

E. W. BULLINGER "This is my Body"

Introduction (not in the book, but in the web download):-

In answer to several requests, and as a specimen of the work now in preparation by the same author on Figures of Speech used in the Bible, the following is now published as a separate pamphlet. The Plan of that work is as follows :—

1. To give in its proper order and place each one of more than two hundred figures of speech, by name.
2. Then to give the proper pronunciation of its name.
3. Then its etymology, showing why the name was given to it, and what is its meaning.
4. And after this, a number of passages of Scripture, in full, where the figure is used, ranging from two or three instances, to some hundreds under each figure, accompanied by a full explanation. "Metaphor" is one of these figures which is defined, described, and illustrated in the last division of the work, and we give the following extract from the MS., confining ourselves to one passage by way of illustration, viz., Matt. xxvi. 26 :—

METAPHOR

Met'-a-phor. Greek, **μεταφορὰ** (*metaphora*), a transference, or carrying over or across. From **μετὰ** (*meta*), beyond or over, and **φέρειν** (*pherein*), to carry. We may call the figure "Representation" or "Transference."

Hence, while the *Simile* gently states that one thing is like or resembles another, the *Metaphor* boldly and warmly declares that one thing IS the other.

While the *Simile* says "all flesh is AS grass" (1 Pet. i. 24), the *Metaphor* carries the figure *across* at once, and says "all flesh IS grass" (Isa. xl. 6). This is the distinction between the two.

The *Metaphor* is, therefore, not so true to *fact* as the *Simile*, but is much truer to *feeling*.

The *Simile* says "All we like sheep," while the *Metaphor* declares that "we ARE the sheep of His pasture."

While, therefore, the word "resembles" marks the *Simile*, "represents" is the word that marks the *Metaphor*.

We have recourse to *Metaphor* when we say of a picture, "This is my father," or "This is my mother." The verb "is" means in this case *represents*; there may not be the least *resemblance*! The verb "is" always has this meaning, and no other when used as a metaphor. No other verb will do.

Few figures are more misunderstood than the *Metaphor*. It is one of the few whose names are well known, and hence it has become a general term *for any figure*; and any figurative language is popularly called "metaphorical."

Few figures have been more variously defined. But all the differences of opinion arise from not separating the figure of *Hypocatastasis* (*q.v.*) on the one hand, or distinguishing *Simile* on the other. The same confusion is seen with reference to *Allegory* (*q.v.*).

Let it then be clearly understood that a *Metaphor* is confined to a distinct affirmation that *one thing* is *another thing* owing to some association or connection in the uses or effects of anything expressed or understood. The two nouns themselves must both be mentioned, and are always to be taken in their absolutely literal sense, or else no one can tell what they mean. The figure lies wholly in the verb, or *copula*, which must always be expressed and never understood by *Ellipsis*.

For example, "All flesh IS grass." Here "flesh" is to be taken literally as the subject spoken of, and "grass" is to be taken equally literally as that which *represents* "flesh." All the figure lies in the verb "is." This statement is made under strong feeling, the mind realising some point of association, but instead of using the more measured verb, "resembles," or "is like," which would be truer to fact, though not so true to feeling, the verb "is" is used, and the meaning of one thing is *carried across* and *transferred* to the other. It is not, as some might think, a mere Hebrew idiom to use "is" "for "represents," but it is a necessity of language arising from the actual condition and character of the human mind.

We must, therefore, banish the popular and loose way in which the words “metaphor” and “metaphorical” are used, and confine the figure strictly and exclusively to this its one true and proper *representation*.

Matt. xxvi. 26, — “This is My body” (τούτο ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμά μου, *touto esti to soma mou*).

Few passages have been more perverted than these simple words. Rome has insisted on the literal or the figurative sense of words just as it suits her own purpose, and not at all according to the laws of philology and the true science of language.

Hence the Latin idiom, “*agere penitentiam*” repent, has been rendered literally in all her versions from the Vulgate, in various languages, “do penance,” except when God is said to repent! Rome dared not translate *agere penitentiam* literally in these cases, which proves her design in thus systematically perverting the Word of God, and the false doctrine is thus *forced* into the words under a show or semblance of literal translation. So the *Metaphor*, “This is My body,” has been forced to teach false doctrine by being translated literally.

No perversion of language has been fraught with greater calamity to the human race. Tens of thousands have suffered martyrdom at the hands of Rome, rather than believe the “blasphemous fable” forced into these words. The exquisite tortures of the Inquisition were invented to coerce the consciences of men and compel them to accept this lie!

Luther himself was misled, through his ignorance of this simple law of figurative language. In his controversy with Zwingle, he obstinately persisted in maintaining the *literal* sense of the figure, and thus forced it to have a meaning which it never has. He thus led the whole of Germany into his error! For while his common sense rejected the error of “Transubstantiation,” he fell into another, and invented the figment of “Consubstantiation,” and fastened it upon the Lutheran Church to this day.

What a solemn and instructive lesson as to the importance of a true understanding of the figures of language!

The whole figure, in a metaphor, lies, as we have said in the verb substantive, “IS”; and not in either of the two nouns, and it is a remarkable fact that when a *pronoun* is used instead of one of the nouns (as it is here), and the two nouns are of different genders, the pronoun is always made to agree in gender with that noun to which the meaning is carried across, and not with the noun from which it is carried, and to which it properly belongs. This at once shows us that a figure is being employed when a pronoun which ought, according to all the laws of language, to agree in gender with its own noun, is changed and made to agree with the noun which, by *Metaphor*, *represents* it.

Here, for example, the pronoun, “this” (τούτο, *touto*), is *neuter*, and is thus made to agree with “body” (σῶμά, *soma*), which is *neuter*, and not with bread (ἄρτος, *artos*), which is *masculine*?

This is the case always in *Metaphors*, and a few examples may be cited here, instead of in their natural order and place.

In Zech. v. 6, “This is wickedness.” Here “this” (*fem.*) does not agree with “ephah” (to which it refers), which is *neuter* (LXX.), but with “wickedness,” [verse 8, cjs] which is *feminine*.

In Zech. v. 3, “This is the curse.” “This” (*fem.*) agrees with “curse,” which is *feminine*, and not with “flying roll,” which is *neuter* (to which it refers) (δρέπανον, *drepanon*, LXX.).

In Matt. xiii. 38, “The good seed are the children of the kingdom.” Here “these” (*masc.*) (οἱ τοῖ, *houtoi*) agrees with “children of the kingdom” (*masc.*), and not with seed (σπέρμα, *sperma*) which is *neuter*.

Luke viii. 14, “These are they which having heard,” etc. Here, “these” (*masc.*), (οἱ τοῖ, *houtoi*) agrees with the participle (οἱ ἀκούσαντες, *hoi akousantes*) “they which having heard,” which is *masculine*, and not with the seed (to which it refers), which is *neuter*.

All this establishes our statement that, in a *Metaphor*, the two nouns (or pronoun and noun) are always literal, and that the figure lies only in the *verb*. Another remarkable fact is that in the vast number of cases where the language is literal, and there is no *Metaphor* at all, the verb is omitted altogether. Even when a *Metaphor* has been used, and the language passes suddenly from figurative to literal, the verb is *at once dropped*, by *Ellipsis* as not being necessary for the literal sense, as it was for the previous figurative expression, e.g., in 1 Cor. xii. 27, “Ye ARE the body of Christ.” Here is a *Metaphor*, and consequently the verb is used. But in verse 29, which is literal, the change is at once made, and the fact is marked by the omission of the verb, “[Are] all apostles? [are] all

prophets? [are] all teachers? [are] all workers of miracles?”

Next compare other examples of *Metaphors* which are naturally used in the explanations of Parables. Note the Parables of the Sower, and of the Tares (Matt. xiii. 19-23, and 37-39).

“He that soweth the good seed IS (*i.e.*, represents) the Son of Man.” “The field IS (*i.e.*, signifies) the world.”

“The good seed ARE the children of the kingdom.” “But the tares ARE the children of the wicked one.”

“The enemy that sowed them IS the devil.”

“The harvest IS the end of the age.”

“And the reapers ARE the angels.”

In all these (as in every other *Metaphor*) the verb means, and might have been rendered, “represents” or “signifies.”

The Apocalypse is full of *Metaphors*, *e.g.* :

“The seven stars ARE (*i.e.*, represent) the seven churches.”

“And the seven candlesticks which thou sawest ARE the seven churches” (i. 20).

“The odours ARE the prayers of the saints” (v. 8).

“They ARE the spirits of devils” (xvi. 14).

“The seven heads ARE (*i.e.* represent) seven mountains (xvii. 9), etc., etc.

So in the very words that follow “this IS (*i.e.* represents or signifies) My body,” we have another undoubted *Metaphor*.” He took the cup ... saying . . . this IS My blood.” *Here*, thus, we have a *pair* of *Metaphors*. In the former one, “this” refers to “bread,” and it is claimed that “IS” means changed into the “body” of Christ. In the latter, “this” refers to “the cup,” but it is not claimed that the cup is *changed into* “blood.” At least, we have never heard that such a claim has been put forward. The difference of treatment which the same figure meets with in these two verses is the proof that the former is wrong.

In i Cor. xi. 25 we read, “this cup IS the new covenant.” Will Romanists, in and out of the Church of England, tell us how this “cup” becomes transubstantiated into a “covenant”?

Is it not clear that the figure in the words, “This is My body,” is *forced* into a literal statement with the set purpose and design of making it teach and support erroneous doctrine?

Other examples of *Metaphor* in this immediate connection are:

i Cor. x. 16. “The cup of blessing which we bless, IS it not (*i.e.* does it not represent) the blood of Christ, “through which all blessing comes to us?”

“The bread which we break, IS it not (*i.e.*, does it not represent) the communion of the body of Christ?” *i.e.* does it not signify the fellowship of all the members of Christ’s mystical body, who, being many, ARE one body (i Cor. xii. 12)? “For we, being many, ARE one bread and one body,” as i Cor. x. 17 declares.

It is because those who eat of that bread do not “discern” or discriminate that “one body” (*i.e.*, Christ mystical), that they are said to eat to their own condemnation; for they witness to the fact of that “great mystery” and yet are ignorant of its truth! And hence they condemn themselves.

Further, the verb, εἶμι (*eimi*), I am, or the *infinitive* of it, *to be*, means *to be* in the sense of *signifying*, *amounting to*. And that this is one of its primary senses may be seen from the following passages, where it is actually translated “*to mean*” and not merely *to be*:-

“But go ye and learn what that IS” (*i.e.*, *meaneth*, as in A.V.), Matt. ix. 13.

“But if ye had known what that IS” (A.V., *meaneth*), Matt. xii. 7.

“He asked what these things WERE” (A.V., *meant*), Luke xv. 26.

“What IS this?” (A.V., “What *meaneth* this?”) Acts ii. 12.

“Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision WAS which he had seen” (A.V., “What this vision should mean”), Acts x. 17, etc., etc.

On the other hand, if an *actual* change is meant, then there must be a verb which shall plainly and actually say so: for the verb “*to be*” never has or conveys any idea of such change.

The usual verb to express such a change is γίνομαι (*ginomai*), which means *to be* or *become*. Mark iv. 39, “There *was* (*i.e.*, there became) a great calm,” and the storm was changed into calm.

Luke iv. 3, “Command this stone that it *be made* (*i.e.* changed into) bread.”

John ii. 9, “When the ruler of the feast tasted the water that *was made* wine.”

John xvi. 20, “Your sorrow *shall be turned* into joy.”

Acts xxvi. 28, Agrippa said, “Almost thou persuadest me *to be* (*i.e.*, to become) a Christian.”

Rev. viii. 8, “The third part of the sea *became* blood,’ and verse 11, “Many men died of the waters, because they were *made* bitter.”

In all these cases the verb is γίνομαι (*ginomai*), *to become*: and if the Lord meant that the bread *became* His body, this is the verb He would have necessarily used. The fact that He did not use it, but used the simple verb, εἶμι (*eimi*), instead, *i.e.*, “is,” proves conclusively that no change was meant, and that only *representation* was intended.

Just as when we are looking over a map and say, “This IS England,” “This IS America,” “This IS Palestine,” etc., we do not mean that that piece of paper is England, but we mean that those mark’s upon it *represent* those respective countries.

From all this it is philologically, philosophically, and scientifically clear that the words, “This is My body,” mean “This [*bread*] represents My body.” And as Professor Macbeth has put it, “We trample on the laws of nature, and we trample on the laws of language when we force the verb ‘is’ to mean *what it never does mean*.”

And besides all this, to pass from the use made of this perversion, suppose for a moment that we grant the claim, and the words mean that the Lord Jesus then and there did transmute the bread into *His own body* (if we can imagine such an impossibility!), what then? Where is there a breath of His giving that power to any one else? Where is there one word about such a gift being conferred?” And if it be claimed, as it is by some traitors in the Church of England, that the words, “Do this,” convey that power and authority, it could have been conveyed only to the eleven who were present. Where is there a breath about not only giving them power, but delegating it to them to give to others, and these to others again indefinitely? There is not one single word expressed or implied that conveys the idea that one iota of such power was conferred or delegated. So that the whole fabric of transubstantiation rests on absolutely no foundation whatsoever! There is a “missing link” which is fatal to the whole position.

And this, on the assumption which we have for the moment granted. But when it is seen that not only is there this missing link, which can never be supplied, but that there is also this claim which can never be substantiated, we have an explanation of the *Metaphor* which sweeps the dogma out of the Scriptures, and proves it to be a fiction which is the outcome of ignorance, and this by arguments that cannot be overthrown, and facts that cannot be denied.