

wonder, then, that these differences of opinion produced no animosity, made little noise and gave rise to no schisms. We may find many instances of a similar nature, both at the present day, and in former ages. At present, there are divines in many christian communities, who understand the demons whom our Lord miraculously cured, to have been no other than persons laboring under certain diseases, such as the epilepsy, or other disorders that are attended with effects similar to those which are described in the gospel. But other divines belonging to the same communities, ascribe these demoniacal possessions to the influence of infernal spirits. Yet this difference is never conceived to be a sufficient reason for separating themselves from one another's communion. Nor could the differences about the real presence appear of more importance than this, at least when it first took place, when it was attended with no practical consequences, when it affected neither the manner of worship, nor the harmony of the church. There is a celebrated instance to our purpose in the disputes that have vexed the church with respect to predestination and grace. It is universally understood that Augustine was the first who maintained and explained at any length, the doctrines that have long passed under the name of the doctrines of grace. And though other eminent fathers differed from Augustine respecting this important subject, yet we do not find that any warm disputes arose on account of it, for several centuries after. It was not till the ninth century that this dispute became a subject of consideration to Councils and Synods. And then indeed, the controversy was carried on with warmth and animosity. The opposite parties anathematized one another, and each side in several successive councils, affirmed its own doctrine to be that of the whole church. Never did any dispute interest the christian world more deeply. Not even the doctrine of the real presence was ever opposed or supported with greater keenness. Here, then, we have an instance of a dispute which excited little attention during a series of ages; yet afterwards rending the church into factions and parties. This instance clearly shows that a subject which excites the greatest attention in one period, may have been in some former and distant age, regarded with the utmost indifference. For any thing that we know, therefore, the differences of opinion respecting the presence of Christ in the sacrament, may at first have been attended with no more noise and commotion than the doctrines of Augustine respecting predestination and grace. At first, these differences may have been carried on in silence and peace, though, afterwards, when Coun-

cils and Popes had declared for the one party, had excommunicated their opposers, and taken away all right of private judgment and liberty of conscience, these same differences burst into a flame and rent the church into pieces.

In what I have advanced under this head, I do not pretend to have proved that this doctrine was actually introduced at any particular time into the faith of the church, without having been formerly believed. All that I have here attempted to prove, is, that the thing is possible. This is all that we are to infer from the arguments now stated; and I conceive they fully warrant this conclusion. I conclude, therefore, in opposition to the reasonings of the *Sieur Barthelemy*, that it was not impossible for the belief of the real presence to gain admittance into the church, though it had not been received from the beginning.

The question here does not relate to any historical fact. It is altogether an argument from probability. It is so on both sides; does not attempt to prove what really happened, but merely what was likely or unlikely to have taken place. *Sieur Barthelemy*, pronounce such an event to be impossible. I have endeavored to show that it is possible.

Another circumstance which might have greatly facilitated the introduction of this doctrine, was the extreme ignorance and barbarity that prevailed during those ages. If we look into the ablest ecclesiastical writers that flourished in the ninth and tenth centuries, we will be astonished at their puerility. And if we consider the small regard which they discover to ascertain the sense of scriptures, their small acquaintance with the principles of sound philosophy, and even with those of common sense, we will not be surprised at their adopting any innovation. The philosophy which generally prevailed in those ages, appears to have been little else than mystical and unintelligible jargon; and the methods employed to ascertain the meaning of scripture, were the most remote that can well be conceived from the principles of sound criticism.

But there is one circumstance which puts the possibility of introducing such an innovation as this beyond all doubt. For the difference of opinion which the *Sieur Barthelemy* has endeavored to prove to be impossible, is known from unquestionable evidence to have existed. It is beyond all dispute, that, in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, differences of opinion on this subject actually prevailed through a great part of the christian church. It makes no difference in the present argument which opinion was an innovation and which was the ancient faith of the