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JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND ELECTION IN VIEW OF FAITH.

In his review of Dr. Pieper's treatise, "Conversion and Election," Dr. Keyser,¹⁾ of the General Synod, notes as the first "serious error" of the book which he reviews that "the Lutheran regulative doctrine," justification, has been dislocated from its dominating position in the body of Lutheran teaching. He says:—

"A serious doctrinal blemish in the book under review is this: It puts into a minor place the material, chief, and regulative principle of the Reformation, namely, justification by faith. This was the doctrine which Luther made central and pivotal, and by which he judged and decided all other doctrines in the Biblical system. He contended ever that justification by faith alone was 'the sign of a standing or a falling Church.' He would not subordinate this doctrine to any other doctrine, or to all other doctrines combined, but judged all by it, and assembled and coordinated all around it. This is also the view-point of the Augustana. To our mind it is the view-point of the Formula of Concord. If the eleventh chapter is read and studied in the search-light of this cardinal principle, it will be much more easily comprehended and evaluated.

1) Election and Conversion. A frank discussion of Dr. Pieper's book on "Conversion and Election," with suggestions on Lutheran concord and union on another basis. By *Leander S. Keyser*, D. D. Burlington, Iowa. The German Literary Board. 1914. 184 pages. 75 cts.

THE EUCHARISTIC INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 6.

1.

The discourse, or dispute, of our Lord on the Bread of Life, which begins at the twenty-sixth and ends at the seventieth verse of the sixth chapter of John, is to-day as much contested ground between the two Protestant bodies which trace their origin to the Reformation in the sixteenth century as it was four hundred years ago. The question in controversy is, whether the remarks of our Lord which John records as having been uttered in the synagogue at Capernaum after the feeding of the five thousand, or any part of those remarks, contain any intended reference to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; in other words, whether the Lord has in these remarks conveyed any intelligence how He regards the eucharistic elements and the sacramental action of partaking of those elements. This question has been, and still is, negatived by the Lutherans, affirmed by the Reformed.

Some enthusiastic defenders of the eucharistic interpretation of John 6 have carried the eucharistic idea even into the

narrative in vv. 1—15. They place the event there recounted after the death of John the Baptist, and connect with it as a cause the retirement of the Lord to Bethsaida Julias. "The death of the renowned forerunner, of the idol of the multitude, brought vividly to the mind of the Lord His own death—the foreseen sacrifice of Himself. The conviction that He must give Himself to a violent death, give His flesh to the hungry and starving multitude, made the decadence of His popularity in Galilee a certain consequence of any right apprehension of His mission or claims. This mastery over the powers of nature which His compassion for others prevailed on Him to manifest would be misunderstood. The moral and mystic meaning of it was far more important than the superficial inferences drawn by the Galileans. The real lesson of the miracle would grievously offend them. But it sank deeply into the apostolic mind."¹⁾ Similarly Geikie speaks of "the prospect of the cross" being before the mind of the Lord as He crossed the lake, and of the Lord's unexpressed wish to be regarded as the Bread of Life while feeding the multitude.²⁾

This thought is speculative, and puts a studied design into a perfectly natural act of helpfulness which our Lord was observed to have performed by the disciple who had understood Him best. The transition from the banquet in the wilderness to the controversy of Capernaum is given quite naturally by John. While all the acts of Jesus were by His omniscience certainly present to Him before their performance, we have no right to assume design in His acts where no design has been expressed. If this attempted connection between the miracle and the discourse on the day after is not for the purpose of obtaining a hint at least, or a foreshadowing, of one of the earthly elements of the sacrament, even the friends of the eucharistic interpretation of the argument of the Lord in the synagogue at Capernaum might discard it as useless.

1) Dr. Reynolds, in *Pulpit Commentary*, *ad locum*.

2) *Life of Christ*, chap. 43.

In their presentation of the doctrine of Scripture on what constitutes the sacrament of the eucharist and the eucharistic, or sacramental, eating and drinking, the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church are singularly free from references to John 6. There are no such references in Luther's catechisms. While their absence in these writings might be explained by the fact that the difference in the doctrine of the sacrament between the Lutherans and the Reformed had not become public and pronounced until the fall of 1528, no such explanation for the absence of references to John 6 will avail for the respective articles of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and of the Form of Concord of 1580. The latter document cites vv. 49—58 and v. 51 in the chapter on the Person of Christ as proof-texts for the redemptive work of Christ.³⁾ Only in chap. 12, Art. 24, of the Apology we find John 6, 35 cited against the Roman mass and the *opus operatum* teaching of the papists. "This passage," Melancthon wrote, "testifies that in the sacrament the remission of sins is offered; it also testifies that this ought to be received in faith."⁴⁾ But even here the reference is merely to the salutary use, not to the essence of the sacrament, or the character of the sacramental eating and drinking.

Luther himself has at no time during his career as an expounder of Scripture discovered any trace of the sacrament in John 6, though, when setting forth faith as of paramount necessity for receiving the benefits which divine grace has stored in the sacrament, he has not hesitated to cite texts from the discourse on the Bread of Life.⁵⁾

3) Jacobs' edit., pp. 635. 654.

4) p. 274.

5) In his *Operationes in Psalmos*, one of his earliest products (1519 to 1521), Luther refers to John 6, 53, thus: "Weshalb eine harte Rede? Weil dieses Fleisch essen und dieses Blut trinken heisst, Christo durch den Glauben einverleibt werden und teilnehmen an seinem Leiden." (IV, 359.) In his Church Postil, where Luther, more than in any other of his writings, indulges a tendency to allegorizing, we might expect eucharistic interpretations of John 6. Moreover, at this time (1521—24) Luther had not as thoroughly broken in every point of doctrine with the exegetical

On the other hand, the confessional writings of the Reformed churches and the writings of Reformed dogmaticians

and dogmatical thought of Rome as later, and Rome, indeed, treats John 6 as eucharistic, and defends its practice of child communion from this passage. But even in his Church Postil Luther speaks out strongly against the eucharistic acceptation of John 6. To quote a few of his sayings: "Darum habe ich gesagt, dass man diese Worte nicht zwingen soll auf das Sakrament des Altars; denn wer es dahin deutet, der tut dem Evangelium Gewalt. Es ist in diesem Evangelium kein Buchstabe, der da des Sakramentes des Altars gewaehnete." (XI, 1143.) "So wir dies Evangelium von dem Brot des Altars verstehen wollen, wie denn unsere Papisten getan haben, und dies Fest [Corpus Christi] damit eingesetzt, so geben wir den Boehmen das Schwert in die Haende, dass sie uns durch die Koepfe hauen. Denn sie schliessen stark wider uns aus diesem Evangelio und ganzen Kapitel; dass wir beide Gestalt geniessen und brauchen sollen. . . . So zwingt der Text, dass es von einem andern Essen muesse verstanden werden. . . . Das Essen und Trinken ist nichts anders denn glauben an den Herrn Christum." (XI, 2249; cf. 2253.) "Das Essen und Trinken ist nichts anders denn glauben, dass Er, Gottes Sohn, wahrhaftig Fleisch und Blut habe." (XII, 228.) In his Exposition of Exodus (1524—26) he cites John 6, 35, and says: "Daselbst hast du auch das geistliche Essen des Herzens." (III, 853.) Those exegetes who favor the eucharistic interpretation of John 6, and nonchalantly substitute for the "flesh" of John 6 the "body" of the words of institution, might appeal to Luther's remark in his "Bondage of the Will" (December, 1525): "In dieser Stelle koennte man Leib anstatt Fleisch sagen." (XVIII, 1877.) Luther refers to v. 63: "The flesh profiteth nothing." But Luther does not speak of the flesh of Christ. Compare, moreover, Luther's remark in his treatise, "That These Words Still Remain Unshaken," etc. (April, 1527): "Fleisch kann nicht von Christi Leib verstanden werden." (XX, 840.) From the series of sermons on the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of John which Luther preached in Bugenhagen's pulpit in Wittenberg in 1530—32 during the latter's absence at Luebeck, we quote a few statements: "Wird also beschlossen, dass er allhier in diesem Kapitel vom geistlichen Essen redet. Denn also legt er's selber aus vom Durst und Hunger, der die Seele belangt." (VII, 2239.) "Daher erhebt sich denn ein Murren, dass sie fragen: Wie kann man dein Fleisch essen? Da ist der Sache also geraten, naemlich, dass er redet vom geistlichen Fleisch und vom geistlichen Essen. Der Glaube ist's, der ihn isset, wie er sich denn selber auslegt." (2321 f.) "Es sind verdrehte und verbluente Reden, und heisst hier 'essen' eine goettliche Niessung und Essen." (2322.) "Dies Kapitel redet nichts von *sacramentis*." (2325.) And in his Table Talk Luther is reported to have replied to a certain question as follows: "Der Spruch Joh. 6, 53 gehoeret nicht zum Sakrament, sondern zum Glauben." (XXII, 592.)

are full of references to John 6 as of eucharistic import. Shedd quotes the Westminster Confession (XXIX, VII) as teaching "that 'the worthy receiver *spiritually* receives and feeds upon Christ crucified,' and denies that he '*carnally* and *corporally* receives or feeds upon Him.'" To this statement Shedd adds the following comment: "The points in this statement are: (a) The believer, in worthily partaking of the Lord's Supper, consciously and confidently relies upon Christ's atoning sacrifice for the remission of his sins. This is meant by the phrase, 'Feed upon Christ crucified.' The allusion is to Christ's words in John 6, 53—56. The flesh and blood of Christ signify the expiatory death of Christ. To 'drink Christ's blood' is to trust in Christ's atonement in a *vital* manner, and with a *vivid* feeling of its expiatory efficacy."⁶⁾ It should be noted that Shedd does not say, nor does he claim that the Westminster Confession says, that the eucharistic eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ are taught in John 6. What he declares, and what his standard church symbol declares, is, that the only possible eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ which a Reformed can conceive is that taught in John 6. In other words, Shedd and the Westminster Confession would agree with the Lutherans in understanding eating and drinking in John 6 as an act of faith; both accept the spiritual signification of these terms. They would disagree in their application of this text to the eucharist.

In his *Fidei Ratio*, addressed to Charles V, Zwingli denies what "the papists, and some who are looking back to the flesh-pots of Egypt, maintain, *viz.*: Quod ore nostro naturale Christi corpus edatur," and he states his reason thus: "Christ Himself showed (the error of this belief) when to the Jews, who were quarreling about the corporal eating of His flesh, He said: The flesh profiteth nothing, namely, as regards natural eating; however, it profiteth very much as regards spiritual

6) *Dogmatic Theol.* II, 565.

eating; for it gives life.”⁷⁾ In his *Christianae Fidei Brevis et Clara Expositio*, addressed to King Francis of France, Zwingli has an elaborate treatise on “Praesentia Corporis Christi in Coena.”⁸⁾ He does not cite John 6 in this treatise, but his whole presentation of the distinction between “spiritualiter edere” and “sacramentaliter edere” rests on his understanding John 6 in the eucharistic sense.⁹⁾

7) Niemeyer, *Coll. Confess. in Eccles. Reformatt. publicatarum*. Lips. 1840, pp. 27. 29.

8) *l. c.*, pp. 44—50.

9) Zwingli's view of John 6 reappears in varying forms in the confessional writings of the Reformed churches published after Zwingli. In the *Basiliensis Prior Confessio Fidei*, which Hagenbach ascribes to Oecolampad and assigns to A. D. 1530, we read: “. . . in des Herren Nachtmal, in dem vns, mit des Herren brot vnd tranck, sampt den worten des Nachtmals, der war lyb, vnd das war blut CHRISTI, durch den diener der Kylehen fuerbildet vnd angeboten wuerdet, blybt brot vnd win. Ein starck glichs wider den fyand der warheit. Joan. 6. Dann es ye ein geistliche spiss ist, darumb sy von der gloubigen Sel muss genossen werden.” (*l. c.*, p. 81.) In the Latin treatise, in the chapter “De sacrae coenae communionem,” the statement: “Credimus firmiter, ipsummet Christum cibum esse credentium, animarum ad vitam aeternam,” is established from John 6, 35. 47. 48. 50. 51. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. (*l. c.*, p. 95.) In the *Helvetica prior*, which was published about the time of the Wittenberg Concordia, when strong hopes began to be entertained for a union between the Lutherans and the Reformed everywhere, the chapter inscribed “Eucharistia” states: “Coenam vero mysticam, in qua dominus corpus et sanguinem suum, id est, seipsum, suis vere ad hoc offerat, ut magis magisque in illis vivat, et illi in ipso. Non quod pani et vino corpus et sanguis domini vel naturaliter uniantur: vel hic localiter includantur, vel ulla huc carnali praesentia statuatur. Sed quod panis et vinum ex institutione symbola sint, quibus ab ipso domino per ecclesiae ministerium vera corporis et sanguinis eius communicatio, non in perituum ventris cibum, sed in aeternae vitae alimoniam exhibeatur.” And the proofs cited are Matt. 26, John 6 and 14, 1 Cor. 10, all of which texts are thus treated as sacramental texts on a par the one with the other. (*l. c.*, p. 121.) The *Confession de Foy (Confessio Gallicana)*, of 1561, expresses itself with some reservation on “la sainte Cène (qui est le second Sacrement),” but also cites John 6, 56. 57, for the following statement: “Jesus Christ . . . nous repaist et nourrit vrayement de sa chair et de son sang, à ce que nous soyons un avec luy, et que sa vie nous soit commune.” (*l. c.*, p. 325.) The *First Scotch Confession*, of 1568, teaches correctly that the bread and wine in the sacrament are the communion of the body

Modern Reformed dogmaticians occasionally seem to surrender John 6 as a eucharistic text. Van Oosterzee says: "The literal conception of the words of the Lord's Supper appears at once impossible, if for a moment we occupy the place and feeling of those in whose presence it was ordained by Jesus. The appeal to John 6, 48—58 is of as little force, since there the Lord spoke indeed of His *flesh* and *blood*, but certainly not of His *body*, or of the blood of the New Covenant; and the Lord's Supper is here as little alluded to as, *e. g.*, in John 4, 13. 14 or 15, 1—8." But practically this author is forced to fall back on John 6 to explain the eating and drinking which occurs in the Lord's Supper, because He says: "If the body of Christ, as Luther declared even in 1534, is really 'eaten and bitten by the teeth,' the question of the Jews at Capernaum, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' becomes in fact a very natural question."¹⁰ Hodge enumerates "the passages of Scripture directly (!) referring to the sacrament," and omits from his catalogue John 6, but when he discusses "manducation," he operates with John 6, 53—58, puts himself on the basis of the Zurich, Helvetic, and Belgic Confessions, adopts Calvin's theory of the believing communicants being engrafted by the Spirit into the body of Christ, and says, evidently with approval: "The Reformed understood that 'eating and drinking,' as used in John 6, 51—58, must be understood 'figuratively of the spiritual appropriation of Christ by faith' because our Lord makes such eating and drinking essen-

and blood of Christ, incorrectly, that the latter are received by believers who are thereby rendered immortal, "quod sicut aeterna deitas carni Jesu Christi vitam et immortalitatem tribuit, ita etiam caro et sanguis eius, dum a nobis editur et bibitur, easdem nobis praerogativas confert," but does not refer to John 6. (*l. c.*, p. 353.) — The eucharistic view of John 6 appears in the Heidelberg Catechism, of 1563 (*l. c.*, p. 411), in the *Helvetica posterior*, of 1566 (*l. c.*, p. 519); and, omitting the Reformed "confessiones secundi ordinis," we might note, from the Puritan Confessions, besides that cited by Shedd, the Larger Catechism, of 1650, which proves that communicants "Christum per fidem pascere," from John 6, 35. (*l. c.*, Appendix, p. 90.)

10) *Christian Dogmatics* II, 764 f.

tial to salvation.” Hodge correctly claims to be in harmony with Lutherans in this view of John 6. But Hodge knows of no other eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ than that which he has explained from John 6; for in the next paragraph he declares: “To receive the body and blood as offered in the sacrament, or in the Word, (!) is to receive and appropriate the sacrificial virtue or effects of the death of Christ on the cross.”¹¹⁾

A study of the Lord's discourse on the Bread of Life is necessary in order to determine the admissibility of employing any remark of the Lord in this discourse for determining eucharistic phenomena.

D.

(To be concluded.)