

that they were judicially blinded, and would only have perverted the very plainest addresses into accusations against Him, (John xii. 39, 40; Matt. xiii. 14, 15.)

But even to His disciples He seems on this occasion to have vouchsafed no direct explanation. It may be, that the great mystery, of the *manner* in which we "eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood," which has caused so much controversy in the Church, was purposely left in obscurity, to try the faith of her children. In the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, it may be found that many who were looked upon as unenlightened, had a clear and humble conception of the great truth, while those who proudly brought the stores of human learning to bear upon it, will be rebuked for their presumption and temerity in endeavouring to understand, rather than simply believe "the deep things of God."

The discourse of our Lord in the sixth chapter of St. John, is among the many recorded by this Evangelist only. Except in the institution of the blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, we do not find Him anywhere else speaking of Himself under the symbol of bread; so it is evident that He here alludes to that ordinance. His remarks were grounded upon the eagerness of the people to follow Him after they had partaken of the food miraculously provided for them. As in His conversation with the woman of Samaria, He sought to lift their minds above the consideration of their bodily wants to their spiritual destitution and nakedness, see Rev. iii. 13; in fact, His teaching in chap. iv. is almost identical with this, only substituting the word "water" for "bread." In what sense, then, did He intend the words, "Bread of Life," to be understood by His hearers? As the manna, which had sustained their fathers in the desert, as the miraculous bread which had lately saved their own bodies from starvation: so a belief in the Divine nature of Christ, a reliance on His word, and an entire dependence on the merits of His atonement, would give and preserve spiritual life in their souls. The close communion with

Him, symbolically expressed in the words, "eating His flesh, and drinking His blood," was also an earnest of the believer's resurrection, "he should never perish, but be raised up at the last day." For the further confirmation of His disciples' faith, which the "hard sayings" had caused to waver, He intimated that they should see Him ascend up where He was before; which would prove beyond a doubt that He was indeed "the living Bread which came down from heaven."

Perhaps the next figure under which our Lord represents Himself, that of a Shepherd, can scarcely with propriety be called a "symbol," but the idea which it conveys of His tenderness towards His people is too touching to be passed over in silence. He had several times been depicted in this character by the Prophets, see Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 12, 23; Zech. xiii. 7. The metaphor acquires greater force when we reflect how much more hazardous and wearying was the life of a shepherd in Eastern countries than with us. Where wild beasts abounded, he had to hold his life in his hand, ready to lay it down for his flock, if necessary. The relation between the shepherd and his sheep is also much more tender and intimate. Each sheep has a name, and if called by it, will run up to the shepherd's hand, and caress him like a dog. "But a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." In all this, what an exquisite type do we see of "the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." Having once laid down His life for His people's sins, and taken it again for their salvation, He is ever at hand to guard them from the snares of their great enemy, the devil. Those that know His voice, and follow Him,

"He leads to cool streams, and where
Refreshing waters flow."

It would seem as if this was the character in which He most desires us to contemplate Him, as it is that in which He takes leave of His disciples just before His Ascension. His thrice-repeated charge to St. Peter, "Feed My sheep," must have painfully reminded the frail, though loving