

tion on the wings of the wind, descends at last in showers of rain to water the earth; and is again restored undiminished to the deep, from which it had been extracted for so wise an end. Nor is it without design that the deep itself, that mighty mass of waters, has been salted throughout, lest Ocean, rotting in his bed, should send forth vapours of contagion, and breathe infection and death over all the world.

These are wonders, which we every day witness, as we may thousands and thousands more. And if we but consider them attentively, they will suffice to make us doubt of nothing revealed, however difficult, or even impossible it may seem to us; when we reflect that God is the agent, whom all his works proclaim omnipotent. Or if these suffice not, then may it be said of us with truth, that, even when we see signs and wonders, we believe not.

Let us at least be more humble and docile believing without hesitation what God has been pleased to reveal to us; and at the same time practising what we believe. Then shall our faith be that faith, which is acceptable to him, being not a faith in word, but indeed also a lively faith's working by charity. If in this manner we continue to believe in God, whom we see not now, we shall one day see and enjoy him in whom we have believed; and be put in full possession of that never ending bliss, which he has promised to the true believer as the reward of his faith.

THE LEAST PREFERRED BY OMNIPOTENCE TO THE GREATEST.

But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he might confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that he might confound the strong; and the mean things of the world and the contemptible, hath God chosen; and the things which are not; that he might destroy those which are: in order that no flesh might glory in his sight.—1. Cor. 127.

To have created all things out of nothing, was the exclusive operation of Omnipotence: and the more does any thing great or good appear the effect of Omnipotence, the less it is in its beginning, and the meaner the origin, from which it is derived.—Hence it is that God, to manifest his power, seems invariably to choose the least things, as instrumental in his hands, to produce the greatest: the weakest, to produce the strongest: the silliest, meanest, most contemptible, and even that which is scarce worth the rating as any thing at all, to produce what is supereminently grand, august, noble and excellent. Thus man by his nature was greatly inferior to the angels, even in his perfect state before his fall: much more so in his fallen and degraded state. Yet God has caused from that very nature, which constituted his inferiority, and even from the degradation of that nature, a dignity to accrue to him, which raises him not only to a level with those glorious spirits; but which even places him above them all. For, by the mystery of the incarnation, in which the Deity himself stoops to take upon himself man's nature, and so to be-

come his brother; man is raised to the dignity of being a kinsman and a brother to God. And, in the person of Jesus Christ, he is identified with God himself: for while he is perfect man, he is perfect God, the second person of the blessed Trinity, whom the angels must all adore. *Et adorant eum omnes angeli Dei.* Heb. i. 6. Psalm xcvi. 8. Thus by humbling himself so much in order to raise us up, poor sinful worms, from our lowly, abject and wretched state, he has exalted us far above even the original state from which we fell; and made our very guilt, for which he came to atone; our very degradation itself, which he came to repair; the cause of our greater dignity and exaltation. *Ubi abundavit delictum, superabundavit gratia.* Rom. v. 20, "Where sin has abounded," says the apostles, "grace has superabounded."

David, a shepherd boy, a mere stripling, is chosen, preferably to all the great and mighty ones, in Israel, not only to be his country's victorious champion, but also its mightiest monarch, its greatest prophet and the head of the regal race, of which the Messiah was to be born.

Nay the more the Deity intends to exalt the humanity he assumes, the more he previously humbles and debases it in the eyes of the world: in so much that, as the prophet says, *he became as a worm and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.* Psalm xxi. 7.

How weak and abject, poor and ignorant were the twelve individuals, whom he chose to be the propagators of his holy religion over all the earth! Yet how great was the undertaking, with which he entrusted them! And how glorious its accomplishment!

But it is not only among rational and moral agents, that God chooses the least and meanest for the greatest and most noble ends. He also pitches upon the most insignificant and trifling objects in the physical world, in order to annex to them in a figurative and conditional sense, the most important consequences. The fruit of a certain tree, only an apple, was singled out by him to be the occasion of our happiness or misery for time and eternity. The eating of it against his command, has brought sin and death, and all their unhappy consequences, into the world; and has also given occasion to God, who alone can bring good out of evil, to shew forth the wonders of his infinite mercy towards us. Hence it seems that as a tree and its fruit, eaten in defiance of his prohibition, has proved the instrument of our ruin; so has he selected, in the tree of the cross, and in the heavenly and mystical fruit it bore, and of which he now commands us to eat, (*John vi. 55.*) the selfsame object to be the instrument of our salvation: to shew us that with any thing he can do all he pleases; even turn our greatest bane to our chiefest advantage; bringing forth eternal happiness from endless misery, and life itself from its contrary death. The Church in the preface for Passion-Sunday, addresses Almighty God in the following remarkable strain: *Qui salutem humani generis in ligno crucis constituit: ut unde mors ardeatur, inde vita re-*

*surget: et qui in ligno vincebat, in ligno quoque vinceretur.* "Who hast annexed the salvation of mankind to the tree of the cross; in order that life might spring afresh from that which proved the source of death; and that he who conquered in the tree, might himself be conquered in the tree."

Numberless instances might be pointed out in the old law of the meanest trifles, considered in themselves to which was annexed the greatest consequence; on account of their figurative meaning, and the allusion they made to some mystery to be revealed, or some grace or spiritual favour to be imparted, under the dispensation of the Redeemer.

What immense consequence is not still attached to the short and simple ceremony of Baptism: and how much is made to depend upon a drop of water sprinkled on us, and a few words repeated over us at the time! The great graces communicated to us by means of this and the other sacraments, the validity of which depends on their administration by the right minister, and the scrupulous observance of their proper matter and form: shew us from what nothings, as it were, Almighty God is wont to bring forth the greatest and most stupendous goods: and convince us that every thing, however insignificant of itself, becomes of the highest importance, when enjoined by him.

THE RULE OF FAITH.

*Et hæc eris vobis directa via, ita ut stulti non errent per eam.* *Isaius xxxv. 8.*

*And this shall be to you a straight way, so that even fools may not err therein.*

The grand discriminating principle between Catholics and others, is their rule of Faith. Protestants admit as their rule merely the Scripture, as interpreted by each individual in the sense he thinks the truest: and thence the cause of perpetual disagreement among them concerning the real meaning of the text. Catholics admit as their rule of faith the same Scripture, not as interpreted by one's self or by any private or particular individual; but as unanimously understood, and invariably explained by the Pastors of the Church: together with certain traditional truths, which have been universally received and carefully handed down to them from the beginning; one of which is, (what Protestants themselves admit,) that the Scripture is inspired writing, and the sure word of God.—This, indeed, seems the very rule of faith, laid down by Jesus Christ himself, when he commanded all to hear the Church, (*Matt. xviii. 16.*) and to attend to the voice of his pastors instructing, with the same deference, as one would to his own. *Luke x. 16.* Faith, says St. Paul, comes by the hearing. *Fides ex auditu.* Rom. x. 17.—It is not the result of one's own reading and investigation, as the very word *Revelation* implies: for what is discovered by one's own lectures and study cannot surely be called revealed.

In the Christian system, that which has been revealed, not discovered, is the object of our belief; and it becomes a proper object, when once the au-