

and most important event. And what time more proper for instituting such an ordinance than that which he embraced, while he was yet sitting in the most friendly manner with his followers, enjoying for the last time their social intercourse, and preparing their minds for what was so soon to take place? And what particular institution was it more natural to adopt than a repetition of that friendly and social action in which they were then engaged, that of eating and drinking together? The commemoration of great events by eating and drinking together was perfectly familiar to their minds. For that was the very night on which they celebrated the feast of the passover, by which the Jewish nation had for many ages commemorated their liberation from a state of slavery in Egypt. And many christians are of opinion that this very feast was considered by the Jews as an anticipation of the death of the Messiah. At all events no institution could have been framed, that could have had a more serious effect upon all christians than that very action in which our Lord's benevolence and kindness were so conspicuously displayed, performed at his last meeting with his disciples, and accompanied by those pathetic and consolatory discourses which are recorded by the evangelist John. "And he took the bread," says the evangelist Luke, "and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, 'This is my body,' which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me &c. As if he had said, 'This is the institution which now the last time of my meeting with you before my death, I appoint for keeping up the memory of this solemn event. And in observing this ordinance, you will, in the most effectual manner promote the happiness of your souls. While you thus commemorate my death, you will reflect on all the sufferings I have undergone on your account. You will remember the love which I bore to you even to death. You will call to mind the gracious truths which I have spoken to you. Your souls will thus be fed and nourished by my death. My body shall be pierced, broken and slain; but ye will receive the benefit. My blood shall be poured out; but in consequence of this, my word shall be in you as a well of living water springing up into everlasting life. In all future ages therefore, wherever ye eat this consecrated supper, it will recal to your remembrance the occasion on which I now institute it, and all the solemn events which are now before me. While you eat this bread, ye will receive the benefits which arise from the wounds inflicted on my body. While ye drink this wine, ye will think of the blood which was shed for you. To you, therefore, this bread is my body, and this wine is my blood.'"

I can see nothing in this language, forced or unnatural. Every circumstance led to the use of it. Whether, we consider the celebration of their deliverance from bondage, in which the disciples were then engaged, or the solemnity and greatness of the events which were just about to take place, or the great and important benefits to be derived from the death of Christ; every one of these circumstances naturally prepared the minds of the disciples for the highly figurative language which our Lord employed. The contemplation of great and important subjects, the description of interesting events, never fail to express themselves in bold and figurative language. On such occasions we never fail to employ elliptical phrases, and a rapid, animated expression of our sentiments. Witness the following expressions of the apostle John, "God is light," "God is love." Surely no person can suppose the apostle to mean that God is the substance which we call light, or that he is neither more nor less than that social affection which we term love. On the contrary, the simplest reader can clearly perceive the meaning to be, that God is possessed of knowledge and benevolence to an infinite degree. From the circumstances in which our Saviour was, he was naturally led and might be expected, to employ the same kind of bold, energetic, and elliptical expression. The solemn scenes before him, the poignancy of his own sufferings, his benevolent care for the welfare of his followers and his desire to leave a deep impression on their minds of the infinite importance of the sacrifice which he was about to offer up; gave his disciples reason to expect the most fervent language. In such circumstances they could not mistake his meaning. He who had declared Herod to be a fox, and required us to hate our father and mother, might well be expected on this awful occasion, to use language still more forcible.

The whole circumstances of the case therefore, lead us to suppose that the words, "Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you," are elliptical, and ought to be understood thus; this bread represents to you, or recalls to your minds, the sufferings of my body. Such an interpretation of the words, is natural, and readily deducible from the circumstances of the case. On the other hand, to suppose our Saviour to mean, that the bread which he held in his hand, was the body of him who held it, is the most extraordinary and the most unnatural of all interpretations. As well might we suppose, when Jesus Christ is called the chief corner stone of the church, that he is declared to be literally a stone. As well might the apostle Paul, when he says, "we are buried with Christ by