

tandum argument in favor of these views. But it can hardly be regarded as sober and serious exegesis by anyone who is not already biased in that direction. Certainly there is nothing in the narrative to indicate that the evangelist John understood it in that way. We must remember that this was written long after the Lord's Supper had become a regularly established institution in the Church. If John had found the explanation of this hard saying in the Eucharist, he would hardly have omitted to say so, after his manner elsewhere. Compare for example chap. xii., 32-33, 'And I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said signifying by what manner of death he should die.' See also chap. iv., 32-34; vii., 39; xxi., 19. The only solution which he does not hint at here, looks in an altogether different direction from the sacrament.

That hint, which undoubtedly furnishes the key to the difficulty if it is given anywhere, is found in verses 61-63, 'Doth this cause you to stumble? What then if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.'

Now it must be acknowledged that the meaning of this explanation is not altogether easy to determine, though each of the commentators upon it declares that the language plainly supports his own opinion. Like many of John's sentences, whether giving his own views or reporting the sayings of Christ, the phrases refuse to yield their full thought under the pressure of lexicon and grammar. It can be extracted only by the subtle chemistry of spiritual sympathy or insight, which cannot always give an intelligible account of its own processes. This much seems certain, however, that the eating and drinking are spiritual. 'It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth no-

thing.' But when he adds, 'The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life,' Alford is quite right in saying this means a great deal more than simply that his discourses are to be taken in a spiritual sense and are life to those who receive them. This is true as far as it goes, but it is not the whole truth. The spiritual feeding is not upon his words only; it is upon himself. But in order that they might feed upon him he must needs be slain. Just as the living animal becomes available for food only by being slaughtered, so only by his death would he become available for the nourishment of his people. The only difference is that in the one case the flesh is literally eaten for the sustenance of physical life, while in his case it is spiritually appropriated so as to furnish spiritual life. This accounts for the strong language of the discourse as to the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and at the same time accounts for the allusion to his ascension in ver. 62. To put the matter in another way: There is a sense in which we might be said to feed upon Christ spiritually by obeying his words and imitating his example. In this way we might become one with him in spirit. His life would be infused into us as the life of any magnetic leader is infused into his followers. But Christ wishes to convey the further idea that for the full effectiveness of that influence so as to give eternal life, he himself must suffer a violent death. Spiritual life can come to the world only through his sacrifice.

This passage, therefore, is parallel to all those passages of the gospels in which Christ is represented as foreshadowing his approaching death as a moral necessity. Such for example as John xii. 24, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.' Matt. xvi., 21, 'From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples