

Then, just like the Samaritan woman with thoughts not yet lifted above earthly things, Christ's hearers entreat, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." And now, just as in the former case, the imagery, the metaphorical speech, falls away from the discourse, and the real purport of Christ's teaching begins to be laid bare. "I am the bread of life," says Jesus: "he that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Here then, is the way in which we are to eat the bread and drink the water of life. To come unto Jesus with earnest faith—this makes real our spiritual life; this is what the Spirit takes of Christ and shows unto us. But not every coming to Jesus is a coming which shall find blood. These men had followed him with haste over the sea of Galilee, but they met with His rebuke, for their zeal was shown only in desire for food for their bodies. And this rebuke of His, He now explains to them; "I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not." Yet this belief it is which shall give to a man that bread which shall come down from heaven, that he may eat thereof and not die. Even while in this world He, through this spiritual sustenance, this meat to eat which others know not of, becomes so sure of the resurrection, so strong in the support which supplies life eternal, that death is conquered already, and all fear thereof is swallowed up in victory. Thus has the Lord spiritualised for us every craving of hunger and thirst, made every meal a sacrament, and converted our bodily needs into a constant sermon. The desire for sustenance for the soul is to be welcomed as much as is healthy longing for the food of the body, and the Lord's lesson is that the satisfaction of that desire shall, through the constant ministration of the Holy Ghost, be a verity of which each of us shall feel assured. We shall eat and shall not die.

II. We have seen how, under this figurative language, Christ spake "of the

Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive," and we are very familiar with the way in which He describes spiritual communion with Himself in the Lord's Supper under the like figure. In the continuation of His discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, He alludes by anticipation to that ordinance, and although the outward signs of that holy sacrament are not mentioned in this discourse, yet some portions of the language here used seem to throw light on the brief expressions which occur in the narratives of its institution. Only at this earlier stage of Christ's teaching provision is not made for the enjoyment of this second mode of spiritual sustenance, any more than for the one already spoken of, "because that Jesus was not yet glorified." But even here He says, "the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Since the means of enjoying this gracious gift were not appointed until the night of the Lord's betrayal, it is clear that the giving of His flesh for the life of the world must be after His death. When His sacrifice has been completed, then that flesh shall in some wise be the true life of mankind for all time to come. And He explains to us here how this shall be. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Here we have Christ's own parallel between himself and others who shall be His brethren. He lives by the Father, believers shall live by Him. And the eating of Christ's flesh by them is compared to the action of Jesus in coming into the world at the sending of the Father. This mission the Lord, in another place (John iv. 34), declares to have been a work of obedience under the very figure which we are now discussing: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." Thus the two sides harmonize completely. The sustenance of Jesus is to obey the will of God, the