclamation:

"The will of the King to the men of the Country of the

¹ See "Babylonisch-Assyrische Geschichte," Teil II., S. 421.