

sulting, much more to be condemned, than the blind incredulity of the Jews.

The Evangelist, as if desirous of giving greater authenticity to his recital, remarks that this conversation took place in the village of Capharnaum, in full synagogue, where the multitude had assembled around Jesus. After the care he had taken to repeat and confirm so often, as we have heard, the reality of the manducation, it would seem that all his hearers should have ceased from their original opposition, and believed unanimously in his words. A melancholy and lamentable example of the weakness, the pride and blindness of the human mind! Incredulity, far from yielding to repeated assertions, becomes irritated at them. It is no longer among the people only, that it appears; it reaches even his disciples: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" said many amongst them. Jesus, who read their hearts, turns to them and says, "Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the son of man ascend up where he was before?" Let us weigh well these words: coming from such a person they can never be sufficiently thought upon. If you are shocked, if you are scandalized at what I say to you, that I shall give you my flesh to eat, now that it is upon earth and before your eyes, how much more will you be scandalized when you shall see it go up to heaven and disappear from your sight? If this manducation appears to you incredible now that you see my body, how much more so will it appear to you, when you shall see it no more? His doctrine therefore was such that after his resurrection it would present more difficulties to be understood than before, and from this I conclude that his doctrine was not such as the reformed attribute to him. For it could not become more difficult for his disciples to comprehend a spiritual and figurative manducation after, than before his ascension: it would not have required any greater exertion to unite themselves to their master as a Saviour and a God, when they should believe him to be at the right hand of his Father, than when they saw him in the midst of them. Indeed, so far must their faith have been from finding a greater difficulty in reaching him in heaven than upon earth, that it must on the contrary have found much less: for the ascension is one of the most splendid proofs of his divinity, and nothing was more calculated to excite the hearts and inflame the faith of the disciples, than the majestic and ravishing spectacle of this prodigy. It must, therefore, become more easy to them afterwards, to believe in Jesus Christ, to feed themselves with his remembrance by receiving the pledges of his love, to unite themselves to him in thought, and to embrace him by faith as their Redeemer and God. But in the catholic dogma of the real manducation, the removal of his person, the absence of his visible and natural body must have been for his disciples a fresh difficulty in believing the mystery, and this is so true, that your theologians rest upon the fact of the ascension as an argument against the real presence, and unceasingly repeat to us that he is as far from our altars as is earth from heaven. They are blind and perceive not, that, contrary to their intention, this reasoning turns pre-

asily to the support of our doctrine, by giving it the very character which Jesus Christ here assigns to it, that of appearing more inconceivable after his ascension.

In announcing it to his disciples, he insinuated to them and gave them sufficiently to understand that in the manducation of his flesh there should be nothing for the senses, as they had imagined; and that his presence in it would neither be palpable nor visible, since, according to his natural presence, they would see him disappear and rise up to heaven. He informed them, moreover, that they were not to judge of his body as of other human bodies, incapable of themselves of a similar flight; that his was to be of a divine nature; his flesh being that of the son of God, on which he could imprint an all-powerful virtue and which he could easily convert into a supernatural state. I beg you to remark also that he is not satisfied with saying to them that they should see him go up into heaven, but also moreover *go up where he was before*. This he said to convince them of his divinity, wishing to ground upon this transcendent and sovereign motive, the faith which he required of them, and which they refused to his words? Now the figurative sense which you give them is so easy, and so much within the reach of our own ideas, that, in that sense, neither would the disciples have ever refused their assent to it, nor would Jesus Christ have had any need to bring forward his divinity in order to extort their belief. Therefore, this sense absolutely cannot be the sense of his words; the only one it is possible to give them is that of the reality.

Your divines have imagined that the following verse brings to the spiritual and figurative sense the whole previous discourse of our Saviour. You shall decide upon it: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." We have already proved that the words which Jesus Christ had spoken were decisive for the reality; these therefore cannot give them the figurative sense: for it would be absurd to suppose that our Saviour would teach at the same time, or by turns, in the same discourse and on the same subject, two senses as opposite as are the reality and the figure. There is also a second and still more forcible proof. If Jesus Christ had concluded by asserting that whatever he had just said must be understood only in a figurative sense, it is evident that both the Jews who had exclaimed against the real manducation, and the disciples who had found it too hard to be understood, would immediately have been reconciled to his doctrine, and more tenderly attached than ever to their master. And yet they all left him, even after his last words, and walked no more with him. Their subsequent departure proves, that the disciples discovered in these words no explanation in the figurative sense, and that our Saviour gave them none of this kind, since his only intention in giving it would have been to disabuse them and retain them about his person.

But if you ask of me the signification of these words; "the flesh profiteth nothing: it is the spirit that quickeneth;" I give you that which best agrees

with what preceds and follows in the discourse of our Saviour. It is well known that in the scripture language *the flesh* signifies the corporeal senses, or the carnal and corrupted reason of man; while *the spirit* denotes the grace of God, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus our lord said to Peter: "Flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Thus St. Paul said to the Romans, that Christians, "walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit." He details to the Galatians the works of *the flesh* and those of *the spirit*. In these and other passages, the spirit and the flesh are taken in the sense that I have explained: they are also taken in the same sense in the verse under examination. Our Lord therefore said that *the flesh*, that is, the senses or corrupted reason of man profiteth nothing towards the discovery or belief of what he had announced. It is still this reality of manducation, on which he has so much insisted, of which he here declares that we cannot judge by the flesh or by a carnal reason which profiteth nothing, and that it could neither be discerned nor believed except by the quickening spirit, that is, by the grace & the light of God. Accordingly he immediately adds: "But there are some of you who believe not—therefore did I say unto you, that no man can come unto me, unless it be given him by my Father;" which very much resembles what he said to Peter, who had just been confessing his divinity: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." The reason in fact is, that faith is a gift of God, and that in order to be more influenced by the proofs on which the credibility of mysteries rests, than by the difficulties that the senses oppose to them, we stand in need of succour from above: of the lights and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. According to the exposition I have just given you, every thing is regular and connected, every thing is consistent in the discourse of our Saviour.

Have you remarked these words: "Therefore (i. e. because they do not believe) did I say unto you, that no man come unto me, unless it be given him by my Father?" That is to say, that there was need of an assistance, a particular grace from heaven for believing the manducation that was announcing: It was not therefore the manducation, that is recognised in your communion, so natural, so conformable to our ideas that it presents not even the shadow of a mystery and requires not for its belief any effort of the mind, and still less any particular assistance of divine grace.

The words, which immediately precede, present also a reflection which I must not permit to escape: "But there are some of you who believe not." Whence comes this reproach of their incredulity? To what can it refer? Ask your divines, if you please, & you will see their embarrassment, or rather their inability to give any satisfactory reply to your question. At what then were these disciples offended? What was it they refused to believe? It was not any strong expression which our Saviour had made use of: for in that case he would have softened it down: and therefore the reproach of incredulity falls upon the things and not upon the