

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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The Gospel of Food

John W. Robbins

*Editor's note: Once in a while we run across a passage in our reading that merits ridicule. Most of these ridiculous passages occur in religious books, for they tend to be the most irrational of all books published. The following paragraphs from James Jordan's book, *The Sociology of the Church, Essays in Reconstruction*, reminded us of a satire that Gordon Clark published in 1971 in *Christianity Today*, "A New Discovery in the Quest of the Historical Jesus." We print the passage from Jordan's book first, followed by Clark's satire.*

The Primacy of Eating

James Jordan

The priesthood of all believers means we need a whole-personed participation in worship. Worship is a dance. It is a command performance. It is not a spectator sport. The Greek notions of the primacy of internal feeling, or the primacy of the intellect, have nothing to do with Scripture. In fact, if anything, the Scriptures give us the primacy of eating [emphasis in the original]. Alexander Schmemmann has written that "in the biblical story of creation man is presented, first of all, as a hungry being, and the whole world as his food. Second only to the direction to propagate and have dominion over the earth, according to the author of the first chapter of Genesis, is God's instruction to men to eat of the earth: 'Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed ... and every tree, which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat....' Man

must eat in order to live; he must take the world into his body and transform it into himself, into flesh and blood. He is indeed that which he eats, and the world is presented as one all-embracing banquet table for man."

Schmemmann goes on to note that "it is not accidental, therefore, that the biblical story of the Fall is centered again on food. Man ate the forbidden fruit. The fruit of that one tree, whatever else it may signify, was unlike every other fruit in the Garden: It was not offered as a gift to man. Not given nor blessed by God, it was food whose eating was condemned to be communion with itself alone, and not with God. It is the image of the world loved for itself, and eating it is the image of life understood as an end in itself."

At the climax of worship is the Lord's Supper. Jesus did not say, "Understand this in memory of Me." What he actually said was, "Do this as a memorial of Me." The doing takes precedence over any theory of what is being done.¹

A New Discovery in the Quest of the Historical Jesus

Gordon H. Clark

Emil Brunner's selection of the verse "The Word became flesh" as the basic theme of the original Christian Gospel is most puzzling. As Goethe indicated in his brilliant translation of *John* 1:1, the

"word" is an unwarranted Hellenistic intellectualizing of a simple message suited to a peasant-oriented Palestinian sociology. No doubt Brunner's choice can be explained by the cultured civilization of Zurich, but it will accord with an ancient agricultural *Sitz im Leben*. Interpretation ought never to ignore the historical situation, for the research scholar can succeed only by his imaginative identification with the subject matter.

One must proceed scientifically. To reconstruct the main message of the historical Jesus—and those who deny his existence, far from being scientific, betray their objective Hegelian indifference to the existential and historical subject—one must not, like the fundamentalists, assume the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Competent scholars no longer give a second thought, nor even a first thought, to the superstition of the misguided Protestant Reformation. The New Testament is a human, all too human, in fact a Jewish, book; and to ignore this fact is to be defeated before beginning.

When, now, a proper identification with the historical situation is made, it will easily be seen—and the evidence forthcoming is abundant—that Jesus is not a product of Greek philosophy, nor even of the mystery cults, but rather, in accord with the Jewish background, is an exponent of the Essene food laws that oppose the corpulent principles of the Pharisees. The early Church modified this original teaching of Jesus by introducing Hellenistic laxity, as was natural for those not nurtured in Judaism.

Therefore the basic text of the Gospels, after the rest have been demythologized and separated into its various layers, is the profound socio-physiological principle of *Matthew* 6:16: "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance...."

This is why trust in God alleviates the food problem: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat [here the text is defective, probably because a very early copyist, or even the original author—whoever he was—ate too heavy a meal] or what ye shall drink.... Your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

A good diet is one that has the correct number of calories. Today stress is laid on reducing the

number. In the historical situation it was also necessary to insist on enough calories. Therefore Jesus said (and this is one of those few places where we can be sure we almost have Jesus' very words), "What man is there, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" Jesus wanted the people to understand that stones have too few calories. Naturally too many calories are also bad; therefore the oily calorific serpent in the next verse must not be substituted for a Galilean fish.

Figs and grapes are healthful because of their vitamins, as *Matthew* 7:16 indicates; but swine are too too fatty (*cf. ibid.* 8:32), and the meat spoils in the Palestinian temperatures.

That Jesus conscientiously followed his dietary regimen is seen in the fact that he could attend a banquet and never need a physician (*ibid.* 9:12).

Of course Jesus could not be expected to hold our advanced ideas on social problems. Yet instinctively his message on diet helps to eradicate poverty. In fact, he recommends himself to the underprivileged classes by pointing out, in *Matthew* 11:5, that "the poor have the gospel of diet preached unto them." Here no doubt it was the copyist rather than the author who omitted two words, but comparative criticism easily restores them.

The gospel of diet, naturally, made enemies then as it does now with the established classes. Thus they caricature Jesus by saying that "the Son of Man came eating and drinking, a glutton and a winebibber." Of course this is exaggeration, for we must balance a diet by supplying a meal that has enough as well as few enough calories. The corpulent, however, lack this balance.

Though Jesus may have occasionally and incidentally spoken of other matters, food is his main concern. In the very next chapter he shows his disciples how to rub and eat grains of wheat. This is healthful because there are no additives, and the natural food is received *eo ipso in statu puro*, for whatever the original Greek requires. Here we have an excellent example of the progress of revelation, for David a thousand years before had eaten baked bread, but the disciples enjoyed the full nutriment of the raw grain.

When the public learned of eating raw wheat, it became necessary for Jesus to explain how a sower went forth to sow. The types of soil were also explained, and productivity up to 100 percent. This is indeed remarkable. Of course we can do much better today, but it is unhistorical to judge Jesus by our modern agricultural norms. He had more trouble with weeds, too, and accommodating himself to the evil suspicions of his audience, he attributed the weeds to an enemy.

A modern scholar is at first not surprised to read that Jesus fed 5,000 people at one meal. Yet a careful evaluation of the text shows serious corruptions. It is impossible, after so many centuries, to decide how much if any of this pericope is genuine. But no one can doubt that a redundancy of twelve basketfuls (*Matthew* 14:20) completely contradicts the principle of the proper amount, not too little, not too much.

Those who wish greater detail on the primacy of food in the Gospel can refer to *Matthew* 9:17, 37, 38; 10:42, 12:33; 13:31-33; 14:9; 15:2, 11, 13, 17 (verses 18 and 19 are a gloss); 16:26, 27, 32ff. (this is also suspect, but not so bad as 14:20); 16:5, 6 (this also has been corrupted by a reference to 14:20); 20:1ff., 22; 21:19ff., 33ff.; 22:4ff.; 23:26, 37; 24:38, 49; 25:10, 26, 35, 37, 42.

This mere listing of the verses that refer to food is enough to demonstrate beyond the possibility of successful contradiction that Jesus' main message was food. Food fills the whole. When one excises the spurious passages, these verses increase in their proportional extent. Of course, I do not contend that we should interpret all these references according to their present contexts. The disciples, who never quite understood their beloved Dietician and Physician, wrote them down so as to fit their own preconceived notions of what Jesus had to mean. Nevertheless they could never disguise the fact that the Gospel is food.

Although it is not strictly germane to our historical research on *Matthew*, one cannot fail to note the widespread influence of the Gospel; for there is no other possible source of Feuerbach's profound principle that *der Mensch ist was er isst*. This

completely justifies Barth in identifying Feuerbach as the greatest Protestant theologian in the generation following Schleiermacher.

This is why the culmination of Jesus' life is a meal. The new and highly accurate science of form criticism, applied to such stories as these, including Plato's Symposium, assures us a priori that a meal must be the climax. With their melodramatic proclivities, the disciples thought they could improve the story with a dramatic death and a *deus ex machina* of a resurrection. Even so, the original facts forced them to include vinegar (probably an original note from some other context) in the death scene. The *Gospel of John* adds fish to the resurrection, but then no one in this Post-Nicene age pays any attention whatever to *John*. Even manuscript A omits half a dozen chapters. The climax therefore is the Last Supper. Why, in view of Jesus' constant message, should not a supper be the last of the story? What more fitting climax could there be? Apparently they had bread, lamb, sauce, roset, and wine. Thus the true Gospel ends on a happy note, as all diets should.

1. James B. Jordan, Th. M., *The Sociology of the Church, Essays in Reconstruction* (Tyler, Texas: Geneva Ministries, 1986), 31-32.

2. Gordon H. Clark, *Christianity Today*, January 15, 1971, 12-13.

Letters to the Editor

Pat Robertson

Dear Dr. Robbins,

Last week I purchased your new book about Pat Robertson, and to say the least, I found it quite provocative. Years ago I took a hard stand against charismatic theology, but I grew tired of the constant bickering and battling; and so I softened my position to that of accepting the fact that it would always be around whether I liked it or not, and there was nothing I could do about it. I got out of the war. Thank you for rekindling the fire again and showing me that charismatic teachings are dangerous, not simply an alternative.

On page 30 you call Charles Finney a heretic, and later in the book there is a short paragraph about him, but it really doesn't explain a great deal. I was always under the impression that God used Charles Finney in a great way to bring revival to this country. I am most interested in reading more concerning him, whether from your pen or any book that you might recommend. I have a particular interest in this because a former pastor of mine was a Finney "cheerleader." He was constantly saying, "Finney said..., Finney said...." Any recommended reading will be attended to promptly.

Thank you for the work that you are doing. There is no doubt that it is sorely needed. Preachers today have gotten intellectually lazy, and are no longer able to logically refute the world's arguments. I'm thankful for the help that you are providing.

Please send me your new book on Dominion Theology.

Sincerely

A minister in New Hampshire

The Hoax of Scientific Creationism

Dear Brother Robbins,

This is to commend most highly both your courage and your clarity in the timely article as titled above [The Hoax of Scientific Creationism], in *Trinity Review* #56.

I have been perturbed for some years, as no doubt you have, by the trend of those promoting "scientific creationism" (e.g. the two San Diego groups, the Bible Science Association, and various local bodies such as at Baltimore), which I have called "Christless creationism," because of the calculated avoidance of anchoring creationism in Scripture in order to gain academic respectability (?) with the enemy: —and in particular abjuring any reference to Christ and his Resurrection, apparently blind to the fact that the Resurrection is the keystone on which all creationism must rest.

You may have noted that I gave a paper on the Saturday of the same Baltimore conference at which you spoke, but did not arrive in time to meet you.

The promoters of this conference, in previous years, had specifically requested the speakers to avoid overt references to Scripture and to Christ in expounding "creationism!" This tragic attitude was characteristic of the so-called debate between Duane Gish and the U. C. biologist at the Pittsburgh Conference last August (a "debate" these two have repeated in many places!), and of Dr. D. James Kennedy's address at the same conference, and of the well-known "two-model approach" which the San Diego groups have been promoting for public school science classes.

I call this a tragic development in creationist leadership (as you must also) when one considers that, apart from Christ—his Person, his work, and his resurrection—there is no scientific argument for Biblical creation or Genesis flood whatsoever, no matter how much circumstantial evidence we might garner from geology or archeology.

At the same time, the Scriptural argument for the truth of Christ's Resurrection (by which we know Him to be God manifest in flesh and the architect of creation!) is not only presuppositional but also evidentiary, satisfying all the canons of scientific evidence, as *1 Corinthians* 15, *Acts* 1:1-4, *1 John* 1:1-2, et. al. attest.

Hence, before joining argument with an evolutionist on any branch of natural science, our creationist brethren should first compel him to confront the facts of Christ's Resurrection and their logical and stupendous consequences.

This is, of course, what the apostle Paul did on Mars Hill (*Acts* 17) for which the assembled "scientists" threw him out. And if this argument had been used before the Supreme Court, creationists would have reason to be proud, rather than having to be ashamed over the arguments they did use, even though they would have been rejected as Paul was.

At least the Supreme Court would have been confronted with making a decision (as was Pilate) over the most fundamental and earthshaking Person and Event in all human history, both of which are sedulously erased from all public school textbooks in America today!

I would like to see this argument developed in *Trinity Review*, and cannot think of a better person to do it than you.

Sincerely,

R. W.

Virginia

Editor's note: The gentleman's much too generous. And while he is correct that the evidence in Scripture satisfies all the canons of scientific evidence, it does so in an ad hominem fashion—just as Christ showed Thomas his wounds and then rebuked him for his unbelief.

The events of history explained in Scripture are not evidence in the empirical sense of the term. They are revealed propositions. We know the events happened because God has told us they did, not because we have learned them empirically. Revelation, not sensation, is the source of truth. Even at the time of Christ, no one saw the Resurrection occur. They saw angels, they saw the empty tomb (for we are told they did), they even saw the Resurrected Christ, but the woman jumped to the wrong conclusion based upon the evidence (see John 20:2). It is only the propositional explanations of the Resurrection that give us knowledge, not empirical evidence. Eyewitness testimony is notoriously unreliable, but Scripture does not rely on eyewitness testimony. Rather, the truth of the eyewitness testimony relies on the inspiration of Scripture. That is why the evidentialists' appeal to the "facts" of Scripture in order to prove Scripture true is so muddle-headed. They have things precisely backwards.