

and such the links by which they were united. Among all our Lord's discourses in Galilee this one stands by itself distinguished from all the others by the manner in which Christ speaks of Himself. Nowhere else do you find Him so entirely dropping all reserve as to his own position, character, services, and claims. Let Him be the Eternal Son of the Father who veiled the glories of Divinity and assumed the garb of mortal flesh that he might serve and suffer and die for us men and our redemption, then all that He here asserts, requires, and promises appears simple, natural, appropriate. Let the great truths of the Incarnation and Atonement be rejected, then how shall this discourse be shielded from the charges of egotism and arrogance? But Christ's manner of speaking to the people is here as unprecedented as the way of speaking about Himself. Here also there is the absence of all reserve. Instead of avoiding what He knew would repel, He seems rather to have obtruded it: answering no questions, giving no explanations, modifying no statements; unsparingly exposing the selfishness, ungodliness, unbelief of his auditors. The strong impression is created that by bringing forth the most hidden mysteries of the kingdom and clothing these in forms fitted to give offence, it was his purpose to test and sift, not the rude mass of his Galilean hearers only, but the circle of his own discipleship. Such at least was its effect; for "many of his disciples when they heard this said, This is an hard saying; who can bear it?" Jesus does not treat their murmuring exactly as he had that of the Jews; turning to them, he says, "Doth this about my coming down from heaven offend you?" but "what and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" Doth this about eating my flesh and drinking my blood offend you? "It is the spirit that quickeneth," the mere flesh without the spirit profiteth nothing, hath no life-giving power. It is by no external act whatever, by no outward ordinance or service, that you are to attain to the life everlasting. It is by hearing, believing, spiritually coming to me, spiritually feeding upon me, that this is to be reached. "The words that I speak unto you they are the spirit, and they are the life; still I know, for I must speak as plainly to you as to the multitude, that there are some of you that believe not. Therefore said I unto you, that no man can, come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." To

have hard things said, and then to have the incredulity they generated exposed in such a way and attributed to such a cause, was what not a few could not bear; and so from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him. With infinite sadness, such a sorrow as He only could feel, his eye and heart follow them as they go away; but He lets them go quietly and without further remonstrance; then, turning to the twelve, he says, "Will ye also go away?"—"Lord," is Peter's prompt reply, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." What Jesus thought of the confession we shall see, when not long afterwards it was repeated. Now He makes no comment upon it; but as one upon whose mind the last impression of the day was that of sadness over so many who were alienated from Him, He closes the interview by saying, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

Such were its immediate original results. What would be the effect of a first hearing or first reading of this discourse now? We cannot well answer the question; we have read and heard it so often, its phrases are so familiar to our ears, the key to its darkest sayings is in our hands. Nevertheless, are there not many to whom some of its expressions wear a hard and repulsive aspect,—are felt, though they would scarcely acknowledge this to themselves, as overstrained and exaggerated? It is not possible indeed to understand, much less to sympathise with and appreciate, the fulness and richness of meaning involved in many of these expressions, unless we look to our Lord's death as the great propitiation for our sins, and have had some experience of the closeness, the tenderness, the blessedness of that mystic bond which incorporates each living member of the spiritual body with Christ the living head. Had Jesus spoken of Himself, simply and alone as the bread of life, it had been possible to have understood Him as setting forth his instructions and his example as furnishing the best kind of nutriment for the highest part of our nature. Even so strong a phrase as his flesh being the bread might have been interpreted as an allusion to his assumption of our nature, and to the benefits flowing directly from the Incarnation. But when he speaks of his flesh being given for the life of the world,—when He speaks of the drinking of his blood as well as of the eating of his flesh, pronounces them to be the source at first and the support afterwards of a life that cannot die, and that will