

Responding to articles (mostly pro Roman Catholic) sent anonymously to me and received 14th June 2011:

(5) Is 'Christ in the Eucharist'?

[Part 2]

Firstly and right at the outset I would state that this article has taken me much longer to write than I had originally hoped for and also it has ended up being of much greater length than I had envisaged. I hope therefore that readers will 'stick with it', perhaps digesting it in small bites, and my prayer is that it may prove to be to all who read it, including any Roman Catholics, an informative and enlightening article and above all a real blessing as the truth of the Word of God is set forth to magnify the Person and Work of "**Jesus Christ, and him crucified**" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

In Part [1] of my response to Karl Keating's article '**Christ in the Eucharist**' I responded to the question he posed in his article - '**Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6?**'

As I begin Part [2] of my response I think it will be helpful to once more reproduce Mr Keating's article here. It read –

Christ in the Eucharist

Protestant attacks on the Catholic Church often focus on the Eucharist. This demonstrates that opponents of the Church—mainly Evangelicals and Fundamentalists—recognize one of Catholicism's core doctrines. What's more, **the attacks show that Fundamentalists are not always literalists. This is seen in their interpretation of the key biblical passage, chapter six of John's Gospel, in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper.** This tract examines the last half of that chapter

John 6:30 begins a colloquy that took place in the synagogue at Capernaum. The Jews asked Jesus what sign he could perform so that they might believe in him. As a challenge, they noted that "our ancestors ate manna in the desert." Could Jesus top that? He told them the real bread from heaven comes from the Father. "Give us this bread always," they said. Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." At this point the Jews understood him to be speaking metaphorically.

Again and Again

Jesus first repeated what he said, then summarized: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' (John 6:51–52).

His listeners were stupefied because now they understood Jesus *literally*—and correctly. He again repeated his words, but with even greater emphasis, and introduced the statement about drinking his blood: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:53–56).

No Corrections

Notice that Jesus made no attempt to soften what he said, no attempt to correct "misunderstandings," for there were none. Our Lord's listeners understood him perfectly well. They no longer thought he was speaking metaphorically. If they *had*, if they mistook what he said, why no correction?

On other occasions when there was confusion, Christ explained just what he meant (cf. Matt. 16:5–12). Here, where any misunderstanding would be fatal, there was no effort by Jesus to correct. Instead, he repeated himself for greater emphasis.

In John 6:60 we read: "Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?'" These were his disciples, people used to his remarkable ways. He warned them not to think carnally, but spiritually: "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63; cf. 1 Cor. 2:12–14).

But he knew some did not believe. (It is here, in the rejection of the Eucharist, that Judas fell away; look at John 6:64.) "After this, many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (John 6:66).

This is the only record we have of any of Christ's followers forsaking him for purely doctrinal reasons. If it had all been a misunderstanding, if they erred in taking a metaphor in a literal sense, why didn't he call them back and straighten things out? Both the Jews, who were suspicious of him, and his disciples, who had accepted everything up to this point, would have remained with him had he said he was speaking only symbolically.

But he did not correct these protesters. **Twelve times he said he was the bread that came down from heaven; four times he said they would have "to eat my flesh and drink my blood." John 6 was an extended promise of what would be instituted at the Last Supper—and it was a promise that could not be more explicit. Or so it would seem to a Catholic. But what do Fundamentalists say?**

Merely Figurative?

They say that in John 6 Jesus was not talking about physical food and drink, but about spiritual food and drink. They quote John 6:35: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'" They claim that coming to him is bread, having faith in him is drink. Thus, eating his flesh and blood merely means believing in Christ.

But there is a problem with that interpretation. As Fr. John A. O'Brien explains, "The phrase 'to eat the flesh and drink the blood,' when used figuratively among the Jews, as among the Arabs of today, meant to inflict upon a person some serious injury, especially by calumny or by false accusation. To interpret the phrase figuratively then would be to make our Lord promise life everlasting to the culprit for slandering and hating him, which would reduce the whole passage to utter nonsense" (O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions*, 215). For an example of this use, see Micah 3:3.

Fundamentalist writers who comment on John 6 also assert that one can show Christ was speaking only metaphorically by comparing verses like John 10:9 ("I am the door") and John 15:1 ("I am the true vine"). The problem is that there is not a connection to John 6:35, "I am the bread of life." "I am the door" and "I am the vine" make sense as metaphors because Christ is like a door—we go to heaven through him—and he is also like a vine—we get our spiritual sap through him. **But Christ takes John 6:35 far beyond symbolism by saying, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55).**

He continues: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57). The Greek word used for "eats" (*trogon*) is very blunt and has the sense of "chewing" or "gnawing." This is not the language of metaphor.

Their Main Argument

For Fundamentalist writers, the scriptural argument is capped by an appeal to John 6:63: "It is

the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." **They say this means that eating real flesh is a waste.** But does this make sense?

Are we to understand that Christ had just commanded his disciples to eat his flesh, then said their doing so would be pointless? Is that what "the flesh is of no avail" means? "Eat my flesh, but you'll find it's a waste of time"—is that what he was saying? Hardly.

The fact is that Christ's flesh avails much! If it were of no avail, then the Son of God incarnated for no reason, he died for no reason, and he rose from the dead for no reason. Christ's flesh profits us more than anyone else's in the world. If it profits us nothing, so that the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ are of no avail, then "your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Cor. 15:17b–18).

In John 6:63 "flesh profits nothing" refers to mankind's inclination to think using only what their natural human reason would tell them rather than what God would tell them. Thus in John 8:15–16 Jesus tells his opponents: "You judge according to the flesh, I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and he who sent me." So natural human judgment, unaided by God's grace, is unreliable; but God's judgment is always true.

And were the disciples to understand the line "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life" as nothing but a circumlocution (and a very clumsy one at that) for "symbolic"? No one can come up with such interpretations unless he first holds to the Fundamentalist position and thinks it necessary to find a rationale, no matter how forced, for evading the Catholic interpretation. In John 6:63 "flesh" does not refer to Christ's own flesh—the context makes this clear—but to mankind's inclination to think on a natural, human level. "The words I have spoken to you are spirit" does not mean "What I have just said is symbolic." The word "spirit" is *never* used that way in the Bible. **The line means that what Christ has said will be understood only through faith; only by the power of the Spirit and the drawing of the Father (cf. John 6:37, 44–45, 65).**

Paul Confirms This

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). So when we receive Communion, we actually participate in the body and blood of Christ, not just eat symbols of them.** Paul also said, "Therefore whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. . . . For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:27, 29). "To answer for the body and blood" of someone meant to be guilty of a crime as serious as homicide. How could eating mere bread and wine "unworthily" be so serious? **Paul's comment makes sense only if the bread and wine became the real body and blood of Christ.**

What Did the First Christians Say?

Anti-Catholics also claim the early Church took this chapter symbolically. Is that so? Let's see what some early Christians thought, keeping in mind that we can learn much about how Scripture should be interpreted by examining the writings of early Christians.

Ignatius of Antioch, who had been a disciple of the apostle John and who wrote a letter to the Smyrnaeans about A.D. 110, said, referring to "those who hold heterodox opinions," that "they abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again" (6:2, 7:1).

Forty years later, **Justin Martyr**, wrote, "Not as common bread or common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, . . . is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus" (*First Apology* 66:1–20).

Origen, in a homily written about A.D. 244, attested to belief in the Real Presence. "I wish to admonish

you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence" (*Homilies on Exodus* 13:3).

Cyril of Jerusalem, in a catechetical lecture presented in the mid-300s, said, "Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that, for they are, according to the Master's declaration, the body and blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ" (*Catechetical Discourses: Mystagogic* 4:22:9).

In a fifth-century homily, **Theodore of Mopsuestia** seemed to be speaking to today's Evangelicals and Fundamentalists: "When [Christ] gave the bread he did not say, 'This is the *symbol* of my body,' but, 'This *is* my body.' In the same way, when he gave the cup of his blood he did not say, 'This is the *symbol* of my blood,' but, 'This *is* my blood,' for he wanted us to look upon the [Eucharistic elements], after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit, not according to their nature, but to receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord" (*Catechetical Homilies* 5:1).

Unanimous Testimony

Whatever else might be said, the early Church took John 6 literally. In fact, there is no record from the early centuries that implies Christians doubted the constant Catholic interpretation. There exists no document in which the literal interpretation is opposed and only the metaphorical accepted.

Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6? For them, Catholic sacraments are out because they imply a spiritual reality—grace—being conveyed by means of matter. This seems to them to be a violation of the divine plan. For many Protestants, matter is not to be used, but overcome or avoided.

One suspects, had they been asked by the Creator their opinion of how to bring about mankind's salvation, Fundamentalists would have advised him to adopt a different approach. How much cleaner things would be if spirit never dirtied itself with matter! But God approves of matter—he approves of it because he created it—and he approves of it so much that he comes to us under the appearances of bread and wine, just as he does in the physical form of the Incarnate Christ.

NIHIL OBSTAT: I have concluded that the materials presented in this work are free of doctrinal or moral errors.
Bernadeane Carr, STL, Censor Librorum, August 10, 2004

IMPRIMATUR: In accord with 1983 CIC 827 permission to publish this work is hereby granted.
+Robert H. Brom, Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004

I wrote in Part [1] – 'I have highlighted in red a number of portions in Mr Keating's article and amongst those portions are the following' –

'Protestant attacks on the Catholic Church often focus on the Eucharist... the attacks show that Fundamentalists are not always literalists. This is seen in their interpretation of the key biblical passage, chapter six of John's Gospel in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper ... Twelve times he said he was the bread that came down from heaven; four times he said they would have "to eat my flesh and drink my blood."... But what do Fundamentalists say? ... They say that in John 6 Jesus was not talking about physical food and drink, but about spiritual food and drink. They quote John 6:35: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'" They claim that coming to him is bread, having faith in him is drink. Thus, eating his flesh and blood merely means believing in Christ. But Christ takes John 6:35 far beyond symbolism by saying, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55).

He continues: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57). The Greek word used for "eats" (*trogon*) is very blunt and has the sense of "chewing" or "gnawing." This is not the language of metaphor. Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6?

You will see that a portion that I underlined reads as follows –

They claim that coming to him is bread, having faith in him is drink. Thus, eating his flesh and blood merely means believing in Christ and later Mr Keating added Christ takes John 6:35 far beyond symbolism by saying, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55). He continues: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57). The Greek word used for "eats" (*trogon*) is very blunt and has the sense of "chewing" or "gnawing." This is not the language of metaphor –

so, in this Part [2], I will address the question –

2. Is 'eating' part of a process to 'eternal life' as Mr Keating claims or is it a gracious, divine gift, evidenced by 'belief' received by faith alone?

Let's now begin to examine the possession of 'eternal life'. Is it obtained by adherence to a sacramental system and process that includes 'eating' and 'drinking' the 'transubstantiated' body and blood of Christ as Mr Keating (and Rome) asserts; or is 'eternal life' graciously and divinely given and known through faith alone and evidenced by 'belief' that personal salvation rests totally and solely upon the person and work of Christ alone and is divorced from any human religious-ritual input; I believe the Scriptures clearly teach the latter. Such 'belief' is something that is much more 'embracing' than Mr Keating's expression '**coming to him... merely means believing in Christ**' would imply.

To see Mr Keating's position on 'salvation'/'eternal life' just look again at these closing words of his article –

One suspects, had they been asked by the Creator their opinion of **how to bring about mankind's salvation**, Fundamentalists would have advised him to adopt a different approach. How much cleaner things would be if spirit never dirtied itself with matter! **But God approves of matter—he approves of it because he created it—and he approves of it so much that he comes to us under the appearances of bread and wine, just as he does in the physical form of the Incarnate Christ.**

For Rome and Mr Keating '**matter**' matters greatly in their process of how one obtains 'salvation/eternal life' and so they need their sprinkling/sacrificing priesthood to handle this '**matter**'.

Pastor John MacArthur, in His Study Bible, in his introductory comments to 'The Gospel According to John', wrote this –

'John's gospel is the only one of the 4 that contains a precise statement regarding the author's purpose (20:30-31). He declares "these are written that ye might BELIEVE that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that BELIEVING ye might have LIFE through his name” (20:31). The primary purposes, therefore, are two-fold; evangelistic and apologetic. Reinforcing the evangelistic purpose is the fact that the word “BELIEVE” occurs approximately 100 times in the gospel (the synoptics use the term less than half as much). John composed his gospel to provide reasons for saving faith (Cecil – ‘BELIEF’) in his readers and, as a result, to assure them that they would receive the divine gift of ETERNAL LIFE (1:12)... In accordance with John’s evangelistic and apologetic purposes, the overall message of the gospel is found in 20:31 “Jesus Christ is the Son of God”. The book therefore centres on the person and work of Christ. Three predominant words (“signs”, “believe” and “life”) in 20:30-31 receive constant re-emphasis throughout the gospel to enforce the theme of salvation in Him’.

In part 1 of my response I compiled a table citing many instances (29) where figurative language was used in John’s gospel. I propose to adopt a similar approach in dealing with the question posed at the start of this section.

Although Pastor John MacArthur stated that “BELIEVE occurs approximately 100 times in the gospel” I only intend to cite a limited number of such references that I trust will nonetheless show clearly that “eternal life” is not grounded upon literally ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’ the body and blood of Christ (priestly religious ritual – “works of righteousness”) as Mr Keating asserts but rather it is evidenced solely through ‘believing’ upon the person and work of Christ (and that by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone).

In Vine’s Expository Dictionary we read VERY helpful comments that should be borne VERY much in mind as we examines instances of ‘believe etc’ in John’s Gospel and in some other portions of the New Testament. In Vine’s, relating to ‘Belief, Believe, Believers’ we read –

‘**pisteuo** – “to believe” also “to be persuaded of” and hence “to place confidence in, to trust”, signifies in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence’ (Cecil - as Karl Keating’s terminology would tend to suggest) **It is most frequent in the writings of the Apostle John, especially the Gospel. Of the writers of the Gospels, Matthew uses the verb ten times, Mark ten, Luke nine, John ninety-nine. In Acts 5:14 the present participle of the verb is translated “believers”** (“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”).

[1] **John 1:11-13**

“(11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become **the children of God**, even to **them that believe on his name**. (13) **Who were born**, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but **of God**”.

Comments

In this passage we learn that Christians, “the children of God”, were “born” (Cecil – “again” – spiritual rebirth) **not because of their ‘bloodline’, not because of their ‘gene-pool’ and not because of some act of supposed ‘free-will’ but because of the Sovereign choice and will of God and to those chosen by God was given power** (Cecil – through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit) **to believe on Christ**, His person and His work, for their salvation.

Matthew Henry wrote ‘John the Baptist came to bear witness concerning Jesus. Nothing more fully shows the darkness of men's minds, than that when the Light had appeared, there needed a witness to call attention to it. Christ was the true Light; that great Light which deserves to be called so. By his Spirit and grace he enlightens all that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him, perish in darkness. Christ was in the world when he took our nature upon him, and dwelt among us. The Son of the Highest was here in this lower world. He was in the world, but not of it. He came to save a lost world, because it was a world of his own making. Yet the world knew him not... All the children of God are born again. This new birth is through the word of God as the means, (1st Peter 1:23) and by the Spirit of God as the Author’.

Pastor John MacArthur wrote in his Study Bible concerning verses 12-13 ‘These verses stand in contrast to verses 10-11. John softens the sweeping rejection of Messiah by stressing a believing remnant. This previews the book since the first 12 chapters stress the rejection of Christ while chapters 13-21 focus on the believing remnant who received Him’.

Concerning verse 12 **Pastor MacArthur wrote** ‘The second phrase “to them that believe on his name” describes the first “as many as received him”. To receive Him who is the Word of God means to acknowledge His claims, to place one’s faith in Him – the term “gave” (v 12) emphasises the grace of God involved in the gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Concerning verse 13 **Pastor MacArthur wrote** ‘“of God” – The divine side of salvation; ultimately it is not a man’s will that produces salvation but God’s will (cf. 3:6-8; Titus 3:5; 1st John 2:29).’

[2] **John 2:11**

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him”

Comments

This first miraculous demonstration of the Lord’s power and glory caused His disciples to believe on Him – but we might rightly ask - in what ‘shape or fashion’ did they believe on Him? I found the following most helpful when considering this question.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 54-57) ‘two days after Nathanael had received the assurance of the greater things that he would see (see John 1:50) on the occasion of a wedding in Cana, Nathanael’s native village, Jesus in the presence of His disciples performs a miracle... The turning of water into wine is not a purposeless exhibition of supernatural power, but a teaching miracle of deep significance... This particular miracle is not followed by a discourse expounding its spiritual truth. We are compelled therefore to deduce its significance as best we can from the narrative itself... and it is a reasonable surmise... that Jesus wished, through the symbolism of water turned into wine, both to expose the inadequacy of Judaism as a religion of salvation and to initiate His disciples into the necessity for His own redeeming death.

The six water pots of stone were set there, the evangelist states, *after the manner of the purifying of the Jews*... It may well provide the clue to the interpretation of the incident. The water contained in these vessels was used for the ceremonial washing of hands as well as for the cleansing of drinking utensils. It was indicative both of the nature and of the weakness of Pharisaism. It was this water... that Jesus turned into wine – wine which,

because it gives life and strength and, as the Psalmist said “makes glad the heart of man” (see Psalm 104:15) is a fitting symbol of the new spiritual power made available for mankind by the shedding of the blood of Jesus. (Cecil – In Matthew 9:17 the ‘life’ imparted at the ‘new birth’ through faith in the Person and Work of Christ is likened to ‘new wine’ and it must be contained in ‘new wineskins’, believers who are not in any way trusting in the ‘old wineskins’ of Pharisaic religious ritual)

In performing this sign it would seem that the thoughts of Jesus were turned to the goal towards which His earthly life was inevitable moving... in the reply of Jesus to His mother... He indicates that His concern is very different from hers... it is impossible to interpret the words “**mine hour**” (v 4)... without reference to other passages... where “**the hour**” invariably refers to ‘the hour’ of the passion... But this greater concern of Jesus did not prevent Him from acceding to His mother’s unspoken request (Cecil – Mary had simply pointed out, but apparently also with a purpose in mind for Jesus to act – her ‘unspoken request’, that there was no more wine)... He would exercise His supernatural power on this occasion.

He would act because wine, lavishly provided and freely offered, was a fitting symbol of the full salvation to be won by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The real significance of Jesus’ action in turning water into wine must always be hidden from those whose faith is not centred upon Christ crucified... **The “disciples” alone**, as the evangelist states at the conclusion of the narrative (v 11) **saw in what happened a revelation of the glory of Jesus, and, we may not unreasonably infer, a further ground for believing in Him as the Lamb of God destined to take away the sin of the world’.**

Bishop J C Ryle wrote ‘The manner in which the miracle was worked deserves especial notice. We are not told of any outward visible action which preceded or accompanied it...

He simply willed the change and it took place (Cecil – what an apt description of the God’s sovereignty in the conversion of a lost sinner) ... He who could do such a mighty work, in such a manner, was nothing less than very God... **Happy are those who, like the disciples, believe on Him by whom this miracle was wrought!**

[3] **John 3:14-16 & 18**

“(14) **And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.** (15) **That **whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.** (16) **For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that **whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life... (18) He that believeth on him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”**

** Literally “The one believing”

Comments

This portion from John’s Gospel contains probably one of the best known verses in the whole of the Bible and the verse itself (v 16) is sandwiched between other verses that reiterate and re-emphasise the grounds on which knowledge of and possession of ‘eternal and everlasting life’ is evidenced and that is **‘belief in’ and ‘belief on’ the One given by God the Father** – and that One is likened to the ‘Saving Serpent’ raised up by Moses in the wilderness only this time the One raised up was a ‘Saving Saviour’ who on the Cross of Calvary was ‘made to be sin’ for those He came to save

(see 2nd Corinthians 5:21)

Commenting on **“believed in the name of”** in verse 18 **Pastor John MacArthur wrote** in his Study Bible **‘This phrase (literally “to believe into the name”) means more than mere intellectual assent to the claims of the gospel. It includes trust and commitment to Christ as Lord and Saviour’**

Bishop J C Ryle wrote 'These verses show us the way in which the benefits of Christ's death are made our own... faith and trust in Christ. **Faith is the same thing as believing...** Faith in the Lord Jesus is the very key of salvation. He that has it hath life and he that has it not has not life. **Nothing whatever beside this faith is necessary to complete our justification;** but nothing whatever except this faith will give us an interest in Christ. We may fast and mourn for sin and do many things that are right and use religious ordinances and give all our goods to feed the poor and yet remain unpardoned and lose our souls.

But **if we will only come to Christ as guilty sinners and believe on Him our sins shall at once be forgiven and our iniquities shall be entirely put away...** Let us beware of supposing that justifying faith is anything more than a sinner's simple trust in a Saviour... Let us beware of mingling anything else with faith in the matter of justification... **that which gives a man an interest in Christ is not his living but his faith'** (his believing)

Matthew Henry wrote 'Christ is plainly set forth to us in the gospel. He whom we offended is our Peace, and the way of applying for a cure is by believing... He has said, Look and be saved, look and live; lift up the eyes of your faith to Christ crucified... Here is gospel, good news indeed. Here is God's love in giving his Son... Behold and wonder, that the great God should love such a worthless world! **Here, also, is the great gospel duty, to believe in Jesus Christ.** God having given him to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, we must give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. **And here is the great gospel benefit, that whoever believes in Christ, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life....** From all this is shown the happiness of true believers; he that believeth in Christ is **not condemned...** How great is the sin of unbelievers!... How great is the misery of **unbelievers!'**

[4] **John 3:36**

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him".

Comments

This particular verse has a special place in my own testimony and affections for I quoted it just before I, as a true believer, passed through the waters of baptism back in March 1985. I quoted it because it encapsulated both the 'assured reality' and the 'unspeakable joy' of what it now meant to me to be 'a believer on the Son of God' and hence a 'Child of God'. The 'assured reality' was a God-given, rock-solid faith in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ for my salvation and the 'unspeakable joy' was the assured knowledge that through this faith I knew for certain that God's wrath no longer abided upon me.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker** states (p 73) 'This section (verses 22-36) ends with words which re-echo the assertion made by the evangelist at the close of the Nicodemus passage. **Belief or disbelief in the Son of God is a matter of life or death;** for, while to the believer His coming is the supreme revelation of God's love, bringing the assurance of eternal life, to the unbeliever it is the sign that he remains the object of God's displeasure'

Commenting on these verses **Matthew Henry wrote** 'The words of Jesus were the words of God; he had the Spirit, not by measure, as the prophets, but in all fullness. **Everlasting life could only be had by faith in Him,** and might be thus obtained; whereas **all those, who believe not in the Son of God, cannot partake of salvation, but the wrath of God for ever rests upon them'**

Commenting on this verse 36 **Pastor John MacArthur** wrote in his Study Bible 'this constitutes a fitting climax to the chapter. **John the Baptist laid out two alternatives, genuine faith and defiant disobedience**, thereby bringing to the forefront the threat of looming judgment.... the ultimate consequence of failure to believe i.e. "the wrath of God".

[5] **John 4:39-42**

"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman who testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them; and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word. And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world".

Comments

True converts to Christ naturally want to witness as to what the Saviour has done for them and these verses tell what happened when 'the woman at the well' returned to her home town in Samaria. The Lord had told her directly that He was the promised Messiah, called Christ (see verses 25-26) and she gladly shared that good news to those she met on her return home. Others professed belief upon hearing her testimony whilst yet more professed belief when they subsequently heard from the lips of the Saviour Himself. One sows, one waters but it is the Lord Himself who gives the increase. **Through witnessing, preaching and the work of God's Spirit ("no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit" 1st Corinthians 12:3), and not through empty and false religious rituals, many truly believed.**

Matthew Henry wrote 'God sometimes uses very weak and unlikely instruments for beginning and carrying on a good work. Our Saviour, by teaching one poor woman, spread knowledge to a whole town... **Their faith grew. In the matter of it: they believed him to be the Saviour, not only of the Jews but of the world**'.

Bishop J C Ryle wrote 'We have in these verses a most teaching instance of the variety of ways by which men are led to believe Christ... In short some were converted through the means of the woman's testimony and some were converted by hearing Christ Himself. The words of St Paul should never be forgotten: **"There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1st Corinthians 12:6)**. The way in which the Spirit leads all God's people is always one and the same. But the paths by which we are severally brought into that road are often widely different... All are finally brought to repentance towards God, **faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ** and holiness of conversation.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker** states (p 78) 'The villagers of Sychar, (see verse 5) as the first disciples called by Jesus and as Nathanael had done, **'come and see'** for themselves the Man about whom the woman had told them; **and their faith and the faith of many others who met Jesus during His two-days' stay in the village, becomes based on a first-hand experience of Jesus, not as a national leader of the old Israel, but as the Saviour of Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles**'.

[6] **John 4:50 & 53-54**

"(50) Jesus saith unto him (a nobleman) Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and he went his way. (53) So the father knew it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth;

and he himself believed and his whole house. (54) This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee”.

Comments

This incident highlights two statements concerning the nobleman in the narrative ‘believing’ and yet it is clear that what he was ‘believing’ in were distinct and very different. In verse 50 it is clear that what the nobleman ‘believed’ is limited to what Jesus had said concerning the assurance that his son would be healed. However, in verse 53, **when we learn that the father and those in his house ‘believed’, this is clearly referring to spiritual and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ whom they now recognise to be the One who had claimed to be the promised Messiah, the Christ.**

Matthew Henry wrote ‘The father was a nobleman, yet the son was sick... The greatest men must go themselves to God... Christ gave an answer of peace. Christ's saying that the soul lives, makes it alive. **The father went his way, which showed the sincerity of his faith.** Being satisfied, he did not hurry home that night, but returned as one easy in his own mind. His servants met him with the news of the child's recovery. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word. Diligent comparing the works of Jesus with his word, will confirm our faith. **And the bringing the cure to the family brought salvation to it.** Thus an experience of the power of one word of Christ, may settle the authority of Christ in the soul. **The whole family believed likewise.** The miracle made Jesus dear to them. The knowledge of Christ still spreads through families, and men find health and salvation to their souls’

Bishop J C Ryle wrote ‘We read that anxiety about a son led a nobleman to Christ in order to obtain help in time of need. Once brought into Christ's company he learned a lesson of priceless value. **In the end “He believed, and his whole house”**... Christ's word is as good as Christ's presence... It gives enormous value to every promise of mercy, grace and peace which ever fell from Christ's lips. **He that by faith has laid hold on some word of Christ has got his feet upon a rock**... The sinner who has really reposed his soul on the word of the Lord Jesus is safe to all eternity’.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 82-83) ‘Without obedience and trust there can be no real faith. The courtier (nobleman) now shows that he has both these essentials. When Jesus says to him **“Go thy way; thy son liveth”** he returns home at once, trusting that Jesus' words are true. **And this incipient belief becomes the full committal of faith**, when he later ascertains that Jesus' words were not merely prophetic, but restorative, for the cure had been effected at the precise moment they were uttered.

Both the miracles at Cana, which are closely linked by the evangelist in verses 46 and 54 are thus shown to have been prompted by trust. Mary trusted her Son to do something... The father of the sick boy was equally confident... **Both miracles are also shown to have resulted in a personal surrender to Jesus which is full Christian faith. His disciples “believed on him”... the father and the rest of the household “believed”... in both cases the verb in the original is an inceptive aorist “they put their faith in him”.**

[6] John 5:21 & 24; 6: 27-29

“(21) **For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them** (giveth them life) **even so the Son quickeneth** (giveth life to) **whom he will...** (24) **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life,**

and shall not come into judgment but is passed from death (condemned) unto life (justified)... (27) Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat that endureth unto everlasting life which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed. (28) Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? (29) Jesus answered and said unto them. **This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent**".

Comments

In my 'Part 1' response, and when commenting on **John 11:24-25**. I wrote the following 'Jesus said "**I am**" and not 'I will be' "**the resurrection and the life**".

Through the faithful preaching of His Gospel, the Lord is currently engaged in spiritually resurrecting sinners who are "dead in trespasses and sins" and giving to them eternal spiritual life – Paul wrote "And you hath he quickened ('made alive') who were dead (spiritually) in trespasses and sins"(Ephesians 2:1)'. In these verses we see that this 'raising up' of sinners who are "dead in trespasses and sins" is jointly credited to both God the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ. **Integral to the quickening of a dead sinner is the evidence of his 'believing' – belief that God the Father** has, in the person of Jesus Christ, fulfilled His ancient promise to send a redeemer, a promise first given in Genesis 3:15 and **belief that God the Son**, Jesus Christ, has fulfilled that promised redeeming work by His sinless life and His substitutionary death on the Cross of Calvary. Prior to 'believing' a spiritually-dead sinner stands 'condemned' in the sight of God – subject to the divine penalty prescribed for sin but, subsequent to 'believing', the spiritually-alive saved sinner has "passed... unto life" – that spiritually-alive saved-sinner is now permanently pardoned from all divine condemnation – and on the part of that saved-sinner there is not a religious ritual in sight. The two ordinances instituted by the Lord namely baptism and communion are intended for those who are already saved and are not a means to obtaining salvation through observing religious ritual as Rome would claim. In the subsequent verses (25-29) the Lord affirms that He is the One who will also physically resurrect all who have died and those resurrected will either enjoy 'everlasting life' or endure 'everlasting condemnation'.

Matthew Henry wrote 'The Divine power of the miracle proved Jesus to be the Son of God, and he declared that he worked with, and like unto his Father, as he saw good... Our Lord declared his authority and character, as the Messiah... **May we believe His testimony**; thus our faith and hope will be in God, and we shall not come into condemnation.'

Bishop J C Ryle wrote 'life we are told is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, to bestow and give at His discretion. Dead bodies and dead souls are both alike under His dominion. He has the keys of death and hell. In Him is life. He is the life (John 1:4; Revelation 1:18)...

The salvation of our souls depends on hearing Christ. **It is the man, we are told, who 'hears Christ's word' and believes that God the Father sent him to save sinners who 'has everlasting life'**. Such 'hearing' of course is something more than mere listening. It is hearing... with faith and love... **How rich and full are the privileges of the true hearer and believer! Such a man enjoys a present salvation'**.

If any two things are put in strong contrast in the New Testament they are faith and works. Not working, but believing, not of works, but through faith, are words familiar to all careful Bible-readers. Yet here the Head of the Church declares that believing on Him is the greatest of all 'works'. It is the work of God. **Doubtless our Lord did not mean that there is anything meritorious in believing**... Regarded as a 'work' it cannot stand the severity of God's judgment, deserve pardon or purchase heaven. But our Lord did mean that faith in

Himself, as the only Saviour, is the first act of the soul which God requires at a sinner's hand... faith in Himself is that act of the soul which specially pleases God'.

The 'natural man' cannot understand such spiritual realities as we learn in 1st Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned". The ability to 'believe' – the 'work' that God requires – is clearly the fruit of someone having been quickened by the Spirit of God and not the root of that someone having been quickened and that is why our 'believing' is in itself not a 'meritorious work' in obtaining everlasting life but rather it is a 'work' that gives evidence to the possession of everlasting life.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker** states (pp 87-88) 'The actions of God which are the most complete expressions of His sovereignty are the raising of men from death to life, and the passing of final judgment upon them... Resurrection and judgment are in fact the *final* things and it is these *final* things with which men and women are confronted in Jesus... His first coming in human flesh is indirectly a coming in judgment, for it inevitably separates believers from unbelievers. The former pass at once from spiritual death to eternal life... Jesus has been given this divine gift of eternal life to bestow upon others. He has also been given as Son of Man the right to pass judgment'

[7] **John 7:31–34**

“(31) **And many of the people believed on him** and said, When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? (32) The Pharisees heard that people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. (33) Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you and then I go unto him that sent me. (34) Ye shall seek me and shall not find me; and where I am there ye cannot come”.

Comments

We learn from God's Word that the miracles performed by the Lord Jesus Christ were to validate His claim that He was the Promised Messiah (see for example John 10:37-38 and Acts 2:22) and here we see how **"many of the people"** were persuaded by such miracles that He was indeed the Promised "Christ" and so they **"believed on him"**. We learn that this would result in such believers eventually being 'admitted' one day into the very presence of God unlike the unbelieving Pharisees who were told by Christ that He was returning to "him that sent me" and to that glorious place they, unlike the "many of the people (who) believed on him" "cannot come" – exclusion from eternal bliss in the presence of God is the price to be paid for not 'believing on' Christ.

Bishop J C Ryle wrote 'We see in these verses the miserable end to which unbelievers may one day come. We find our Lord saying to His enemies **"Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am thither ye cannot come"**... **Let us take heed to ourselves lest we sin after the example of the unbelieving Jews and never seek the Lord Jesus as a Saviour until it is too late**... Let us give diligence to make sure our interest in Christ, while it is called today. Better never to have been born than to hear the Son of God say at last **"Where I am, thither ye cannot come"**.

Pastor John MacArthur wrote in his Study Bible concerning verse 31 'Divided conviction existed among the people concerning Jesus. While some wanted to seize Him, **a remnant**

of genuine believers existed among the crowds. The question here anticipates a negative answer (in other words) the Messiah could do no greater kinds of miracles than those Jesus had done. Concerning verse 32 **Pastor MacArthur wrote** 'Both (Pharisees and chief priests) were alarmed at the faith of those indicated in verse 31 and in order to avoid any veneration of Jesus as Messiah attempted unsuccessfully to arrest Him (verse 30).

Confirming the inability of unbelievers to enter into glory **Pastor MacArthur wrote** concerning verse 34 'Jesus referred here to His return to His heavenly origin with His Father after His crucifixion and resurrection (see John 17:15)'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 106) 'Many of the crowd, though unimpressed by His claims to be of divine origin (see verse 29) nevertheless believe in Him because of the great number of signs He has performed; and the expression of their belief alarms the chief priests who hear of it, and leads them to take drastic action against Him... But however much they may attempt to get rid of Him, they are powerless to do so till the appointed hour has come... The death of Jesus, moreover, which the Jews will ultimately succeed in bringing about, will not mean His complete disappearance, but will be the prelude to His return to the Father who sent Him, and in that heavenly state He will be beyond the reach of all unbelievers'.

[8] **John 7:37-39**

(37) "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. (38) He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (39) But this spoke he of the Spirit, whom they that believe on him should receive for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Comments

In my 'Part 1' response I gave a detailed explanation of the tremendous significance of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that He uttered on this particular day of this particular Jewish feast so I don't intend to cover that ground again. All I would say is that **the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit is given to believers and this gift is received at the moment of true conversion** as 1st Corinthians 12:13 clearly teaches. I would also say, in anticipation of an important section to be included later in this article, that **'believing on Christ' is equated to 'coming to Christ and drinking' as the last phrase of verse 37 and the first phrase of verse 38 also clearly teach.**

Let me repeat just this portion from The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker** (p 106) 'The departure of Jesus in death would also make possible that baptism of the Spirit which was to be the supreme gift of Jesus to all who believed in Him... Jesus promises to all believers, who are conscious of their need of it, the gift of thirst-quenching water which would become in them a perpetual source of refreshment both to themselves and others.

Again I repeat a short portion of what **Matthew Henry wrote** 'The Spirit dwelling and working in believers, is as a fountain of living, running water, out of which plentiful streams flow, cooling and cleansing as water.'

Bishop J C Ryle wrote 'The Lord says "if any man thirst". These words were no doubt meant to have a spiritual meaning... It means anxiety of soul, conviction of sin, desire of pardon, longing after peace of conscience... The Jews who heard Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost and were "pricked in their hearts", the Philippian jailer who cried to Paul and Silas "What must I do to be saved?" are both examples of what the

expression means. In both cases there was a **“thirst”**... Happy are those who know something by experience of spiritual **“thirst”**... **“Blessed indeed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6)**...

Those little words **“let him come unto me”** are few and very simple. But they settle a mighty question which all the wisdom of Greek and Roman philosophers could never settle: they show how man can have peace with God. They show that peace is to be had in Christ by trusting in Him as our Mediator and Substitute – in one word, by believing. To **“come”** to Christ is to believe on Him and to **“believe”** on Him is to come.

The saints of God in every age have been men and women who drank of this fountain by faith and were relieved... They felt their guilt and emptiness and thirsted for deliverance. They heard of a full supply of pardon, mercy and grace in Christ crucified for all penitent believers. They believed the good news and rested upon it... Really to feel the sinfulness of sin and to thirst and really come to Christ and believe are the two steps which lead to heaven... thousands of living Christians in the present day... have tasted peace and hope and comfort since they first believed’

[9] **John 8:21–24**

“(21) Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; where I go ye cannot come. (22) Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? Because he saith, Where I go, ye cannot come. (23) And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world. (24) I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for **if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins**”.

Comments

These verses state once more the fate that waits those who die in unbelief – we have already considered this subject in our consideration earlier of [7] **John 7:31-34**.

Matthew Henry wrote ‘Those that live in unbelief, are for ever undone, if they die in unbelief... Nothing but the doctrine of Christ's grace will be an argument powerful enough, and none but the Spirit of Christ's grace will be an agent powerful enough, to turn us from sin to God; and that Spirit is given, and that doctrine is given, to work upon those only who believe in Christ.’

Bishop J C Ryle wrote ‘Our Lord says to His enemies **“If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”**... They are greatly mistaken who suppose that it is harsh and unkind to speak of hell and future punishment... Let us settle in our minds, as one of the great foundation truths of our faith, that there is a hell... Let us never suppose that there is any want of love in speaking of hell. Let us rather maintain that it is the highest love to warn men plainly of danger and to beseech them to **“flee from the wrath to come”**. It was Satan, the deceiver, murderer, liar who said to Eve in the beginning, **“Ye shall not die” (Genesis 3:4)**. To shrink from telling men that except they believe they will **“die in their sins”** may please the devil, but surely it cannot please God’.

Pastor John MacArthur wrote in his Study Bible concerning verse 24 **“if ye believe not”** – Jesus emphasised that the fatal, unforgivable and eternal sin is failure to believe in Him as Messiah and Son of God. (Cecil – not failure to observe human and priestly religious rituals based upon distortions of Scripture) In truth, all other sins can be forgiven if this one (unbelief) is repented of’.

[10] [John 8:43, 45 & 47: John 10:26: Acts 13:48](#)

“(43) Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because **ye cannot hear my word...** (45) And because I tell you the truth, **ye believe me not...** (47) He that is of God heareth God’s words; **ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God”**

“(26) But **ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep** as I said unto you”
“(48) And when the gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord; and **as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”**

Comments

Earlier I posed the question
“is ‘eternal life’ graciously and divinely given and known through faith alone and evidenced by ‘belief’?”

The verses quoted here show that when Christ spoke there were those that He identified as not being either able or willing to “understand” or “hear” (in the sense of understanding) what He said. He also identified those who could not and would not believe what He said. Why was it that some “understood”, “heard” and “believed” and yet others who listened to Christ did not?

The verse in ‘the sandwich’ of those quoted in this section is John 10:26 where Jesus said “But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep”.

Rob Zins in a short booklet entitled ‘I am a Christian. Perhaps you are not. So, is this a big deal?’ wrote (pp 14-15) “**But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep**” This does not sound right. We find ourselves wanting to correct the statement. We want Jesus to say ‘but you are not my sheep *because* you do not believe’. And yet it is just the opposite. He says they do not believe *because* they are not His sheep. If they were His sheep they would believe. The sheep *really* believe. Those who are not His sheep *really* do not believe. Unless you are a sheep of Christ you cannot believe. If you are a sheep you will believe. The sheep of Christ believe with both their heart and mind... There are those who have a head knowledge of Jesus but have no will to follow His teaching. They are not His sheep. There are those who have a religious knowledge of Jesus and love their religion. They are not His sheep. It must be both head and heart, not one or the other’.

Why are some people “sheep” and other people are not “sheep”? – Well the last verse cited, Acts 13:48, does I believe answer that question – it reads “and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”. Notice again the order, rather like John 10:26. Many would prefer the verse to read ‘*And as many as believed were ordained to eternal life*’ but it doesn’t say that. In both cases, it was those chosen (‘ordained’) by God who ‘believed’ and not *those who believed that were then chosen (‘ordained’) by God.*

The ability to believe in the possession of ‘eternal life’ is a divine gift received and known by the recipient though faith alone and not ‘conjured up’ through a series of religious rituals. “Faith” is succinctly defined in Hebrews 11:1 as being “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”.

Those who possess the gracious, divine gift of “faith” [see Ephesians 2:8] possess “the substance of things hoped for” – and what is “the substance of things hoped for”? – It is the assurance of the possession of ‘salvation/eternal life’. The knowledge by anyone of such possession is of course denied by the Roman Catholic religion

and classified as being the mortal sin of 'presumption'
and so worthy of 'eternal condemnation'.

What is "the evidence of things not seen" that
constitutes part of the "faith" of a true believer?

In Luke 10:17 we read this "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord even the demons are subject unto us through thy name". These disciples were overjoyed by temporal events that they had seen and witnessed whilst ministering – for them this was evidence that they truly belonged to the Lord who had sent them out.

However, the Lord redirected their focus in verse 20 when He said "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven".

The divine gift of "faith" stretches far beyond any earthly visible plain – it stretches right into the heavens and is "evidence" that believers know with assurance that their names are written in that as yet unseen book in heaven – "The Lamb's Book of Life". Paul captured the essence of this vital difference between the seen and the unseen when he wrote in 2nd Corinthians 4:18 "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal".

Again any claim to such eternal assurance is roundly rejected by the Roman Catholic religion. Rome insists rather that their system of sacraments must be strictly adhered to and even then, the best most can hope for, is a period of further suffering and cleansing after death in purgatory in the hope that this 'works faith' will eventually prise open the doors of heaven.

I wrote earlier

Although Pastor John MacArthur stated that "**BELIEVE occurs approximately 100 times in the gospel**" I only intend to cite a limited number of such references that I trust will nonetheless show clearly that "**eternal life**" is not grounded upon literally 'eating' and 'drinking' the body and blood of Christ (as enshrined in Roman Catholic priestly religious ritual and that constitute "works of righteousness") as Mr Keating asserts but rather it is evidenced solely through 'believing' upon the person and work of Christ (and that by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone).

and I want now to simply quote, without comment,
other verses from John's Gospel that refer to 'believing'.

John 9: 1, 14, 16, 30, 33-38.

¹ And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth... ¹⁴ And it was the sabbath day when *Jesus* made the clay, and opened his eyes... ¹⁶ Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day... ³⁰ The man answered and said unto them... ³³ If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. ³⁴ They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. ³⁵ *Jesus* heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, **Dost thou believe on the Son of God?** ³⁶ He answered and said, **Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?** ³⁷ And *Jesus* said unto

him, **Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.** ³⁸ And he said, Lord, **I believe.** And he worshipped him.

John 10: 25-27

²⁵ Jesus answered them, **I told you, and ye believed not:** the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. ²⁶ But **ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep,** as I said unto you. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

John 11: 24-27

²⁴ Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. ²⁵ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: **he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:** ²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. **Believest thou this?** ²⁷ She saith unto him, Yea, **Lord: I believe** that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

John 11: 45; 12:10-11

⁴⁵ Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, **believed on him...** ¹⁰ But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; ¹¹ Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

John 12: 37-45

³⁷ **But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:** ³⁸ **That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled,** which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, ⁴⁰ **He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted,** and I should heal them. ⁴¹ These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him... ⁴² **Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him;** but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: ⁴³ For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. ⁴⁴ **Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.** ⁴⁵ And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

John 14: 11-12

¹¹ **Believe me that I am in the Father,** and the Father in me: or else **believe me for the very works' sake.** ¹² Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me,** the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

John 16: 27-31

²⁷ For **the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed** that I came out from God. ²⁸ I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. ²⁹ His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. ³⁰ Now are we sure that thou knowest all things,

and needest not that any man should ask thee: **by this we believe** that thou camest forth from God. ³¹ Jesus answered them, **Do ye now believe?**

John 17: 6-9, 20

⁶ **I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world:** thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. ⁸ For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, **and they have believed** that thou didst send me. ⁹ I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine... ²⁰ **Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;**

John 20: 26-31

²⁶ And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. ²⁷ Then saith he to **Thomas**, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and **be not faithless, but believing.** ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. ²⁹ Jesus saith unto him, **Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and yet have believed.** ³⁰ And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹ **But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.**

In the concluding section of this article I want now to look at what many evangelical Christians, **including a number of former Roman Catholics**, have written concerning these crucial verses in John chapter 6. Karl Keating emphasises that for him eternal life is absolutely dependent upon believing Rome's claims that in the Eucharist there is a literal eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of Christ. He rejects any suggestion that this terminology is meant to be figurative and to represent spiritual union with Christ for those in possession of saving faith evidenced by their believing on the Person and Work of Christ **alone** [His sinless life and His substitutionary sacrificial death] for salvation unto eternal life.

As a help I'm now going to set out some crucial verses from John 6, many of which will be referred to by the various commentators that I will be quoting –

Selected verses from John 6:

⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, ⁹ There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? ¹⁰ And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. ¹² When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. ¹³

Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten...

²² The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples were gone away alone; ²³ (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) ²⁴ When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. ²⁵ And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? ²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. ²⁷ Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed...

³² Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. ³⁴ Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. ³⁵ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. ³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

⁴¹ The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. ⁴² And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? ⁴³ Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. ⁴⁶ Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am that bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

⁵² The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat? ⁵³ Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶ He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father hath sent

me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. ⁵⁸ This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

⁵⁹ These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. ⁶⁰ Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

⁶¹ When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? ⁶² *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

⁶³ It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you that believe not. For

Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. ⁶⁵ And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it

were given unto him of my Father. ⁶⁶ From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John
by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 95-96)

'When the Galileans mutter protest about the extravagance of such claims coming from the lips of one with whose earthly origins they are acquainted, Jesus repeats that the salvation He has come from heaven to bring is essentially the work of *God* and that no one can experience it who is not drawn by the Father... Before anyone can be drawn to Christ in faith and partake of the bread from heaven, he must first have heard the voice of the Father, invisible though He is, directing him to this unfailing source of life-giving energy [Cecil – remember the words of Jesus to Peter after he had declared Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God” – the Lord said to Peter “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven” Matthew 16:17]

But it was not possible for Jesus to make this heavenly food, which in fact was Himself, universally available, until He had offered Himself in sacrifice. The bread had to be broken before it could become the food of all who would receive it; and His blood had to be shed before the ransomed could receive its life-giving properties. In a word, the distribution of this food could only result from His redeeming death. There is therefore a vital connection between the giving by Jesus of the real bread, which far surpasses in quality and in the permanence of its effects the manna which prefigured it, and the offering of His own flesh and blood in sacrifice.

The discourse, accordingly, passes almost imperceptibly from the revelation of Jesus as the true bread that has come down from heaven, to the necessity of eating His *flesh* “**the bread which I shall give**” says Jesus “**for the life of the world is my flesh**” (v 35). **Christian faith in other words is faith in Christ crucified.** True nourishment, which brings eternal life, is possible only for those who accept His sacrifice, who are incorporated by faith into His body, who are crucified with Him that they may live with Him, and who abide in Him because He abides in them – truths which are **sacramentally set forth every time Christians partake of broken bread and outpoured wine at the Lord's Supper.**

A most noticeable feature of the last part of this discourse is the way in which the miraculous feeding of the Galilean multitude, the death of Jesus on the cross, and teaching relevant to the Sacrament of Holy Communion are all blended together.

The true bread which Jesus has come down from heaven to give is His flesh offered in sacrifice; and unless men eat this bread i.e. unless they accept the sacrifice in faith, they have no life in themselves.

The feeding miracle is no isolated exhibition of supernatural power wrought solely for the satisfaction of the material needs of a particular group of people on a particular occasion. Like the miracle of the turning of water into wine, it is first and foremost a *sign*, an acted parable of the spiritual sustenance which is always available to the believer as a result of Jesus' sacrifice.

That sacrifice, moreover, is not a material offering akin to the animal sacrifices, which prefigured it, but a personal, conscious of a willing victim made in the realm of eternal spirit (see Hebrews 9:14). So, in the Holy Communion, there is no magical participation by the believer in the physical flesh of Jesus, but an ever-fresh appropriation of the spiritual benefits of His passion. Accordingly, the words recorded in verse 63 are equally applicable to the feeding miracle, the sacrifice on Calvary and the Lord's Supper. **"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing:"** for *the flesh* in this context signifies the outward to the exclusion of the inward, the visible apart from the invisible, the material unrelated to the spiritual, and the human disassociated from the divine.'

Former Roman Catholic, Rob Zins, Director of 'A Christian Witness to Roman Catholicism' (web site <http://www.cwrc-rz.org/>) wrote in

'Romanism: The Relentless Roman Catholic Assault on the Gospel of Jesus Christ'
(pp 118-121)

'We shall begin our discussion by refuting the allegation that to take the bread and blood as a figure in John 6 is to abandon a literalist approach to Scripture. It is not literal to force a meaning when a metaphor is intended. All literalists allow for figures of speech as they are used by a writer. To discount the use of a figure is to depart from the literal interpretation of the text. All literalists strive to interpret the Bible in a normal sense, allowing figures where they are intended. We regret the Catholic claim that Christians depart from their literalist ways when it comes to John 6. We do nothing of the sort. We recognise the author's figure and use it literally.

We believe the controlling verse of John 6 is verse 35 **"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst"**. Notice the problem Jesus encountered is given to us in verse 36 **"But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not"**.

We observe that our Lord uses the word **"believe"** both in verse 35 and in verse 36. In the first He shows that **"to believe"** in Himself is to never hunger or thirst. In the second He shows that some of those present did not **"believe"** and this was the problem!

In verse 40 we notice the promise of eternal life is to those who believe **"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day"**. Again in verse 47 we observe **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life"**. At this point Jesus says simply (verse 48) **"I am that bread of life"**.

He is not saying that He is literal bread. He is contrasting the sustenance which He gives to His own with that of the manna given to the Jews in the wilderness. They ate and died. But the one who eats of Christ will not die! Now here is the rub! **Romanists believe that Jesus was telling people to literally eat Him!** We say He masterfully uses the figure of bread, as it was the common sustenance of the day, representing Himself as the fulfilment of the manna (type) given to the Jews in the wilderness. Christ Himself is the antitype of that manna.

(Cecil – it might be helpful remind ourselves of a portion from Karl Keating’s article that illustrates what Rob Zins correctly identified as the Roman Catholic understanding of this subject – Karl Keating wrote –

John 6:30 begins a colloquy that took place in the synagogue at Capernaum. The Jews asked Jesus what sign he could perform so that they might believe in him. As a challenge, they noted that "our ancestors ate manna in the desert." Could Jesus top that? He told them the real bread from heaven comes from the Father. "Give us this bread always," they said. Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." At this point the Jews understood him to be speaking metaphorically.

Again and Again

Jesus first repeated what he said, then summarized: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" (John 6:51–52).

His listeners were stupefied because now they understood Jesus *literally*—and correctly. He again repeated his words, but with even greater emphasis, and introduced the statement about drinking his blood: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:53–56).

No Corrections

Notice that Jesus made no attempt to soften what he said, no attempt to correct "misunderstandings," for there were none. Our Lord’s listeners understood him perfectly well. They no longer thought he was speaking metaphorically. If they *had*, if they mistook what he said, why no correction?

Cecil – we now return to what Rob Zins wrote in his book ‘Romanism’)

The much disputed passage is John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". The Lord goes on to repeat the same essential thought only adding to it the drinking of His blood in verse 53. The entire pericope (extract/episode) ends in verse 59.

The Romanist thinks the astonishment of the Jews upon hearing this was due to the fact that they understood Him clearly, and simply could not grasp how they could literally eat Jesus and drink His blood. With this we agree. But, the key is that Rome thinks the Jews had a *right* understanding of Jesus; that He really did want to be eaten in some physical way! We say they did not have a right understanding of Jesus’ words.

The Jews of John 6:52, like Rome, took Jesus as though He wanted them to be cannibalistic. They like Rome were wrong. When they were disgusted and cried out in verse 52 "How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat?" Rome thinks they were on track, but left Jesus before He would show them how to eat Him (at the Last Supper). Rome thinks that because Jesus did not pause and correct their understanding of literally eating Jesus, they must have heard Him right!

We are reminded that when our Lord said "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19) the Jews were quite sure that He was referring to the Temple and took Him quite literally and were disgusted. To our knowledge the Lord did not correct their crass literalism.

Those who thought Jesus was teaching a physical eating of Him were missing the entire point! But there was no misunderstanding by those who had ears to hear. They knew that Jesus had set Himself up as one greater than Moses and now greater than the manna. They knew that the hard thing to swallow was not a future Catholic transubstantiated wafer, but rather absolute trust and faith that He was the antitype to manna given by God alone. The Jews on the other hand were repulsed at the very thought of eating Jesus and what that meant in the light of clean and unclean.

There are actually three ways to see this episode. First are those who are disgusted with the thought that they have to somehow eat Jesus (crass literalists). Second, are those who think they can in some way eat Jesus physically (Roman Catholics). Third, there are those who understand eating Him means believing in Him and seek no other way of literally digesting Jesus... the Romanist thinks Jesus meant literally to eat Him. The result? An entire religion built around faulty exegesis which alleges that a priesthood can actually turn a wafer into the body of Jesus Christ.

We began this section with the claim that verse 35 ("And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst") actually controls the chapter. It is not surprising then to find that Jesus returns to the same word "unbelief" in characterising those who left Him. "But there are some of you that believe not" (verse 64). Their unbelief was deeply rooted in a failure to grasp the Person and mission of Jesus Christ (Cecil – such ability is a gracious divine gift as I believe verse 65 goes on to teach). They were not in unbelief due to their failure to understand that Jesus would provide a way literally to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

Former Roman Catholic, Mike Gendron, Director of 'Proclaiming the Gospel' (web site <http://www.pro-gospel.org/>) wrote a helpful article that is located on <http://www.pro-gospel.org/articles/103-john-653-unless-you-eat-my-flesh> - this is the text of that article –

“Unless You Eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and Drink His Blood You Have No Life In You”

Are these words of Jesus from **John 6:53** to be taken literally or figuratively? The Roman Catholic Church teaches the context of John chapter six and the above headlined verse 53 are literal. Thus Jesus is giving absolute and unconditional requirements for eternal life. In fact, this literal interpretation forms the foundation for Rome's doctrine of transubstantiation -- the miraculous changing of bread and wine into the living Christ, His body and blood, soul and divinity. Each Catholic priest is said to have the power to call Jesus down from the right hand of the Father when he elevates the wafer and whispers the words "Hoc corpus meus est." Catholics believe as they consume the lifeless wafer they are actually eating and drinking the living body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is a vital and important step in their salvation and a doctrine they must believe and accept to become a Catholic.

If priests indeed have the exclusive power to change finite bread and wine into the body and blood of the infinite Christ, and if indeed consuming His body and blood is necessary for salvation, then the whole world must become Catholic to escape the wrath of God. On the other hand, if Jesus was speaking in figurative language then this teaching becomes the most blasphemous and deceptive hoax any religion could impose on its people. There is no middle ground. Therefore the question of utmost importance is -- Was the message Jesus conveyed to the Jewish multitude to be understood as literal or figurative? Rome has never presented a good argument for defending its literal interpretation. Yet there are at least seven convincing reasons why this passage must be taken figuratively.

Counterfeit Miracle

There is no Biblical precedent where something supernatural occurred where the outward evidence indicated no miracle had taken place. (The wafer and wine look, taste and feel the same before and after the supposed miracle of transubstantiation). When Jesus changed water into wine, all the elements of water changed into the actual elements of wine.

Drinking Blood Forbidden

The Law of Moses strictly forbade Jews from drinking blood (**Leviticus 17:10-14**) A literal interpretation would have Jesus teaching the Jews to disobey the Mosaic Law. This would have been enough cause to persecute Jesus. (See **John 5:16**)

Biblical Disharmony

When **John 6:53** is interpreted literally it is in disharmony with the rest of the Bible. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you," gives no hope of eternal life to any Christian who has not consumed the literal body and blood of Christ. It opposes hundreds of Scriptures that declare justification and salvation are by faith alone in Christ.

Produces Dilemma

It appears that the "eating and drinking" in verse 6:54 and the "believing" in verse 6:40 produce the same result - eternal life. If both are literal we have a dilemma. What if a person "believes" but does not "eat or drink"? Or what if a person "eats and drinks" but does not "believe?" This could happen any time a non-believer walked into a Catholic Church and received the Eucharist. Does this person have eternal life because he met one of the requirements but not the other? The only possible way to harmonize these two verses is to accept one verse as figurative and one as literal.

Figurative In Old Testament

The Jews were familiar with "eating and drinking" being used figuratively in the Old Testament to describe the appropriation of divine blessings to one's innermost being. It was God's way of providing spiritual nourishment for the soul. (See **Jeremiah 15:16**; **Isaiah 55:1-3**; and **Ezekiel 2:8, 3:1**)

Jesus Confirmed

Jesus informed His disciples there were times when He spoke figuratively (**John 16:25**) and often used that type of language to describe Himself. The Gospel of John records seven figurative declarations Jesus made of Himself -- "the bread of life" (6:48), "the light of the world" (8:12), "the door" (10:9), "the good shepherd" (10:11), "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), "the way, the truth and the life" (14:6), and "the true vine" (15:1). He also referred to His body as the temple (2:19).

Words Were Spiritual

Jesus ended this teaching by revealing "the words I have spoken to you are spirit" (6:63). As with each of the seven miracles in John's Gospel, Jesus uses the miracle to convey a spiritual truth. Here Jesus has just multiplied the loaves and fish and uses a human analogy to teach the necessity of spiritual nourishment. This is consistent with His teaching on how we are to

worship God. "God is Spirit and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth" (**John 4:24**). As we worship Christ He is present spiritually, not physically. In fact, Jesus can only be bodily present at one place at one time. His omnipresence refers only to His spirit. It is impossible for Christ to be bodily present in thousands of Catholic Churches around the world.

When Jesus is received spiritually, one time in the heart, there is no need to receive him physically, over and over again in the stomach.

In his article Karl Keating wrote "**John 6 was an extended promise of what would be instituted at the Last Supper**" – he is seeking to establish a clear unbreakable doctrinal link between the events of John 6 and what would occur many chapters later at the Last Supper – is he correct?

To answer that I want now to quote some portions from a short booklet written by **former Roman Catholic, Jim McCarthy**, Director of 'Good News For Catholics' (web site <http://www.gnfc.org/>) The booklet written by Jim McCarthy was entitled **'The Mass: From mystery to meaning'**.

Jim McCarthy wrote –

'My stomach was in full flight as we waited for Mass to begin... But I had made up my mind; I was going to be an altar boy... As the bell clanged the entire congregation rose to their feet. Pretty heady stuff for an eleven-year-old... I served Mass for four years... Having attended Mass most of my life, I understand the reverence that every Catholic has for this sacrament... I found that the heart of the issue is the interpretation of Jesus' words **"This is my body... this is my blood"** (**Matthew 26:26-28**). Four major passages record the events of the Last Supper during which Jesus spoke these words. Three are in the gospels. The fourth account is given by Paul... In addition there are several short references in The Acts of the Apostles and 1 Corinthians. **John 6, where the Lord speaks of Himself as the "bread of life" is also important...**

What is the correct interpretation of Jesus' statement **"this is my body"**? To answer this we must decide whether He was speaking in plain or figurative language.... Jesus uses both types of language on the night of the Last supper, he said **"These things have I spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father"** (**John 16:25**).

[Cecil - In the Authorised Version the words quoted by Jim as **"figurative language"** [from the New American Standard Version] are translated as **"proverbs"** – is **"figurative language"** a faithful translation of the text? In Vine's Expository Dictionary in relation to the word **'proverbs'** readers are re-directed to the word **'parable'** and referring to the usage in John 16:25 we read "The word is sometimes spoken of as a 'parable' John 10:6 i.e. a figurative discourse; see also John 16:25 7 29 where the word is rendered 'proverbs'. Going back now to Jim's booklet we read -]

Continuing with what Jim McCarthy wrote –

Whether we take Christ's words to be spoken in plain or figurative language will determine our view of the Eucharist. **'The Plain View'**. This is the interpretation held by the Catholic Church... those receiving Holy Communion eat the body of Christ. Participation is essential for spiritual life, central to Catholic experience and important for salvation... **'The Figurative View'**. This interpretation treats Jesus' words as a figure of speech... **By reading Christ's words in context we can determine their right meaning. My study of the Last supper has led me to believe that Jesus was speaking figuratively. Four points provide a summary of the reasons for my conclusion.**

[Cecil – Jim uses the following 4 headings for each of his points – **1. Jesus’ teaching style; 2. John 6; 3. Sound reason; 4. The stated purpose.** In the context of this article I will now only quote portions of what Jim wrote under point 2, **John 6.**]

Continuing with what Jim McCarthy wrote –

‘In John 6, the Jews continue to resist Jesus’ claim of being divine. They challenge Him to prove this by bringing down manna from heaven as Moses had (v 30-31). Jesus takes their reference to the manna, the food which was essential for life in the wilderness, and applies it figuratively to Himself. He answers, “I am the bread of life” (v 35).

In the debate which follows, He uses bread to illustrate the truth that they have refused to accept: **belief in Jesus is essential for spiritual life.** First He states the matter in plain language, **“He who believes has eternal life”** (v 47). Then He states it in figurative language, **“If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever”** (v 51). **In His analogy, Jesus uses eating to represent believing.**

This can be seen again in a following verse. Jesus went on to say, **“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day”** (v 54). Moments earlier He had said, **“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day”.** Notice that the results are identical in both verses: **eternal life and resurrection.** But although in the one we must eat and drink, in the other we must behold and believe. Since the results are identical we should understand that the actions to obtain them are also identical: **eating represents believing.** His figurative statements are easily understood when read in the context of the other verses in the passage.’

In his article Karl Keating wrote the following – **‘chapter six of John’s Gospel, in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper’.** Is this linkage of the events in John 6 to events recorded many chapters later at the Last Supper correct. Not according to Jim McCarthy who wrote –

‘But we should not read into this passage a reference to the Eucharist. The reason is once again context. **The circumstances in John 6 and the Last Supper are different.** Yes, Jesus refers to bread in both, but there the similarity ends.

In John 6, He is speaking to those who reject Him as the source of eternal life. He uses bread as an analogy to illustrate mankind’s need to believe in Him. Jesus never even mentions wine.

At the Last Supper, He is among His eleven true disciples. There He is instituting a commemorative meal using bread and wine. When we understand how different the two events are from each other, it becomes clear that we cannot use John 6 as a foundation upon which to rest our interpretation of the Last Supper. But this is exactly what the Catholic Church does’.

(Cecil – In John 6 the Lord is applying the story of **‘The Manna in the Wilderness’** that sustained the life of God’s people to Himself and how He maintains the spiritual/eternal life of His people who BELIEVE on Him. At the Last Supper He is applying to Himself the story of **‘The Passover Lamb’** that saved God’s people from the outpoured wrath of God in Egypt. **‘The Passover Lamb’** speaks of a **SACRIFICE** (Calvary) that saved God’s people from the consequences of their sins.. In John 6 **‘The Manna’** speaks of **SUSTENANCE** for God’s people as they journey through the wilderness of life (this spiritual sustenance is received through their ongoing belief in Christ as He is revealed in God’s Word by the Holy Spirit and not by physically ingesting literal bread and wine.)

Former Roman Catholic, William Webster,

Director of 'Christian Resources' and Pastor of 'Grace Bible Church, WA
(web sites <http://www.christiantruth.com/index.php> and
<http://www.gracebiblebattleground.org/content/location.html>)

wrote in

'Salvation: The Bible and Roman Catholicism':

(pp 62 - 68)

'Question and Answer Catholic Catechism: Question 1217: Is the Eucharist necessary for salvation? Answer: The Eucharist is necessary for salvation, to be received either sacramentally or in desire. Christ's words "if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you" (John 6:53) mean that Holy Communion is necessary to sustain the life of grace in a person who has reached the age of reason...

From the quotations given from the authoritative Roman Catholic sources, we learn that the Eucharist is the sacrament in which the priest has the power to transform the bread and wine into the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ, a process known as transubstantiation... The Church derives this teaching from its interpretation of the passages in the Gospels dealing with the Last Supper and also from John chapter 6 where Jesus speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood...

We have already seen that the Bible teaches that there are no longer any sacrifices (Hebrews 10:18) and the priesthood has been abolished. Consequently the Roman Catholic Church's interpretation of John chapter 6 and those passages related to the Last Supper must be unbiblical...

But what exactly do these passages of Scripture mean? John 6:26-65 is the account of an incident where Jesus presents himself to the Jews as the Bread of Life... Jesus gives an illustration in order that these people might understand what he meant by the word "believe" which he has used five times in this section... Then Jesus makes this statement: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (v 63).

Jesus makes it clear that the significance of his words to the Jews is spiritual... They must be interpreted in a spiritual and not in a literal or physical manner. Jesus is teaching them what it means to enter into a spiritual relationship with himself. Thus, when he speaks of them eating his flesh and drinking his blood he is not speaking literally. This is a figurative way of explaining the meaning of faith. True faith is an appropriation of the very life of Jesus Christ himself into our lives so that he personally becomes the very life of our life. Jesus is not literal bread but he calls himself the bread of life. That is figurative language with a spiritual meaning...

What does it mean to come and believe in him? It means coming into a spiritual union with the Son of God, so that it is likened to eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Belief means far more than intellectual assent. It means the appropriation of the very life of the Son of God into my life, demonstrating that true Christian faith involves coming into a vital, living, intimate relationship with a person and not merely assenting to a set of doctrines proposed by a church.

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the necessity of being "born again", this Jewish religious teacher misunderstood the spiritual truth as something physical. "How can I return to my mother's womb and be born again?" In a similar manner the Roman Catholic Church misinterprets Jesus' words in John 6:53-54. It interprets them in a way that is completely independent of their context and assigns a physical and literal meaning to what was intended to be spiritual and figurative... By taking the verses out of context, the Roman Catholic Church falls into the same error as Nicodemus did, giving a physical interpretation to a spiritual truth...

To interpret the words of Jesus without careful reference to their context is bound to give a meaning to his words that he never intended... The terms “to eat” and “to drink” illustrate what it means to believe – and to believe in Christ results in eternal life and in being raised up on the last day... Only by taking John 6:53-54 out of context and assigning to it a physical interpretation, and then aligning it with their interpretation of the passages related to the Last Supper, can the Roman Catholic Church arrive at its teaching on transubstantiation...

The Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on the Eucharist as the literal body and blood of Jesus, and the means whereby he is sacrificed continually on the altar and then offered as the source of eternal life, is completely contradictory to the truth of the Word of God. There is no longer any priesthood or sacrifice and the words of Jesus are figurative and spiritual, rather than literal and physical’.

In a little booklet by **C.C.J. Butlin** (and called ‘**Traditional Doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church Examined**’ (available from the Protestant Truth Society, London) chapter 4 addresses ‘**transubstantiation**’. Mr Butlin quotes (pp 20-21) some of those who advanced this teaching from the 7th century onwards until it was confirmed by Pope Innocent III (Pope from 1198 – 1216) and made an article of faith and a requisite to salvation by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Mr Butlin then goes on to say (pp 21-24) –

‘The “Fathers” are opposed to the doctrine. They did not acknowledge any change in the elements or believe in any corporal presence:

Tertullian: ‘Christ, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, made it His body by saying “This is my body”, **that is, the figure of my body**’ (Contra Marcion, lib 5, p 458: Paris 1675)

Eusebius of Caesarea: ‘Christ Himself gave **the symbols** of the Divine ceremony to His own disciples that **the image** of His own body should be made. He appointed to **use bread as a symbol** of His own body’ (Demons, Evan, lib ciii, c.ii, p236).

Transubstantiation is unscriptural – Romanist writers confess as much:

Cardinal Cajetan: ‘That part which the Gospel hath not expressed, viz., the conversion of the bread in the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation) we have received expressly from the Church’.

Bellarmino admits ‘It is not altogether improbable that there is no express place of Scripture to prove transubstantiation without the declaration of the Church.

Occam: ‘It is easier, more reasonable, less inconvenient and better agreeing with Scripture, to hold that the substance of the bread remains’.

We note that St Paul still calls the bread, after consecration, bread (see 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26). These verses tell us too that if the bread be Christ, the sacrament should cease, as it is to continue only till Christ comes. **Concerning the wine, our Lord called it wine after consecration as well as before** (Luke 12; Mark 14)

Transubstantiation is illogical – The Words “This is my body” are not the whole... He also said “which is given (or broken) for you”. Now as His body was neither then broken or given since He was fully alive, the bread could not be really or naturally His body. If it were His body then He held His own body in His own hands and gave other perfect bodies of Himself to His disciples. Hereby the truth of Christ’s human nature is destroyed for if His body has the power of being in a dozen places at the same time it no longer possesses our nature... The like difficulties arise regarding the wine. If transubstantiation be true then was Christ’s blood all in His veins, yet all in the cup?

[Cecil – clearly the Lord was indicating that the bread and wine would merely symbolise the Sacrifice of Himself that He was about to make on the Cross – the place where His body would be given and His blood shed]

The senses reject the doctrine – Scripture agrees that we are to employ our senses in judging of the truth or falsehood of a matter. Cf Luke 24:38-40; John 20:27; Acts 1:1-3 see also 1 John 1... If we cannot trust our senses (when we see, feel, taste, smell nothing but bread) the senses of the Apostles may have been deceived concerning the Resurrection... If deceived in one case why not the other?

In chapter 5 that addresses **'The Mass'** Mr Butlin makes this succinct summary on page 31- 'The Roman doctrine of the Mass rests not on Holy Scripture but on the dubious authority of their Church. Moreover, not only is the doctrine lacking in Scriptural support, it is contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament. It is almost inconceivable that a Church which accepts the Epistle to the Hebrews as canonical should build its doctrines on principles flatly denied by that Epistle'.

[Cecil – if transubstantiation is not true as is clearly evidenced by what Scripture teaches and by what has been explained by the sources I have quoted then **EATING the consecrated HOST is not part of any process to obtaining eternal life as Mr Keating vigorously asserts**]

In **'A Protestant Catechism'** by **Rev. R.P. Blakeney** (former Rector and Rural Dean of Bridlington and Canon of York) in the section that deals with **'Transubstantiation'** beginning on page 45 we read this very pertinent **"Question 201: Has the discourse in John 6 a reference to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at all?"**

Earlier we read what former Roman Catholic Jim McCarthy had to say on this issue when he wrote **'But we should not read into this passage a reference to the Eucharist. The reason is once again context. The circumstances in John 6 and the Last Supper are different. Yes, Jesus refers to bread in both, but there the similarity ends.'**

So how does Rev Blakeney answer **Question 201?** – This is his answer – **"No; it was delivered at least thirteen months before the institution of the Lord's Supper. Two Passovers elapsed between the events recorded in this chapter (John 6) and the Last Supper. But Christ uses the present tense 'except ye eat' (verse 53) which can have no reference to the Lord's Supper which was not then in existence".**

It had been my original intention to finish the article at this point in the hope that what I have written does biblically demonstrate **'that coming to him is bread, having faith in him is drink. Thus, eating his flesh and blood merely means believing in Christ'** and is precisely what the Word of God teaches. However, in the providence of God, just last night I got round to reading an article in the British Church Newspaper No. 221 18 November 2011. The article is located on pages 13 & 15 and I will reproduce it in its entirety –

"They said to one another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was" Exodus 16:15. We are told that the Hebrew word for **manna** means **'What is it?'** This was the question asked by the Israelites when they first saw the manna and the question became its name.

The same question is asked to this day. What is it? Is there any natural explanation for it? Desert insects and plants have been credited with producing substances similar to the biblical description of manna.. But production on such a colossal scale, for some 40 years, without fail, six days of every week, and none on the seventh day, could only have been miraculous.

The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ answered the same question on a spiritual plane. What is it? He said manna was a picture of Himself. When speaking of the manna He explained **“I am the living bread which came down from heaven” (John 6:51).**

He went on in the same passage to speak of the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. His words were clearly symbolical. No other interpretation is possible whatever Rome may say.

The Rev. R.P. Blakeney in his famous *Protestant Catechism* (1868) points out that even Rome is forced to abandon a literal interpretation of these words. If taken literally they would raise all sorts of difficulties including saying that all who partake of the sacrament are saved and all who do not are lost. Moreover Rome's denial of the cup to the laity would, on a literal interpretation of Christ's words, deny them salvation.

Indeed, this passage in John does not refer to the Lord's Supper at all. It refers to believing Christ's words and so becoming united to Him by faith.

The Last Supper

Similarly, Christ spoke symbolically at the Last Supper when He “took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me” Luke 22:19.

There is no shred of evidence that the New Testament writers took these words literally. Had they believed in the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (the conversion of the essence of the bread and wine into the physical body and blood of Christ) and the sacrifice of the Mass it would have been given a central place in the New Testament.

The Reformation

The same question, What is it? arose about the bread and wine at the Reformation. All the English martyrs died for denying transubstantiation.

Rome teaches that every crumb of the consecrated bread and every drop of the consecrated wine contain the entire body, bones, nerves and sinews, soul, humanity and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an act of cannibalism.

The question put to the Reformers at their trial was, Where is the body of Christ? If the accused answered that it was on the Altar in Church, all was well. But if he/she replied that it was in heaven (into which the disciples saw Him ascend bodily) he/she was condemned.

Today

Still the question, What is it? haunts us. We reply that the bread and wine on the table are only bread and wine, not changed in any sense, and we take it simply in remembrance of Him. Some say craftily we ‘make a memorial’. No, we make nothing. Others say we do not know exactly what happens to the bread and wine at Communion. We know very well what happens to them – nothing at all. The bread and wine simply remind us of Christ, His body broken and His blood shed, and that we must feed on Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

In practice that means hearing His words, believing them and trusting in His atoning blood for our salvation. We then become spiritually united with Him.

Having addressed the second question posed in the title to this section I hope in my third and last response to **Is 'Christ in the Eucharist?'** to comment upon something else Mr Keating wrote very close to the end of his article – namely – **'Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6? For them, Catholic sacraments are out because they imply a spiritual reality—grace—being conveyed by means of matter.'**

I hope in my article to address the truth about **'grace'** and show how Rome completely misrepresents the grace of God in order to compel her followers to be utterly dependent upon the Roman Catholic priesthood and sacraments for supposed 'salvation'.

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 25 November 2011