

in which the soul must become acquainted with God; it must be done by some figure which tells of a subjective realisation, of a process whereby He is made ours, and we are made His, and for this purpose it would be difficult to find fitter words than those which tell how dead food becomes a part of living men. It is from feeling this that the Psalmist cries out (Ps. xxxiv. 8), "O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." The support which such faith gives, he knows to be as real as the strength which the body derives from natural food. And the like idea is conveyed in our Lord's words, when he proclaims the blessedness of those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness. So when Isaiah puts forth his earnest invitation to a covenant with Jehovah, he can find no more forcible expressions than those drawn from the nurture of the body: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And of those who would seek for strength from other means he asks: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

It would not be difficult to multiply passages of this nature drawn from every book of Scripture, but we desire at present to examine how Jesus employed such language, and to draw from such examination that instruction which He desired to impart. On a careful inspection of the Gospels, we find that our Lord uses such expressions mainly in reference to three subjects. First, with regard to the reception of His teaching, and the effects which it should produce. This we may call the awakening of the soul to life, and it is the Holy Ghost which imparts this earliest quickening and nurtures it into strength. Secondly, He speaks in words of this kind concerning the sacrament which He instituted for our perpetual remembrance of His

death. Thus He vividly sets before us the close communion which believers should have with Him. This is Christ's own support of the full-grown spiritual man. Thirdly, He has the same figure with respect to the kingdom of heaven, when those words refer to the state of the dead in the world beyond the grave, where the soul, which has been awakened by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, and fed and sustained through life by Christ's body and blood, shall find its complete fruition in the presence of the Father, and shall need no more figures, but shall see God as He is.

I. There are two passages in St. John's Gospel which illustrate fully the way in which our Lord spoke of the reception of His teaching under the figure of taking food and drink. The first is His conversation with the woman of Samaria (John iv.). Christ, in the parching noontide, had asked her for a draught of water. Surprised at such a request made by a Jew, she gives expression to her wonder, and then Jesus, by His first words, shows the spiritual lesson conveyed through these natural things. The woman had always thought of the well as the gift of the patriarch Jacob, and she had gone no farther. Christ at once speaks of the water as the gift not of Jacob, but of God. "If thou hadst known—truly realised—that this well of water is heaven's gift, and hadst thus been prepared to own a constant heavenly interposition in thy life, and to recognise heaven's Messenger when He appeared, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Like many a lesson of Jesus, this teaching falls like seed on unprepared soil. The woman's thoughts are all centred on the material. She has no mind to inquire after what is meant by living water, but only is perplexed how, having nothing to draw with, the stranger can have a store of water at all. Jesus, by His next reply, leads her a