

THE AVE MARIA.

Ave Maria gratia plena.—LXXXI. 28.

The sun was sinking in the west,
Like angel spirit to its rest,
An ocean flood of golden light
Lay on each hill and wood and height;
It seemed a land of fairy sprite. *Ave Maria.*

Then every convent bell did ring,
Each hut and dale did echoing sing,
The gentle peasants did prolong
The sound of that full thrilling song
Loud chanting as they moved along, *Ave Maria.*

Oh! sweet it is, and good to see
The glowing sun sink in the sea.
While nature heaves with loving swell
Of choral song and convent bell,
All coming that one prayer to tell, *Ave Maria.*

From the Catholic Telegraph.

INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH.

I now undertake to answer your inquiry respecting the infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church. I shall endeavor to give you a clear notion of its nature before I proceed to show you one reason for embracing it. Our first principle is, that man is not bound to believe any doctrine as of faith, unless that doctrine has been revealed by God. Thus a Catholic does not acknowledge any power or right in the church, nor in any portion thereof, nor in any Angel, nor in any being, to require his belief of a doctrine which is above his reason's discovery. When then he says that the Church is infallible in giving her doctrinal decisions, he does not mean to say, that she can make that which God did not reveal, become an article of faith. He does not mean that she can add to the Revelation of God, and will be infallibly correct in this addition. But man is bound to believe what God teaches. Yet a man is a reasonable being, and must have a sufficient motive for his assent, or belief, he is not required to believe without evidence. Thus for his faith, evidence is necessary—otherwise his belief would have no foundation upon which it could rest. We next ask what evidence is required? Certainly if our reason could discover the truth of the doctrine submitted to our minds, it would be quite superfluous for God to teach what we could discover without his teaching.—Did we discover the truth of this doctrine without the teaching of God, and so rely by the exertions of our own intellect, our belief would be founded upon the evidence of reason, and further evidence would be superfluous. But if we did not make the discovery by our own exertion, if no exertion of ours could reach so far, and that we received sufficient testimony of the truth from some person who had seen and known and testified; and that moreover this witness was as incapable of deceit as he was beyond his influence, this testimony would be to us sufficient evidence of the truth of this doctrine. We would then require evidence that such a witness gave such testimony, and that evidence would be the sure foundation of our faith. Our belief would then be rational. It will not be questioned that God is such a witness. It will be admitted that his knowledge is more extensive than ours; that his knowl-

edge is not merely rational conjecture, high probability, but it is undoubted, certain assurance of fact, and that it is unalterable. So that what he once asserts for truth will be truth forever. Those principles are manifestly true. We now come to matter of fact and deduction. God did reveal his knowledge. They to whom he revealed it had evidence of the fact.—They were bound to believe. Why?—Because they had an infallible certainty that the Lord spoke, and an infallible certainty of what he said. Thus the principle of obligation is found in the infallible certainty of God's declaration.

From this we see the indissoluble connexion of faith with an infallible certainty of truth. Take away the certainty, and upon what will faith rest? Give the infallibility, and we see the basis of faith.—Conjecture is not faith. Probability is not faith. Faith is certain knowledge resting on the testimony of God. It must be founded upon an infallible certainty that God made a revelation, and of an infallible certainty of what that revelation was. Suppose we ascertain that he spoke, and moreover that he revealed the contents of a certain book, but great doubts arise as to the meaning of certain passages of that book, and learned men give to the same passage contradictory meanings, so that of these words, "And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world," one division asserts the meaning to be, that Christ would preserve the visible body of his Church, who were teachers of his doctrine in his truth all days to the end of the world. And another division asserts that such is not the meaning, but that during ages in succession, long before the end of the world, this visible body would be false guides, and teach the doctrines of antichrist. Suppose an hundred such passages can be produced upon which there are flat contradictions. Suppose that the very copies are called into question; that several passages of a most important nature are by learned men said to have been introduced in dark and superstitious times, by cunning priests to impose upon the credulity of the people, and to bring persons to believe that God had taught what he never had revealed.—Suppose equally learned, and equally numerous and zealous men assert these passages to be genuine. We are left without any infallible guide to give us certain evidence. Upon what will our faith rest?—Thus, we repeat, there is an indissoluble connexion between faith and infallibility. You perceive then my dear friend, that the infallibility of the Church in doctrinal decisions, is not similar to the decisions of the highest courts of judicature; but absolute, the dictate of the Holy Ghost, which remain with the Church forever, and guide her into all truth. Thus the Church of God is the "Pillar and ground of the truth."

This leads us to a correct view of what we hold in the Catholic Church; namely, that when God required man to believe mysteries upon his testimony, he furnished man an infallible mode of knowing exactly what he taught, and what man was to believe. In other words, that God gave to man evidence as the foundation upon

which his faith should rest. And if God did not furnish man with an infallible guide, it would be unreasonable to make faith necessary for Salvation. It would be as if God should say to man, "You must believe firmly all that I teach, but although I could establish several modes by which you could know my doctrine with infallible certainty, still I will not furnish you with an infallible guide. I shall leave you to conjecture, to probability, to speculation and to doubt! This leaves man to the guidance of his private judgment."

Our doctrine then is, that God did establish an infallible guide, and that in the new law, the bishops which succeed to the Apostolic commission with the Bishop of Rome, form this necessary tribunal.—They have no authority to change what God revealed: they have no power to add to what God has revealed. But they will in all cases of doubt lead us with infallible certainty to a knowledge of what God has taught. For according to prophecy, the words of God were put into their mouth, and are not to depart out of their mouth, nor out of the mouth of their seed, nor their seed's seed forever. Under the old law, there was a similar tribunal, of divine authority, and deemed infallible.—See Deuteronomy 17th and 18th.

We now proceed to show the grounds of our assertion, that the bishops of the Church joined with the chief Bishop of that tribunal, which will with infallible certainty, give us those doctrines which are of faith. It will be unnecessary to prove, that there can be no faith, without having an infallible certainty of what God has revealed. And we cannot have this certainty unless we can find a witness whose testimony of that revelation will be infallibly correct. Thus we are brought to the dilemma, "There can be no faith, or there must be an infallible witness of doctrine." Hence we are reduced at once to total want of evidence, or we must find an infallible witness to know what God did say; for conjecture, or opinion, is not evidence. We must place upon the same level, the Pagan, the Deist, the Socinian, the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Campbellite, the Roman Catholic, the Swedenborgian, the Universalist, the Shaker, the Mormon, and thousands of others, too tedious to mention. All profess to hold the truth, and all contradict each other. Has God revealed the truth, and commanded us to believe his word, and yet placed it out of our power to know with certainty what he said? This clearly must be the case, if we have no infallible witness to tell us what he said. But a thousand various sects are ready to exclaim, "We have an infallible Guide." God is good and wise, and merciful—he has given us this witness. Stand aside—move from amongst us, you Pagans, Deists, Jews, Mahometans, and Roman Catholics—You will not receive this witness—It is the Bible."

Obedient to the mandate, we move aside with our companions. We ask not how they know that book to contain the doctrine of God to man, because the experience of centuries gives us the plain certainty of what will occur. At an humble

distance we listen. One of the great Protestant assembly calls on all his fellows, to adore the Lord Jesus, as the eternal Son of God. Another arises and protests against such idolatry, as Christ is not God, but only a glorious created being. The book is produced; passages are read; each explains them in contradiction to the other. Some interpose and endeavour to allay the strife of the disputants. Some are for referring the matter to a Council of Episcopalian Bishops. Others cry out that Synods, and Presbyteries are the constituted authorities of the Christian church. Others exclaim, let each congregation of people judge for themselves; Scripture does not warrant any clerical authority; it is contrary to the freedom of the Gospel to be under such a yoke. Others with equal propriety exclaim, why submit our judgment to a congregation? let every one judge for himself; this is the liberty of the Gospel, for every man to believe as he pleases. Some propositions are made for peace and union among all evangelical Christians who hold the fundamentals of religion. But about what are fundamentals they cannot agree. But they generally agree in anathematizing all who do not believe the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. The Universalists raise their voice to the highest pitch, and proclaim that according to the Gospel, the whole human family are to be saved. All the different divisions appeal to the book, and the bible is made by each to speak in favor of his opinion. The confusion among the builders of Babel could not be greater.

The Deist calmly asks, "is this the consistency of the christian's religion? Is this the manifestation of evident truth? Is this the revelation of God, to which I am to sacrifice my reason?" "Great Allah," cries the Mahometan, "I bless thee for the words of thy Prophet; they are light to mine eyes; they are fountains in the desert; they are waters of perfume from Arabia; they are lovely as the houris of Paradise; they sound in my ears as the first music, with which thou wilt greet my soul, when it will be borne from the Angel of death." The Pagan looks at the mongrel crowd in great astonishment, and asks, whether the God of the christians, was he who sowed the teeth of the Dragon, and whether this Book partakes of the same qualities as were found in those teeth? "Friend of the old christianity," (said the Israelite turning to me) "when I shall be too idle to labor, or poor and mean enough to become a hypocrite, which of these sects shall I join?" Neither of them was our answer. A general stir takes place about the conversion of the world. And for this purpose it is proposed to circulate the Bible in every language, and in every nation. And it is proposed that all the various divisions should unite in this great and glorious enterprise. It is proclaimed that all agree that this book contains the word of God; even the Roman Catholic, let him be invited to the holy work. Let us send it to the Mahometan, to the Jews, to the Pagan, and to the poor benighted Deist. Let us have no strife—let each take and read and interpret for himself, and believe as he pleases. We will all be christians,