

Biblical Criticism and Exposition.

LIFE OFFERED TO ALL.

"John vi 51.—"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

These words are part of a very remarkable address to the people assembled in the synagogue of Capernaum, by our Lord, and on a very remarkable occasion. On the other side of the sea of Tiberias, he had miraculously fed five thousand men with a few loaves and fishes. The miracle had made a deep impression on the multitude, and they said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." The prophet whom they expected, was to exalt their nation above every other on the face of the earth, to be a king as well as a prophet; and who so fit to be a king as the individual who had shown himself to be possessed of such abundant and miraculous resources. They resolved immediately to force him to declare himself, and at once to set himself at their head. But his time was not yet come, his kingdom was not of this world, and he privately withdrew from their improper officiousness, and passed over to Capernaum. They were not to be so easily put off, and accordingly followed him to the other side. He who knew the heart, and who alone had a right to charge them with improper motives, declared, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." And, ever ready as he was to proclaim to man the glad tidings of good things he was commissioned to bestow, he tells them that, as their natural life required the sustenance of bread and flesh, so their spiritual and everlasting life required its appropriate nourishment; and this he alone was qualified and ready to bestow, even his own flesh and his own blood. The strong and undisguised language in which he shadowed forth the mysteries of salvation, naturally roused the astonishment and disgust of the carnal mind, and they said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Even many who professed to be his disciples

declared, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" But Jesus warned them not to take the words in a literal sense: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." We do not mean in this place minutely to examine the analogy between the food for the body and that for the soul, and shall merely remark that hardly any single portion of the Bible contains more various and profound information in Christian theology than this discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum. We shall only add two remarks: 1. As a feast, however copious and freely offered, will not benefit the man who does not partake of it, neither will the free gift of gospel blessings avail any who do not make them their own by an appropriating faith. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." 2. But is it not presumption to do so? Is it right to tell every one who hears the gospel that it is offered to him? Yes: for to the mixed multitude of Capernaum the Saviour said, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

TOO SUPERSTITIOUS.

"Acts xvii. 22-34.—In the opening of that remarkable oration, the full meaning is lost in our translation. In our version he is made to say, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are *too superstitious*." Now, on the very face of it, this does not seem a likely thing for the apostle to have said, nor is it at all in his usual manner, nor in that of any other good orator, to excite the prejudices of his audience against him at the very outset, by charging them with a sin not very flattering to the vanity of an intellectual people. This, however, the apostle does not do; he had not so learned the art of addressing a multitude. He well knew the first rule of his art to be, to endeavour to secure for himself a favourable hearing, by, as far as possible, insinuating himself into the good graces of his audience, by at all events giving them the honor which was justly their due. He therefore says,