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**"SOLA SCRIPTURA"  
& THE  
INTERPRETATION  
OF THE  
EATING & DRINKING  
OF JN. 6:51-53**

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*SOLA SCRIPTURA* AND THE INTERPRETATION  
OF THE EATING AND DRINKING OF JOHN 6:51-53

In our presentation today we return to the Bread of Life discourse of Jesus, which has been studied by the people of God ever since the report of Jesus' words was penned by the apostle John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Theologians of the church through the centuries have poured over the discourse presented in verses 26-58 of John 6, as well as the related statements of the Lord following in versus 61c to the end of the chapter, and offered varying explanations of the meaning of what Jesus was actually saying as He spoke to the crowd of Jews gathered in and around the synagog in Capernaum on the occasion indicated in John 6. Jesus had on the previous day and nearby the distant eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee preached to, healed the sick among, and miraculously fed, and then left, the multitude of 5,000 men besides women and children. Many in that multitude had sought Jesus thereafter and now found Him and his twelve disciples in Capernaum. One of the first questions on their minds when they came to Jesus concerned the time when Jesus had arrived at the city after leaving them the night before, thus also inquiring implicitly as to how He had gotten there. After the miraculous feeding, they wanted to make Him their king, a bread-king.

Jesus responded by speaking of things far more important for the people to know than what they sought. The brief gist of Jesus' words was that their quest for Him following the feeding miracle was prompted by their desire to have their stomachs continually filled in that wonderful way; that the miracle had not led them to think of the teaching of Him who performed it and the other mighty works. He stated that there was a food which satisfies forever and endures to life everlasting which they should strive to acquire; that the Father had sent Him, Jesus, to dispense this food, this Bread from the Father in heaven; that the people could receive this food by believing on Himself, for He.

Jesus, was the heaven-sent Bread of Life. So, let his hearers come to Him and believe on Him as the Son of God, their Messiah and Savior, as He had been proclaiming to them, and obtain everlasting life and the resurrection from the dead at the last day. Despite the Jews' murmuring because Jesus said "I am the Bread which came down from heaven."<sup>1</sup> He declares plainly "Most assuredly . . . he who believes in Me has everlasting life." This brings us to the verses of the discourse, 51-53, which we would touch upon exegetically today, as Christ says

- (51) "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."
- (52) The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this *Man* give *His* flesh to eat?"
- (53) Then Jesus said to them "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you."

The particular topic of our paper is "*Sola Scriptura* and the Interpretation of the Eating and Drinking of John 6:51-53."

At the outset of our discussion let me note that, while much modern scholarship questions the Johannine apostolic authorship (in whole or in part) and/or the integrity of Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life, I maintain both: the entire discourse, in my view, is surely the accurate written report of the apostle John as to what Jesus actually said in Capernaum (possibly in condensation).

This paper proposes to deal with two principal understandings of the verses at hand and of the kind of eating of the flesh of Christ and the kind of drinking of his blood referred to in verses 51-53, as these interpretations have come down to us from the past. These views are (1) that the eating and drinking are a special (and miraculous, supernatural) eating and drinking of the divine elements which is by faith, and (2) that Christ is speaking of the sacramental (miraculous, supernatural)

eating and drinking, orally, with the elements of Christ's body and blood received in the communicant's mouth, which occurs in the celebration of the eucharist. The former view is distinctively Lutheran. It has been enunciated and championed by numerous early church fathers, by Luther, Chemnitz, and Lutheran theologians, pastors, and Christian people (among such, members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) and also by Reformed theologians until the present day. The other view, that John 6 is speaking of the eating of Christ's flesh and drinking of His blood which takes place in the Lord's Supper, has been the teaching and belief of numerous early church fathers, of the Eastern and Western Churches of old, of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches subsequently, and of certain modern scholars until the present time.<sup>2</sup>

Among recent arguments offered in behalf of the Eucharistic interpretation are these:

- Beginning with verse 50, new words are introduced into the sermon—"eat," "drink," "feed," "flesh," "blood"—which are held to be sacramental and referring to Holy Communion. Raymond Brown, for example, writes: "They [Jesus' words in verse 53] simply reproduce the words, we hear in the Synoptic account of the institution of the Eucharist (Matthew xxvi 26-28): 'Take, *eat*; this is *my body*; . . . *drink* . . . this is *my blood*.'"<sup>3</sup>

- Much is made of the fact that the Gospel of John does not record the words of the sacrament's institution as do the Synoptics. Brown states: "The second indication of the Eucharist is the formula found in verse 51: 'The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.' If we consider that John does not report the Lord's words over the bread and the cup at the Last Supper, it is possible that we have preserved in verse 51 the Johannine form of the words of institution. In particular, it resembles the Lucan form of institution: 'This is my body which is given for you.'"<sup>4</sup>

- Another Roman Catholic theologian, André Feuillet, holds that the eucharistic theme is found *throughout* the John 6 discourse and thus continues to be the subject in verses 51-53. He writes:

It . . . seems evident to us that the eucharistic theme, already prepared by the word *eucharistēsas* in verses 11 and 23 (deliberately repeated), is announced from the beginning (verse 27 with *brōsis*; *dōsei* used in this verse, recurs in verse 55).<sup>5</sup>

He is the opinion that

The Christian cannot help seeing in these verses the body and blood of the Christ of the Eucharist. Even the first part of the Discourse, which speaks of bread and drink, takes on a new meaning, or rather a more exact one, for it is principally by the sacrament of the Eucharist Christians receive this heavenly bread which is the Logos incarnate.<sup>6</sup>

Feuillet adds this idea, among others:

Christ had to prepare his disciples for the great event of the Last Supper. . . . As for the Discourse on the Bread of Life in John, there are two possibilities: either the evangelist has added to Jesus' discourse following the multiplication of the loaves some of the tidings which He said at the Last Supper, or else the miracle of the loaves was already the preparation for the institution of the Eucharist.<sup>7</sup>

- Lutheran exegete James Voelz, taking a different approach, asks the question "Does the Bread of Life discourse refer to the oral eating of the Lord's Supper or does it not?" and responds: "The answer, I believe, is Yes, but not simply Yes—rather, Yes in a complex way."<sup>8</sup> He explains:

I believe that in the discourse on the Bread of Life, our Lord is speaking of heavenly sustenance which He gives for His own, for the people of God. What is that heavenly sustenance? It can properly be thought of, I believe, in specifically eucharistic (i.e., oral eating) terms: (verse 54) "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and will raise him up on the last day." But it can *not only* be thought of in such specifically eucharistic terms: (Verse 47) "He who believes has eternal life." Yet, the Sacrament of the Altar is one means—and it is the only means of *oral* eating and drinking—for the Body of Christ to be fed with the body of Christ, by the living food of the Lord, her living Savior.<sup>9</sup>

Again:

This discourse is worded in such a way that its words *cause* Christian hearers to think about the oral eating of the Sacrament of the Altar, and eating which occurs in the case of all communicants, while at the same time they point beyond the oral eating to the spiritual eating, an eating which occurs only in the case of believers.<sup>10</sup>

Voelz suggests that the words of Christ in the discourse

are, in short, a sort of *double entendre*, with some parts of the discourse applying more strongly to one member of the meaning (the verses before verse 51, e.g., applying more strongly to the more general spiritual eating), and other parts applying more strongly to the other member (the verses following verse 51 applying to the more specifically eucharistic oral eating).<sup>11</sup>

Before proceeding now, two things may be parenthetically noted. First, numerous theologians, ancient and modern, simply *assume* that Jesus speaks of the Sacrament of Holy Communion throughout the John 6 discourse and present their comments without endeavoring to supply reasons for this assumption. Secondly, the fact that some liberal scholars do not regard Jesus as Himself having spoken the words of the Bread of Life discourse, but attribute it to someone else—for example, a final redactor of Fourth Gospel material—substantially affects their interpretation of what is said in the discourse.

In contrast to the view that Jesus was speaking of the eucharist in John 6, the present writer states that he is in agreement with the traditional Lutheran interpretation which sees the Lord speaking here exclusively of the spiritual reception of Christ by faith and, specifically, of the spiritual eating of Christ's body and drinking of His blood that occurs through faith in Jesus. Guided by the principles of the traditional Lutheran Biblical hermeneutics, I respectfully defend this viewpoint on the basis of the considerations which follow (among others).

(1) Surely, Jesus Himself actually spoke the words of the John 6 Bread of Life discourse, and at the time in his ministry and at the place mentioned in John 6: 1-4. The Gospel text says so!

(2) The apostle John, who was with Jesus, gave a fully truthful report of what Jesus actually did and said on the specified occasion, we know, because he wrote his report under divine inspiration.

(3) Surely, Jesus had the desire to bring, and was intent upon bringing, people in the multitude gathered in Capernaum to faith in Himself and to eternal life and salvation. Surely, He chose the best words to speak to the crowd, so that the Holy Spirit could accomplish in many the miracle of conversion. While the church of the future would study His words and receive benefit, He spoke at that time to help and save the people to whom He initially addressed them.<sup>12</sup>

(4) When Jesus spoke of Himself as the Bread of Life which should be eaten for the reception of eternal life, adding later also that His blood should be drunk to the same end, He assuredly was speaking of a reception of these divine entities *by faith*, because of his clear, preparatory indication of this to be His meaning in the heart of the discourse, verses 29-47. When at the beginning of His address Jesus counsels His audience to labor for the food that endures to everlasting life which the Son will give them “because God the Father has sealed Him,” the people ask what works they should perform to obtain it. He replied, “This is the work of God, that you *believe* in Him,” Jesus (emphasis mine). They ask in turn “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and *believe* You?” (emphasis mine). In connection with a reference to the manna God gave the Israelites during their wandering in the wilderness, Jesus added “My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God. . . is [that which] comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”<sup>13</sup> When the people then ask Jesus to give them this bread for all time in the future, He said “I am the bread of life.

He who *comes* to Me shall never hunger, and he who *believes* in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have *seen* Me and yet do not *believe*.”

Jesus employs a metaphor in identifying Himself as the Bread of Life. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a strong comparison is made between two entities by equating them, saying one thing is the other. Just as earthly bread nourishes physical life, so He, the heaven-sent Bread, preserves (and also initially bestows) spiritual and eternal life. As in a Semitic pattern (seen very frequently in the Psalms and in Proverbs), in which two similar statements of the sacred writer are given in parallelism, with the one illuminating and explaining the other, so Jesus identifies coming to Him and believing in Him.

In the next verse exhibiting this pattern (verse 36) Jesus continues. “But. . . you have *seen* Me” (emphasis mine), He says. “and yet do not *believe*” (emphasis mine). In verse 40, He states: “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who *sees*, the Son and *believes* in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (emphasis mine). Further on, in verses 44-47, Jesus speaks of this coming to Himself and declares “He who *believes* in Me has eternal life” (emphasis mine), adding the assertion, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone *eats* of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (emphasis mine). All of the eating (later, drinking is added), coming, seeing, and believing of which Christ speaks, He equates! Each activity bestows the identical gift, eternal life, as well as the perpetual abiding in Christ spoken of in the last portion of the discourse. Each of these figurative activities is a description of faith. In other words, the eating of Christ, drinking of his blood, coming to Him, and seeing Him is a designation of a like spiritual activity which is faith in Christ as Son of God and Savior. In the totality of Scriptural revelation it is alone by this



faith that persons receive eternal life. Assuredly, Jesus is speaking of a receiving of Himself by faith, here in the Bread of Life discourse.

(5) Christ is *not* referring to the reception of Holy Communion in the Bread of Life discourse. That is so for the following reasons.

(a) When, along with all He has previously stated, Jesus makes the bald statement, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (verse 53), He makes absolutely clear that He is speaking of an eating and drinking which is *absolutely necessary* for salvation, namely the salvation which is alone by faith. The same cannot be, and is not, said of the Lord’s Supper. Certainly the saints of the Old Testament period were saved without receiving this sacrament, as was the penitent malefactor crucified with Christ on Calvary, as are infants and small children in the New Testament period.

(b) In John 6 Jesus speaks of an eating and drinking of Himself (this inclusive term is justified in accordance with what Christ says in verse 57, “feeds on *Me*,” emphasis mine) which is *always salutary*. This cannot be said of the Lord’s Supper, which communicants (that is, those who are unworthy) may receive to their judgment, and possibly to ultimate condemnation. Compare 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 in which section a *manducatio indignorum* (as well as *dignorum*) is taught, and mention is made of consequent chastening judgments which were visited upon the unworthy communicants in the Corinthian congregation.

(c) As was mentioned above, Jesus in the John 6 discourse was trying to win the hearts of his hearers to faith (especially those whom the Father was drawing to

Christ; compare verse 44). Since the Lord's Supper was not instituted until a year after He spoke to the crowd in and around the Capernaum synagog. He certainly was not speaking to them about a sacramental eating of which they did not, and could not, have knowledge. In this connection one Lutheran scholar observes: "It is vain to point to Nicodemus upon whom Jesus urged Baptism; for the Baptist baptized thousands. Nicodemus knew of this Sacrament, and Jesus explains its effects to him."<sup>14</sup>

(d) There is no mention in the Bread of Life discourse of the wine which was (and is necessarily) present as a visible element in the Lord's Supper. According to the Synoptic Gospels, furthermore, the contents of the cup, (along with the wine) Christ's blood, were received by the disciples on the first Maundy Thursday. That blood was said to inaugurate the New Testament Christ came to establish for the benefit of the disciples in Jerusalem's Upper Room and of all future believers. Neither cup, nor wine, nor reception of the blessings of the New Testament in connection with the drinking of Christ's blood are referred to in the John 6 discourse. These omissions contribute to the conclusion that Christ is not speaking in the discourse of the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>15</sup>

(e) Christ addressed the Bread of Life discourse chiefly to unbelievers, the Jews in Capernaum, in order to bring about their conversion. The words of the Lord's Supper were spoken in an entirely different setting to those who were already believers, true disciples of Jesus, in order to strengthen their faith.

(f) Martin Chemnitz in his *The Lord's Supper* speaks of the specific and distinctive "sealing function" (my expression) peculiar to the sacramental eating and

drinking, as compared with the eating and drinking by faith. He says:

For the spiritual eating is the enjoyment of Christ and of all His benefits, but the Lord's Supper was instituted as the seal of His benefits. And how is the spiritual benefit of Christ sealed to us? Surely not with only a little morsel of bread and a few drops of wine, but with the very substance of the body which was given for us and the blood which was shed for us. For this is what the Son of God Himself affirms. Therefore, just as there is one thing which is sealed and another thing by which the sealing is done, so also the spiritual eating of Christ which is sealed is one thing, and the sacramental eating of the body of Christ by which the sealing is done is another.<sup>16</sup>

In accord with this helpful observation, it again will be determined that the eating and drinking of John 6 is different from that in the Supper. Christ is not speaking of the eucharist in the Bread of Life discourse.

(g) Since the Bread of Life discourse makes no reference to the Lord's Supper, as has been shown previously, the words of Christ in John 6 have no *double entendre*, but pertain exclusively to a spiritual reception of Christ by faith.<sup>17</sup>

Our Lutheran confessing fathers, proceeding with exegetical accuracy, carefully and clearly distinguish the spiritual and the sacramental eating and drinking, as they write in the Formula of Concord, Article VII titled "The Holy Supper," sections 61-66, as follows:

There is therefore a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ. The one is spiritual, of which Christ speaks chiefly in John 6:48-58. This occurs, in no other way than with the spirit and faith, in the preaching and contemplation of the Gospel as well as in the Lord's Supper. It is intrinsically useful, salutary, and necessary to salvation for all Christians at all times. Without this spiritual participation, even the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only not salutary but actually pernicious and damning. This spiritual eating, however, is precisely faith—namely, that we hear, accept with faith, and appropriate to ourselves the Word of God, in which Christ, true God and man, together with all the benefits that he has acquired for us by giving his body for us into death and by shedding his blood for us (that is to say, the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and everlasting life), is presented—and that we rest indomitably, with certain trust and confidence, on this comforting assurance that we

have a gracious God and eternal salvation for the sake of Jesus Christ, and hold to it in all difficulty and temptation.

The other eating of the body of Christ is oral or sacramental, when all who eat and drink the blessed bread and wine in the Lord's Supper receive and partake of the true, essential body and blood of Christ orally. Believers receive it as a certain pledge and assurance that their sins are truly forgiven, that Christ dwells and is efficacious in them; unbelievers receive it orally, too, but to their judgment and damnation. This is what Christ's words of institution say, when at table and during supper he handed his disciples natural bread and natural wine, which he called his true body and blood, and said therewith, "Eat and drink." Under the circumstances this command can only be understood as referring precisely to oral eating and drinking—not, however, in a coarse, carnal, Capernaite manner, but in a supernatural, incomprehensible manner. But Christ adds another command, and in addition to the oral eating he ordains the spiritual eating, when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." In these words he required faith.

Hence, in harmony with these words of Christ's institution and St. Paul's exposition of them, all the ancient Christian teachers and the entire holy Christian church teach unanimously that the body of Christ is received not only spiritually through faith, which occurs outside of the sacrament too, but also orally, and this by unworthy, unbelieving, false, and wicked Christians as well as by the godly and pious.<sup>18</sup>

What, then, in compressed interpretative summary is Jesus saying in the Bread of Life discourse and specifically in John 6:51-53? In the first part of the discourse Jesus tells his audience that He, Jesus, is the giver of the bread of life (the bread which bestows on, and preserves in, God's people eternal life, verses 26-34). Then he identifies this bread of life with Himself, saying "I am the Bread of Life," and makes plain that He, who as the Living Bread has come down from the Father in heaven, is to be eaten, that is, received by faith, so that He can—and He will—bestow life upon the eater, the believer, verses 35-51b. Then—in the manner of a "zoom-lensing" as it were—he reveals what it is in Himself which enables Him to be the Bread of Life for men, namely, his "flesh" (verse 51c), which along with the blood that flowed from his dying flesh would be given in substitutionary, sin-atonement sacrifice for mankind, so that He can offer the absolute assurance:

“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day,” verse 54 (the last section of the discourse extending from verse 53c to verse 58). The absolute necessity of the eating and drinking is made plain when Jesus says in verse 53, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

If inquiry is made yet as to why Jesus used the substance of bread metaphorically to describe Himself and particularly the activity of eating and drinking metaphorically to describe faith, the first answer, of course, is that Jesus knows—fully. What may be said, however, is this: eating and drinking are a receiving of a most intimate and vital kind. As eating and drinking receive food (bread) for assimilation in the body and sustenance of physical life, so believing receives and unites us with the Bread of Life, Christ, for the sustenance of the spiritual and eternal life He provides. Jesus says in verses 56 and 57: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” Christ likens faith to the eating of food in order to show and accentuate the closeness and continuousness of our union with Himself and its salvific effect. It is for the believer a great comfort to know that through his faith he is constantly and without interruption feeding on the body and blood of Christ, and thus is continually a recipient of eternal life and all the other blessings of salvation, present and future, to which the *en Christō* concept (found throughout the New Testament) points Him.

The explanation of the Bread of Life discourse given above by the present writer, he humbly submits, is a “*Sola Scriptura*” interpretation. This is so, because the traditional Lutheran hermeneutical principles which have come down to us from the time of the Reformation and constitute a part of our Luther heritage, were employed in arriving at an understanding of the

text—and these principles are in agreement with, or derived from, the Scriptures themselves and are therefore valid. Pastors in the audience will recall many of them from seminary days: Biblical interpretation must be grammatical; the exposition of a passage must agree with the context; every word in the Holy Scriptures can have only one intended meaning in any one place and in any one relation; Scripture (not human reason, personal feeling, and so on) is the sole source and norm of true doctrine; because Scripture is of divine origin and is the verbally inspired Word of God, it presents the truth in ordinary language in all the matters of which it treats; all Scripture passages which deal with the same matter, and to the extent in which they treat of the same matter, must be considered as being in full agreement with one another (this is the analogy of faith), and thus any exposition of a passage which does not agree with all its parallels is untenable; and other principles. The understanding and use of these Scripture-based hermeneutical principles enable the student of the Word to ascertain the true meaning of the text, the meaning the Holy Spirit originally placed into it via the sacred writer. It enables him to practice exegesis and not eisegesis of the inscripturated Word and thus arrive at its true understanding. Certainly the church today needs to hold to the “*Sola Scriptura*” interpretation of the Word of God—and, we may add today, the correct exposition of the Bread of Life discourse recorded in the Apostle John’s Gospel.

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January 22, 1997

## Appendix A

Some Scholars (English Texts) Who **DO NOT** Find the Lord's Supper  
Referred to Directly in the John 6 Bread of Life Discourse

Barnes, Albert. Notes on the New Testament.

Beasley-Murray, George. John. In the Word Biblical Commentary.

Boice, James M. The Gospel of John.

Bruce, F. F. The Gospel of John.

Calvin, John. Commentary on the Gospel According to John.

Carson, D.A. The Gospel According to John.

Chemnitz, Martin. The Lord's Supper.

Clarke, Adam. The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Howard, Wilbert F., and Arthur J. Gossip. The Gospel According to St. John. In The Interpreter's Bible.

Lenski, R.C.H. The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel.

Luther, Martin. Sermons on the Gospel of John. In Luther's Works.

Tappert, T. G., Editor. The Book of Concord.

Tenney, Merrill. John, The Gospel of Belief.

## Appendix B

Some Scholars (English Texts) Who **DO** Find the Lord's Supper  
Referred to Directly in the John 6 Bread of Life Discourse

Barrett, Charles. The Gospel According to St. John.

Bernard, J. H. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John. In The International Critical Commentary.

Brown, Raymond E. The Gospel According to John. In The Anchor Bible.

Bultmann, Rudolf. The Gospel of John, A Commentary.

Feuillet, André. Johannine Studies.

Haenchen, Ernst. John. In the Hermeneia series.

Lee, Dorothy A. The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel.

Lee, Edwin K. The Religious Thought of St. John.

Macgregor, G.H.C. The Gospel of John.

MacRory, Joseph. The Gospel of St. John.

Schnackenburg, Rudolf. The Gospel According to St. John.

Schnelle, Udo. Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John.



## Endnotes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, the Biblical texts cited in this paper are taken from the New King James Version.
2. For some other interpretations of the eating and drinking—as well as of the food received—according to John 6, which various scholars have held in antiquity and until the modern age, see the convenient summary and the commentary in Raymond Brown's The Gospel of John According to John 1-XII, volume 29 in The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 284-294. Cf. also André Feuillet, Johannine Studies, translated from the French by Thomas E. Crane (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1964), pp. 55-56, with attention also to footnote 6.
3. Raymond Brown, page 285.
4. *Ibid.*
5. An erroneous reference. Perhaps *dōsō* in verse 51 is meant.—The citation is from André Feuillet, pages 118-119.
6. *Ibid.*, page 119.
7. *Ibid.* Pages 121-122.
8. James Voelz, "The Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6: Is It Eucharistic?" (*Concordia Journal*, January 1989), page 32.
9. *Ibid.*, page 34.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, page 35.
12. Although, as it turned out, many "disciples" found Jesus' message and choice of words hard to stomach (verse 60) and departed from Him (verse 66), they indeed understood what He was saying. Leon Morris in his *Reflections on the Gospel of John, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), page 239, points out that the Jews of Christ's day "often used the language of eating and drinking when they wanted to refer to taking teaching into their innermost being." He directs attention in this connection also to such Old Testament passages as Proverbs 9:5 and Isaiah 55:1, with which the Jews were acquainted, and in which the word of God is "likened to food or drink which must be taken within," and then observes in a comment regarding the final portion of the John 6 discourse: "Jesus is then using language that people would appreciate and understand as something quite different from Holy Communion. He has already spoken in this discourse of people coming to him as the bread of life (verse 35) and of believing in him (vv. 40, 47), and he is saying much the same when

he invites his hearers to take him into their innermost being. There is the addition in this part of his address that the separation of flesh and blood points to his death, as do different words in 3:16. He is saying that he will die for the people and inviting people to feed on him in a heavenly and spiritual manner.” (Page 239)

13. The impersonal “that which” is a better rendering than “He who,” which the NKJV has. While the predicate nominative *ho katabainōn* in verse 33 is masculine and could refer to Christ, it is better construed with the nominative masculine subject *ho . . . artos* (bread), since Christ has not as yet plainly revealed to the Jews that He Himself is the Bread of Life; that revelation comes in verse 35.
14. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1931), page 485.
15. It maybe noted in passing that neither (1) Christ's use in the John 6 discourse of the word “flesh” (verses 53ff.) as designative of the gift which He would give for the life of the world but his use of the word “body” in the words of institution, nor (2) Jesus' use in the Bread of Life discourse of a form of *trōgō* (in John 6:54 ff.) for his previous use of a second-aorist forms of ἐσθίω (e.g., *phagē* in verse 51 and *phagēte* in verse 53) are significant for our discussion in this paper. Relative to (1) and the use of “flesh” in John 6, Leon Morris comments simply that Christ “chose to use the word *flesh*, which puts a strong emphasis on the physical corporeality. It was the body of flesh that Jesus would give for the life of the world; *Reflections on the Gospel of John*, Volume 2, page 236. Relative to (2), George Beasley-Murray in *John*, Volume 36 in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1989), page 95, points out that the two words are used synonymously, noting that in John 6:58 *ephagon* and *trōgō* are set in synonymous parallelism.”
16. *The Lord's Supper*, translated from the Latin by J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), page 64. Chemnitz's entire work sheds great light on the matters discussed in this paper: cf., e.g., pages 236-241. Useful to consult also is the selection from chapter LXVIII (pages 859-861) of the Chemnitz-Leyser-Gerhard *Harmonia Quattuor Evangelistorum* (Hamburg 1704), translated by Matt Harrison, which appeared as an article sub-titled “On John 6 and the Supper” in *Reflections*, a forum for CTS student scholarship and informed opinion (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary, Fall 1990-91), page 25.
17. The *double entendre* idea may be characterized as a compromising view. With regard to all compromising views offered for the interpretation of the John 6 discourse, Lenski comments (*Op. Cit.*, pages 485-486): “The general answer to these compromising views is the old hermeneutical rule of Hilary: the true reader of the Scriptures is he who expects the passages of Holy Writ themselves to furnish their meaning, who carries nothing into them, who takes out only what they bring, and is careful not to make the Scriptures say what he thinks they ought to say. The specific answer to these compromising views is, that they confuse the spiritual eating, by faith, which is to take place equally with all the three means of grace

(Baptism, the Word read, taught, and preached, and the Lord's Supper), with the oral eating peculiar to the Supper, which invariably takes place. All ought to eat and drink by faith when they are baptized, when they hear and read the Word, when they receive the Lord's Supper; but all do not so eat and drink by faith. many use these means of grace so as not to receive life eternal through them. But no one ever partook of the Lord's Supper who did not eat and drink orally, with his mouth, the consecrated bread and wine, and in, with, and under this bread and wine the body and the blood of Christ conveyed to him by the earthly elements. To eat and drink by faith is an inward spiritual act, always salutary; to eat and drink the elements of the Supper orally is an outward act, sometimes not salutary, but unto judgment, 1 Corinthians 11, 28-29."

18. *The Book of Concord*, translated and edited by Theodore Tappert *et al* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pages 580-581.