

are to believe the doctrine, I must at once give up the task: for I am acquainted with no means of enabling you to conceive what I myself am as incapable of conceiving as you are. But for how long, let me ask you, have men considered themselves authorized to deny what is most clearly demonstrated by facts, on the ground that in theory it presented obscurity? How long have they presumed to reject the most solidly established dogma in religion, on the plea of its baffling their conceptions: while in the order of nature we admit, as indeed we ought to do, without cavil or doubt, thousands and thousand of effects, without the remotest possibility of our conceiving how they have been caused, in a single instance? The incomprehensibility of a mystery does not diminish its truth and certainty. Nor is it both rational and natural for us to yield to manifest proofs, without presuming to search for a reason that is hidden from us. Believe then, and doubt not, that Jesus Christ is really present; that the bread and wine no longer subsist, because they are become his body and blood; believe it, immediately you are convinced that he himself has so declared. Proceed no further: bound your inquiry where the clearness of revelation abandons you and obscurity begins its reign. Leave to God the accomplishment of what he has been pleased to reveal. He will execute his purposes by ways known only to himself. Do not harass your mind by discussing whether these ways are or are not agreeable with the principles of your reason, and waste not your time in judging and deciding whether it be that these principles must be absolutely false, or that God has ways unknown to men by which he operates his mysteries without injury to their principles.* So, when you find the ministers of the protestant religion dilating with complacency on the difficulties of the Eucharist, and displaying its pretended impossibilities, adhere firmly to what revelation teaches on this subject. Call to mind the words of our Saviour, when he promised to give us his body to eat, and his blood to drink, and when he performed his promise, on the eve of his passion. Call to mind the doctrine and the belief of the apostles, and the first christians; the discipline, coeval with christianity, respecting the secrecy that hid these mysterious dogmas in the breasts of the faithful: call to mind the liturgies of the fifth age, all of which express the same dogmas in glowing terms, and whose uniformity proclaims their apostolical descent: call to mind that the primitive Fathers developed the same belief with the greatest clearness when they spoke free and unrestrained in presence of the faithful alone, or when they were instructing the neoplates in what it was necessary for them to know before being admitted to partake of the holy communion: think, in fine, of the moral impossibility of our belief being ever establishing, such as it now exists,

*“For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts, saith the Lord.”—Isaiah LV. v. 9.

unless it be supposed to derive its origin from Jesus Christ himself.

All the proofs attesting this point of revelation are most certain: the metaphysical arguments brought forward against them are far from being so, they leave them totally untouched. The former are within the comprehension of our minds the latter are far beyond the limits of human intelligence. We cannot therefore, without overthrowing the laws of good sense, throw aside plain and palpable proofs, to cling to conceptions that, to say the least of them, are founded on no certainty and are hazardous in the extreme. If, however, such metaphysical difficulties should rise up in our imagination, they must be driven away: proofs built upon facts must be introduced into their place: on such occasions, raise up your heart to heaven, whence all revelation is derived; take refuge under the Divine Majesty which veils its own mystery, and forbids you to examine it with too curious an eye: place all your confidence in him who proposes it to you, and, at the moment of communion, cry out to him with St. Peter, with the apostles and the christians of all ages: Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Son of the living God, and that thou hast the words of eternal life. This is the clear and luminous side of the column: fix your eyes upon this together with the chosen people of God, and you cannot fail of being secure: whereas you will be infallibly lost like the Egyptians, if you place yourself with them on the side that diffuses nothing but darkness and uncertainty. This mixture of light and darkness, which is equally found in the order of nature as in religion, was no doubt intended for the trial of our faith during the days of our pilgrimage: with our earthly pilgrimage it will terminate: then shall the evil be withdrawn and the truth be clearly laid open to our eyes: then, to our astonishment shall we find the simplicity of all that, which at present confounds and defies the ingenuity and imagination of man.

In the mean time, thus let us argue the point: it would no doubt be a madness believe, on the testimony of man, what we do believe respecting the Eucharist: but there would be a thousand times more madness in refusing to believe it on the positive testimony of our Saviour. You confess with us his divinity demonstrated by all his works: you acknowledge with us in Jesus Christ the God who created the universe, who rules nature, and who “hath done whatever he pleased in the heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the depths.” It would be highly unreasonable to oppose our weak understanding to his divine word and to place more reliance on our limited and ever erring reason than on his almighty power and infinite wisdom.*

* Hear the same language from the mouth of one of your own divines: “We confess with the holy Fathers that the manner of Christ’s presence is as inaccessible to our thoughts as to our language; that is, we confess, that it is not to be fathomed by human reason, but must be believed by faith. However incredible it may appear to us that, at so immense a distance, the flesh of Jesus Christ should come down to us and become our food, it must never be forgotten how much the power of the Holy

APPENDIX.

Testimonies of the Fathers.

Saint Ignatius, the disciple and successor of St. Peter in the see of Antioch, speaking of certain heretics, who denied the reality of the body of Christ, says: “They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not acknowledge the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father by his goodness resuscitated.” *Ep. ad Smyrn. p. 36. T. II. P. P. Apost. Amsteladami, 1724.*

Justin in his apology to the Emperor Antoninus, expresses himself as follows: “Our prayers being finished, we embrace one another with the kiss of peace. Then to him who presides over the brethren is presented bread, and wine tempered with water: having received which, he gives glory to the Father of all things in the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost, and returns thanks, in many prayers, that he has been deemed worthy of these gifts. These offices being duly performed, the whole assembly, in acclamation, answers, *Amen*; when the ministers, whom we call deacons, distribute to each one present a portion of the blessed bread, and the wine and water. Some is also taken to the absent. This food we call the Eucharist, of which they alone are allowed to partake, who believe the doctrines taught by us, and have been regenerated by water for the remission of sin, and who live as Christ ordained. For we do not take these gifts as common bread and common drink; but as Jesus Christ, our Saviour, made man by the word of God, took flesh and blood for our salvation: in the same manner, we have been taught that the food which has been blessed by the prayer of the words which he spoke, and by which our blood and flesh, in the change, are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus incarnate. The apostles, in the commentaries written by them, which are called Gospels, have delivered that Jesus so commanded, when taking bread, having given thanks, he said: *Do this in remembrance of me, This is my body.* In like manner, taking the cup, and giving thanks, he said: *This is my blood*: and that he distributed both to them only. If you find this reasonable, respect it: if you think it impertinent, despise it: but do not on that account condemn to death people who have done no evil. For we declare to you that you will not escape the judgment of God, if you persevere in this injustice. For our parts, we say: God’s will be done.”

Irenæus, in his fourth book against heresies, ch. XVII. al. 32. speaks thus: “Jesus Christ, having taken what of its own nature was bread, blessed

Spirit surpasses our comprehension, and how foolish it would be to think of measuring his immensity by our weak understandings. Let faith, then, admit what reason cannot conceive.”

“O God incarnate, how thou canst give us thy flesh to eat and thy blood to drink! How thy flesh is meat indeed! How thou, who art in heaven, ART PRESENT ON THE ALTAR! I can by no means explain. But I firmly believe it all! because thou hast said it. I firmly rely on thy love, and on thy omnipotence to make good thy word: though the manner of doing it I cannot comprehend.”