
Christ the Adaptive Food from Heaven

The Word is milk, herbs or solid food

Nor will [the seeker's] palate suffer any other taste, when it has *tasted the good Word of God, and His Flesh, and the Bread that cometh down from heaven*. Because He tastes so sweet and so delightful, all other flavours will seem harsh and bitter to him now; and therefore he will feed on Him alone. For he will find in Him all the sweetness that ever he desired; for He adapts and fits Himself to all requirements. Again, to those *who are being born again of incorruptible seed*, He is made *the rational and guileless milk*; while to those who are weak in some respect He offers Himself like healing herbs in friendly and gracious hospitality. And again, *to them who, are able, have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil*, He presents Himself as solid food.¹

Christ is apprehended by all the senses of the soul

And perhaps, as the Apostle says, *for those who have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil*, Christ becomes each of these things in turn, to suit the several senses of the soul. He is called the true Light, therefore, so that the soul's eyes may have something to lighten them. He is the Word, so that her ears may have something to hear. Again, He is the Bread of life, so that the soul's palate may have something to taste. And in the same way, He is called the spikenard or ointment, that the soul's sense of smell may apprehend the fragrance of the Word. For the same reason He is said also to be able to be felt and handled, and is called the Word made flesh, so that the hand of the interior soul may touch concerning the Word of Life. But all these things are the One, Same Word of God, who adapts Himself to the sundry tempers of prayer according to these several guises, and so leaves none of the soul's faculties empty of His grace.²

The self-adapting food of the Word

Commenting on "Strengthen me with ointments, encompass me with apples, because I am wounded by Charity" (Song of Songs 2:5) Origen says:

And let it not surprise you that He should be called the apple tree, as well as the tree of life and various other things; seeing that He also bears the title of the true Bread, and the true Vine, and the Lamb of God, and many others.

For the Word of God becomes all these things to each and every one according as the capacity or the desire of the participant requires; in just the same way the manna also, although it was one food, yielded its flavour to each person after his desire.

So He does not offer Himself only as bread to those who hunger, and as wine to those who thirst, but He presents Himself also as fragrant apples to those who crave delights.³

¹ *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1.4 (p.78) (with ref to John 6:33-58)

² *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 2.9 (p.162) (refs to Heb. 5:14; John 1:1-4, 6:35; 1 John 1:1; John 1:14)

³ *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 3.8 (pp.197-8)