

men can give infallible decisions, we answer, by the power of God.

How can there be life in a lump of clay? We find the answer in Genesis ii. 7: "And the Lord God breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

How can there be infallibility in the decisions of a body of fallible men? We find the answer in John xx. 22; "He (Jesus Christ) breathed on them and said to them, receive ye the Holy Ghost," &c. &c.

"The weak things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong" 1 Cor. i. 27.

We readily grant that men, even the most learned, are fallible and subject to errors, whilst depending upon their reason and their learning alone; and for this reason we believe, that not even the most transcendent genius, improved by the most liberal education; that can be obtained on earth, will ever alone qualify, a man to be a minister of Christ, a pastor of souls, a spiritual guide to Heaven, to pilot us surely and securely through the raging billows of a tempestuous sea, into the harbour of eternal peace. No, dear sir, this would be for the blind to lead the blind; for if after nearly six thousand years of unrelenting exertions, human wisdom and philosophy have not been able to penetrate into one, out of millions of the secrets of this material world, which in a short time will be destroyed by fire, how much less can the limited understandings of even the most transcendent geniuses penetrate into the dark recess of God's sanctuary, where all is mystery; how much less, I say, can they comprehend and explain the profound mysteries of this spiritual world, the Church, created for the soul of man, which is to last for ever, so long as God shall be God.

Here, then, God in his mercy interposes his infinite power. Wishing to give us sure guides to lead us, safely into the harbour of eternal life, Jesus Christ, God-man, by infusing his Holy Spirit of truth into those fallible men, whom he appoints his successors in the ministry, and promising never to take that spirit from them again, supplies at once the want of that knowledge, which no genius, no talents; no education ever will be able to give.

The body of pastors, then, being guided by the Holy Ghost, every individual pastor draws his knowledge from that body, from the whole Church.

The most learned among them is willing to say with Jeremiah the prophet, "A, a, a, Lord God, behold "I cannot speak, for I am a child." Jer. i. 6. He is willing to acknowledge the depth of those mysterious truths of religion, in the investigation of which he must stumble at every step unless directed by an unerring guide. Thus he applies to the decision of the Church, for the true sense of holy writ, for the true doctrine of Christ delivered by tradition, for the knowledge of all those tenets of religion necessary to be known for salvation. Thus, the pastor himself is led, and he is only fit to be a pastor, because he is led by an infallible guide, and instead of consulting his limited and fallible reason, in the interpretation of

Scripture, instead of delivering from the pulpit his opinions of the sense of Scripture, and calling such fallible opinions the word of God, he gives no instructions to his flock, but what he derives from the decisions of the Church, guided by the Spirit of Truth. Thus thousands, and hundreds of thousands of pastors, scattered over the whole globe, of different nations and tongues, delivered to their respective flocks, one and the same doctrine on all the different parts and mysteries of religion, and this doctrine they deliver, not as opinions, but as matter of certainty, as certain as that God is God. Is it not a pity that things on which our salvation depend should be only matters of opinion? It is my opinion, says one, that children may be saved without baptism; it is my opinion, says another, that God is too merciful to damn souls for ever; I think, says another, that it is immaterial what a person believes, or what religious creed he adopts, so he leads a good life. It is your opinion, and you think! Pray are you certain? and if you are not certain in matters of such weight, how can you be happy? Good God! will you leave it to the day of judgment to disclose whether you were right or wrong? Or, will you not rather renounce that fallible guide, your limited and corrupted reason, which never can give you certainty in matters of revelation, and apply for spiritual knowledge to the fountain of eternal truth, the holy Catholic Church, guided by the Holy Ghost, that you may no longer feed on opinions and uncertainties, but repose in the bosom of certainty.

The true minister of Christ, dear sir, speaking in the name of his divine master, must speak with authority, with certainty, without any hesitation, on all the different mysteries of religion on which he is obliged to instruct his flock. Woe to the wretch who shall deliver his private opinions, his own uncertain notions as the word of God, and thus often give poison for wholesome food, the productions of weak and corrupted reason for divine revelation.

The idea we have of a minister of Christ, you will perceive, is precisely the same which the first Christians must have had. Surely, dear sir, the Church in 1820 must be the same as it was in the beginning, the same kind of pastors, provided with the same powers, administering the same baptism, the same Eucharist or Lord's Supper, in short, all the same sacraments, and preaching the same doctrine.

The apostles of Christ, scattered over the globe, preached one and the same doctrine, because Christ was with them. Mat. xxviii. 18, 20. The Ministers of Christ in 1820, scattered over the globe, preach likewise one and the same doctrine, because Christ is still with them.

"I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

The apostles of Christ received the confessions of the faithful. "And many of those who believed, came " confessing and declaring their deeds." Acts xix. 11. They had received from Jesus Christ the power of forgiving and retaining sins. John xx. 22, 23.

The ministers of Christ in 1820, likewise hear

the confessions of the faithful, because they have no idea that Christ ever deprived them of that power,

The apostles of Jesus Christ submitted to the decisions of the whole Church, because they knew the Church to be guided by the Holy Ghost; witness the first council held at Jerusalem, which settled the question about circumcision; to the decision of which all submitted.

"It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burthen upon you than these necessary things," &c. &c. Acts xv. 28.

The ministers of Christ in 1820, likewise submit to the decisions of the general councils of the Church, because they know that the Holy Ghost is as much with the Church in 1820, as he was immediately after her institution. In short, we do not conceive why less spiritual powers should be attributed to the ministry of Christ in 1820, than in the year 100 or 390, &c. &c. for at all times, and in all ages, the Ministry is, most assuredly, intended for the same functions.

A minister of Christ, in 1820, is a preacher of the truth, as well as the year 100, and the truth in 1820 is certainly the same as in the year 100.

A minister of Christ in 1820, is a minister of reconciliation, as well as in the year 100. You will readily allow that men in 1820, are sinners as well as in former years, and therefore stand as much in need, as in former years, of those heavenly means and remedies which our blessed Lord sent his apostles to administer. Thus, by baptism, they, in 1820, wipe away the stain of original sin, as well as Christ's immediate successors did. Thus, also, by absolution, in 1820, they wipe away the stains of actual sin, as well as the ministers first appointed by Christ. It cannot be conceived, that Jesus Christ should grant the power of forgiving sins, merely in favour of a single generation, and should then (as if repenting of that grant) deprive all future generations of the same favour and benefit: neither ought it to be believed, as there is not a word from the mouth of Christ in favour of such a belief. We believe then, (even from the written word, without reference to the decision of the Church,) that all the spiritual powers originally granted by Christ to his ministers, still continue with his ministers, and will to the consummation of time. And we believe that any one, not in possession of those spiritual powers which Christ himself declares he gave his ministers, cannot be a minister of Christ; he may be a gentleman, he may be a man of learning, he may be what you please, but, most assuredly, he cannot be a minister of Christ. I shall thank you, dear sir, to point out to me how, in thus believing, we are guilty of superstition.

Having explained to you, what we believe of the Church, and the Ministry of Jesus Christ, I shall now, in a brief manner, lay before you some of the particular tenets of the Holy Catholic Church—those, I mean, which distinguish that church from all others. I begin with confession.

CONFESSION.

This, I know, is the greatest stumbling block for