

The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

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AMICABLE DISCUSSION.

Continued.

LETTER VI.

ON THE EUCHARIST.

Still one more observation. According to the principle of your teachers, the Jews could only have been wrong in understanding literally what he had said figuratively, and in taking for a real manducation, that which according to our Saviour's intention was only to take place by faith. But here by attempting to give this turn to the fault of the Jews, your teachers themselves are mistaken. In fact, had it been so, Jesus Christ would have immediately perceived the error of the Jews, and would not have permitted them to remain in it. There only needed a word, to correct their mistake, to appease their murmurs, to reconcile their hearts to his doctrine, and yet this most simple explanation he refused to give them! He who always corrected his disciples, whenever they mistook his meaning, he who had just performed a miracle to feed this multitude of Jews, and had attached them to him by his favours, he who came down from heaven but to instruct and save, he sees them become irritated and embittered against him merely from a misunderstanding, which he can easily remove, and he refuses to do it! he leaves them in error! what do I say? He himself throws them into it! for the strength of his expressions necessarily implied the reality. The Jews understood them so, neither ought they to have taken them in an opposite sense. It belonged to our Saviour to remove from their minds the idea that he had given them of the reality if he had not wished that they should believe it; yet he does no such thing. It was the reality then that he had in view, the reality that he meant, the reality that he had promised, and that he wished them to believe beforehand on the the word and assurance that he gave them of accomplishing it on a future occasion.

The fault of the Jews did not so much consist in misunderstanding him as in refusing to believe him, and if they deserved to be condemned, it was not for want of understanding so much as for want of faith. I will explain myself: they understood Jesus Christ to say that he would give in reality his flesh to eat and his blood to drink; and they had had good reason for understanding him so: for, most assuredly it was what he had said. They judged that he could not give them his flesh to eat in the manner that the flesh of animals is eaten: and in this again they were right. What then was their

fault? It was this: they were not aware of any other way of eating flesh than of tearing it with their teeth, either raw and bloody, or cooked and dressed: and because this is the only manner they are acquainted with, they conclude that there can be no other manner, and will not believe that there can be some other way unknown to them. They come to a decision according to their own ideas, and measure their faith by their limited conceptions: & not seeing the possibility of what Jesus announces to them they refuse to believe it.* But had they not often heard speak of him as of an extraordinary personage? Had they not approached, known and followed him? Had they not been witness of many miracles, and, quite recently, of the multiplication of the loaves? His deportment, his features, his august and majestic countenance, from which beamed a ray of his shrouded divinity, his conversation full of a surprising wisdom, his most holy and pure life, every thing should have inspired them with confidence; every thing should have discovered to them in his person a superior character, a prophet who held nature under his control. In addition to this, he had just revealed to them that he was come down from heaven, that he had been sent to them by God his Father: imposture could have no share in such a soul as his was shewn to be, nor could lies proceed from his mouth. The Jews therefore ought to have believed in his heavenly mission and his divinity; they ought to have given credit to all his discourses, and then have said to themselves:

*What Jesus Christ had already said to the Jews, with what he afterwards added in speaking in their presence to his disciples, was sufficient to let them understand that they must not adhere to the idea of a carnal manducation. He had already said, many times, that he was himself the living bread, the bread come down from heaven: that the bread that he would give them to eat was his flesh, which he would give for the life of the world: that whoever should eat of this bread should live for ever. By these repeated declarations he gave them sufficiently to understand, that they should eat his flesh under the form or appearance of bread, that they should participate of the substance of his body and be nourished by it under the appearance and image of this ordinary aliment of man: and when soon after he said to his disciples that they should see him go up to where he was before, was it not for the purpose of teaching them that he should not give his flesh to be eaten in a visible manner, because they should see him visibly disappear and mount up into heaven in body and person with all the sensible and natural proportions of the human body? Was not this telling them that although he should give them his flesh to eat, it would still remain, as before, living and entire: that therefore he spoke not of ordinary flesh, which must be given to support a mortal life, and be torn in pieces and consumed when eaten?

“We cannot conceive, it is true, in what manner he can make us eat his flesh and drink his blood: but since he has said it and assured us of it, it certainly must be possible: he certainly must have means, which we know nothing of, for the accomplishment of his promise. He is holy, he is good: he cannot sport with our credulity: he is sent by God, he comes from heaven: he therefore knows all things and can do all things whatsoever he pleases: and when once he assures us that he will give us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, we are immediately persuaded of it; we are convinced by his only word, and without being able to conceive it, we believe it.” This is what they should have thought, should have said and firmly confessed. Their fault and condemnation lie in not having thought or acknowledged it; in having cast aside so many motives which required their entire confidence and reliance upon him: in having preferred their own conceptions to his: in having presumed to consider him as capable of proposing to them what is impossible, that is, of wishing to deceive them, or of deceiving himself, and, in this insulting alternative, in obstinately refusing to believe him.

These reflections on the unhappiness of the Jews create in my mind another reflection; which makes me afraid for you and those of your communion. Like unto these Jews, you reject the reality of the manducation that Jesus Christ announces to them, and with them you say; “How can he give us his flesh to eat?” But in you this incredulity becomes much more unpardonable. The Jews did not at that time know of the resurrection and ascension of our Saviour, or of the descent of the Holy Ghost announced by him, and followed by so many prodigies that have renewed the face of the earth. These splendid and divine operations have in your regard placed the authority of Jesus Christ beyond any thing the Jews could at that time know of it. They had seen some of his miracles, and had from them concluded that he was the prophet expected in those times. For his divinity they had his assertion, and it was sufficient in such a personage. But, besides this assertion, you have all the proofs of it, and this is much more. You admit these proofs, you profess the divinity of Jesus Christ. Well then! Sir, either cease to profess it, or cease to refuse your belief in him: for to acknowledge him as God and not to believe his word to hear him clearly telling you that he will give you in reality his flesh to eat, as he has said, and as is demonstrated, and nevertheless to maintain, to persist obstinately in maintaining that the thing is impossible; this is an extravagance much more im-