

# The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

VOL. I.

KINGSTON, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1831.

NO. 49.

## SELECTED.

### AMICABLE DISCUSSION.

Continued.

#### LETTER X.

##### A RECAPITULATION UPON THE EUCHARIST.

We have seen that the secrecy so religiously observed throughout the whole Church on the subject of the Eucharist during the first ages, could have been intended to conceal neither more nor less than the real presence. We have seen that, in the celebration of the sacred mysteries, the bishops and priests of these same ages, recited set forms of invocation and prayers, in which we find the clearest and most energetic terms employed to express the real presence, the change of the substance, the adoration, and the oblation of the victim, or the unbloody sacrifice of the new law. And after this what necessity can there be of entering upon a more minute and particular examination as to what these same bishops and fathers may have written in the works they have left behind them? You will easily conceive that they could never have taught a doctrine directly opposed to that which they were guarding with so much circumspection; and that, while day by day they continued, in the public liturgy, to call down the Holy Spirit, to effect the change of the bread and wine into the body & blood of Jesus Christ, they could not, in common consistency, have maintained in their writings, that no change whatever of substance was effected in the bread and wine. It is hardly to be supposed that in their temples and religious assemblies, they should have presented to the adoration of the faithful and themselves have adored the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and at the same time should have advanced in their writings that divine worship could not be paid to the consecrated elements, without idolatry, seeing that these creatures were but the figure and the memorial of Jesus Christ, absent and in heaven. Equally objectionable would be the supposition that they should in their writings have pronounced the new law to be without a sacrifice, while they themselves were daily offering a sacrifice to God upon their altars. Produce the most obstinate and inveterate Zuinglian, and let me but once persuade him that the discipline of secrecy had undoubtedly the dogma of the real presence for its cause and object, or let him be compelled to admit that the change of the substance, the adoration, the unbloody sacrifice, proclaimed in all the liturgies of the fifth century, are necessarily of apostolic origin, and I will defy him to do otherwise than conclude, that, whatever the fathers have said upon

the Eucharist, must absolutely be referred unto it. And now, Sir, I flatter myself, you clearly perceive that the occult discipline relative to the Eucharist was actually indebted to the doctrine of the real presence, and to nothing else, for its existence; I also flatter myself that you will no longer entertain a shadow of doubt as to the apostolic origin of these dogmas, uniformly expressed in all the liturgies written in the fifth century. You ought therefore, to feel well convinced, without further enquiry, that the passages of the fathers upon the Eucharist, can neither be understood nor explained, in a sense contrary to the doctrine they were secretly preserving, a doctrine they so strongly expressed in the private celebration of their liturgies. Not, however, that I would deter you from examining these passages. It shall be my pleasure now, immediately, to assist you in so doing. For, in a matter of such moment, there cannot be too great an accumulation of proofs.

From the occult discipline we learn that the mysteries of religion were studiously veiled in obscure and enigmatical expressions, whenever there was danger of their dignity being compromised before the non-initiated; and that, on the contrary, when no such danger existed, they were discussed without disguise. From it also, we are taught, that the same precaution and reservedness that attended the bishops in their public instructions, never left them in their writings. "How should it be proper," says St. Basil, "to divulge abroad to the public at large in writing, what it is not lawful to expose to the eye of the uninitiated?"

Now, to mark out the precise circumstances in which there did or did not exist danger of the mysteries being compromised, in instructions or writings, would, at this distance of time, be a venturesome undertaking. The fathers alone were able to judge of the freedom with which they could safely communicate their sentiments, and they alone could calculate the probable danger resulting therefrom. We, for instance, should never have supposed that any risk could be run in writing to a bishop; and yet we find that Innocent I. at the commencement of the fifth century, dares not speak openly of the mysteries to Decentius. It might never have entered our thoughts, that a christian of the second age could have opened himself with confidence to a Pagan Emperor. and yet Jusur made no difficulty in admitting Antoninus into many secrets of the sanctuary.

We know, however, to a certainty, that the fathers, in their discourses before the catechumens and unbelievers and in composing the works destined for the public eye, were obliged to be upon

their guard and to proceed with wariness and reserve, as they themselves very frequently testify, because, in a general way, they found themselves in these embarrassing circumstances. We know, also, to a certainty, that they must have developed this doctrine in its entire and naked form, when speaking or writing for the instruction of the newly baptized. For, on these occasions, their object was to initiate them thoroughly in the mysteries of which they were to be partakers; and it became necessary to explain the nature of the sacrament and give every other essential information respecting it, that their ignorance might not expose them to profanation or sacrilege.\* Whence it follows, that if we would form a correct judgment of the opinion held by the fathers upon the Eucharist, we must investigate writings of the second kind, and not those of the first. Good sense requires that, for the discovery of the real sentiments of an author, recourse should be had to the writings in which he must have clearly expressed them, and not to those in which he was under the necessity of concealing them in vagueness, obscurity, and ambiguity of language.

There is no doubt that, in those glorious ages, every bishop was most zealous in instructing the

\*"On the eve of the great paschal solemnity, and of our regeneration," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "we shall give you the necessary and suitable instruction; with what reverence and in what order you must enter the baptistery; what are the reasons for the sacred ceremonies there made use of; with what devotion you must, on coming forth from baptism, approach the altar of God, and participate in the spiritual and celestial mysteries there offered in order that, having your souls enlightened by our instructions and exhortations, you may each of you comprehend the greatness of the gifts conferred upon you by the Almighty."

"Of all the things," says St. Gaudentius, "that are pointed out to us in the book of Exodus, in describing the celebration of the pasch, we shall at present speak only of those, which cannot be explained before the Catechumens, but which notwithstanding it is necessary to disclose to the newly baptized. This splendid night (of Easter) requires our instruction to be adapted rather to the circumstances of the time, than to the lesson of the day, in order that the neophytes may, for the first time, be taught in what manner we partake of the paschal sacrifice.

"You not only see the same body that was seen by the magi," says St. Chrysostom, "but you are acquainted with its virtue, you know how it communicates itself, and you are ignorant of nothing that it has effected, having been carefully instructed in all these particulars at the time of your initiation."

"In the paschal solemnity," says St. Augustine, "the first seven or eight days are appointed for the instruction of the children (the newly baptized) upon the sacraments.