

baptism," be understood to say, that christians were literally laid in the grave with Christ. And as well might our Lord's declaration that he is the door of the sheep, be construed into an affirmation, that he is truly and properly a wooden or an iron gate. For every one of these interpretations, there is absolutely the same reason, as for that which makes a piece of bread, or a wafer, to be literally the body of Jesus Christ. No circumstance can be pointed out which should lead us to understand the former in a figurative sense, which does not equally, and even more strongly urge us to the figurative interpretation of the latter.

The second argument that the words, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you." ought to be understood figuratively, is, that this kind of language is in reality, often used in the scriptures, in a figurative sense. It is exceedingly common in the sacred writings, to express wisdom virtue, and all the means of christian improvement by the terms, bread, meat, milk, wine, and other substances employed for the nourishment of the body. This kind of language abounds in all the Jewish writings; in the Old Testament, in the apocryphal books, and in the New Testament. To be satisfied of this matter, recourse may be had to the following passage. Proverbs chap. ix. v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Isaiah, chap. lv. v. 1, 2. Jeremiah chap. xv. v. 16; Job. chap. xxiii. v. 12. Ecclesiastics chap. xxiii. v. 19; John chap. iv. v. 34. Rev. chap. xxi. v. 6. and chap. xxii. v. 17.

So general was the use of this language among the Jews, that wicked men are said to eat wickedness and malice. And good men who are desirous of making farther improvements in virtue, are constantly said to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The examples of this sort of language might easily be extended to a much greater number and variety. And many more instances will occur in reading the scriptures. Those which have been produced, clearly show the extensive use of this language among the Jews. Since then it appears, that a desire to make advancement in religious knowledge and virtue, was called hungering and thirsting; since an acquaintance with the doctrines of religion was called meat and drink; and since those who strive to understand the will of God and to practise it, are said to eat and drink his commandments—it surely need not be thought extraordinary, if the Son of God who has given a complete revelation of the divine will, should call himself the bread of life, and the water of life. We can never regard this metaphor as too bold, if we consider that he alone communicated the words

of eternal life, that he brought life and immortality to light, that it was he of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did speak, and that, for the great importance of his communications he was styled the Word of God. Farther, if we consider not only the importance of the revelation which he hath communicated; but observe also that he offered up his life a sacrifice for us that he might deliver us from misery and from guilt, and that consequently our happiness depends on him, we cannot surely be surprised that he is said to have given us his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink. The common use of these expressions, clearly shows that nothing more was meant than to set forth the high importance of our Saviour's doctrine and sacrifice.

The advocates for the Church of Rome ask why we would understand the words of our Saviour, "Take, eat; this is my body," in a figurative rather than a literal sense. The answer is easy. The general use of such expressions among the Jewish people, leads us, nay requires us, to interpret them in this manner. Were we to consider these words as altogether insulated, and without regard to the use of such language in other parts of the sacred writings, it might then indeed be necessary to understand them literally. But if we compare them with similar expressions in other parts of those books, which is the method pursued by judicious critics in all other cases; we will then find that the figurative interpretation forces itself upon us. We cannot reject it without rejecting at the same time, the general and customary practice of the Jewish language.

The reason which prevented the Jews from understanding these words of our Saviour may be easily ascertained. They did not believe his doctrine to be of that importance which he asserted it to be, and which it certainly is. Neither did they consider his death a sacrifice offered up for the benefit of mankind. It is not surprising then that they should despise his pretension to be the bread of life. Nor is it any wonder that they asked in the language of derision, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" For they regarded him as nothing more than a carpenter's son—as a sinner, an impostor—as a blasphemer and an evil-doer, who suffered on the cross the just punishment of his offences. How then could they understand the propriety of calling his doctrine the life of men, or of considering his death as the foundation of their happiness.

We are justified in the figurative interpretation of the words in question by the express direction of our Saviour himself, John vi 63. When the