

Jennit? What mean this embarrassment, these snares, these concerted concealments? You discover here, Sir, the inevitable march of error. At all times it has shewn itself timid and hesitating at the commencement, and its first steps have always been faltering and uncertain.

I should but use my right, were I to refuse all further discussion, and refer you, upon the Eucharist as upon all other articles of faith, to the decisions pronounced by the Church. I have established its authority. I have shewn that it received it from its divine Founder, that when he was leaving the earth he bequeathed it to his apostles, and, in their persons, to those who should succeed them in the ministry. that he had never ceased to teach by their instrumentality and would continue to the end of the world to teach by that of their successors. that, in consequence, the doctrines of the Church will always be protected from error, that, by hearing the Church, we hear Jesus Christ, and, by despising the Church, we despise Jesus Christ. You have seen the proofs of all this; they have appeared to you convincing. And if the impression they have made upon you is weakened, read them over again: subject them, if you please, to a new examination. But when once a person is convinced of their solidity, there is no longer room for hesitation. The decision is past, every thing is said: all that remains is to accept it, and submit to it. This simple, and at the same time safe, method abridges for every catholic, whether learned or ignorant, the interminable difficulties that exist in protestant societies.

But the arguments you have often heard opposed to the belief of catholics upon this mystery, those that you have read in the writings of your teachers have made a deep impression upon you. They frequently return to your mind, and balance, as you say, the force of the general inference drawn from an infallible authority. Well! then, Sir, I am willing to enter with you into the heart of this controverted point: I engage to justify to you the decrees of the Church upon the Eucharist, and to shew you their conformity with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. I foresee its full extent: I have it at one glance with all its proofs before my eyes. Oh that I could but lay it before your eyes with the same rapidity! but the dissertation must necessarily be long: you must submit to it: it is necessary for your peace of mind: the subject is all important. I should also be apprehensive that my silence might appear to you a tacit acknowledgment of the weakness of my cause: and I ought not to give your teachers this kind of advantage in your mind.

Before we set about developing the proofs, it will be well to remove certain general difficulties, which might diminish their effect. These difficulties are produced, in some, by the false notions conjured up by a heated imagination: in others by specious reasons which seem to demonstrate the physical impossibility of the real presence. The first are indignant at the very idea of the consequences which they imagine themselves obliged to admit. If Jesus Christ were really present in the Eucharist, he

would then, say they, be abandoned to the mercy of the wicked: he would have put himself into the power of his captives, by giving them the power of offering to his adorable body, the most shameful indignities; of casting him to animals, of dragging him in the mud, and treading him under foot.—

But, in the first place, these persons do not reflect that similar objections might be made against the presence of God which they admit in the universe. They will reply, no doubt, that God is not present in all places in substance, as we say the Eucharist is, but only by his infinite knowledge and by the action of an unlimited power. Were the observation correct, the objections would not the less forcibly recut: for does it not seem unworthy of his supreme majesty that his pure and immortal eye be open to every scene of horror and debauchery? What representations, what work full of folly and turpitude, what disgusting and infamous images find place in the divine conceptions, and become reflected upon the increated Word? Far from us however be such illusions! God sees all crimes, and his eye is not defiled: he knows them, and the purity of his essence remains uninjured. And let us equally be on our guard how we believe that the profanations exercised upon a consecrated host can touch and affect the person of Jesus Christ. The only right he has granted his ministers over it, is to be able, at their will, to render it present upon the altar, and that in a manner which it is not given them to comprehend. The wicked man; indeed, profane the evils under which he conceals himself, may prostitute them to unclean animals; may throw them into the mud or under their feet: for he abandons to their mad outrages the cover he places between himself and them, of itself contemptible and common, it is true, and yet most deserving our respect and our veneration from the presence of the sacred guest, whom it holds concealed from our eyes. Here their profanations stop: they reach not his adorable body, on which he gives them no hold: inaccessible to all their senses, he is also screened from all their attempts: & not less impalpable than invisible, in the midst of the most shameful outrages, his divine person remains eternally impassible and inviolable.

Others borrow their arguments from still more abstracted metaphysical sources, and with an air of triumph display to us their pretended demonstrations of the impossibility of one body existing in many places at the same time. Their triumph without dispute, would be certain, did the question turn upon a body existing in the Eucharist under the same forms, and with the natural qualities and proportions of a human body: for certainly it will never enter any one's mind to believe or propose to be believed that a body such as yours [or mine] can be simultaneously in many places. But we are speaking of a body passed to a state entirely different from our own, become impalpable, invisible, inaccessible to all our senses: we are speaking of a presence, the manner of which we pretend not to explain, which we acknowledge to be above our understanding. In what manner would they shew the impossibility of such a presence being simulta-

neously multiplied, & of the existence of such a body in many places at once? Would they maintain it to be more impossible than impalpability & invisibility?

If they allow that our Lord could derogate from the ordinary laws of matter, to such a degree as to conceal his body from all our senses, can he not still further derogate from them so as to render himself present in many places at once? Have we a sufficient knowledge of the properties of matter, to deny this? Have we sufficiently penetrated its essence? For, to affirm the impossibility of any thing whatsoever is to assert that the qualities that are attributed to it are repugnant to, or mutually exclude one another. This cannot be proved, if we do not know them: the first step then is to know them: and up to this time the primitive elements, the intimate qualities of matter, the modifications of which it is susceptible under the hand of the Almighty, are mysteries to man. Whatever progress may have been made in the analysis of bodies, their formation and organization always elude our inquiries; in this respect as in every thing else, the secret of the Creator has not yet been discovered. I am sorry, I confess, for those transcendent geniuses, who, to justify their incredulity and overturn our belief, transport us with them into unknown regions, and would have us adopt as luminous demonstrations the arguments they produce for us out of sight in the void and the night of chaos. What is remarkable, is that they make no difficulty in admitting other mysteries, not less incomprehensible than this. You believe with us, I would say to them, the Trinity and Incarnation, and have not these dogmas their inaccessible heights? Does not the Socinian imagine that he discovers in them impossibilities and absurdities? You reply to him that his objections prove only the limits of the human mind and in no wise the impossibility of these dogmas: it is just so that I answer you respecting the Eucharist. Does not the birth of Jesus Christ appear repugnant to our ideas of things? that he should have taken a body and come into the world from the womb of a virgin, what is there in appearance more impossible than this, according to all that we observe of the laws of nature and the properties of the human body? that after his resurrection his disciples being assembled and keeping the doors shut for fear of the Jews, he should have twice appeared in the midst of them, how are we to explain this prodigy and make it accord with the notions we have formed of matter? And after his ascension, that he should have appeared to St. Paul in the same manner as he shewed himself after his passion to Saint Peter, to his disciples and to more than five hundred brethren together, do you more easily conceive this? For we have manifestly here the presence of Jesus Christ in two places at once, in heaven at the right hand of his Father, & on earth before St. Paul, to whom he shewed himself as he was before. To convince his apostles of his resurrection he had caused to be seen by their eyes, in his complete humanity, the same members, the same features that they had known him to possess before his death.