

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH

by Henry E. Manning

Manning's theological work celebrating the victory and triumph of the Church through Christ's redemptive work, emphasizing the Church's role in manifesting the knowledge of Christ to the world.

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We give thanks unto God, who maketh us always to triumph in Christ Jesus, and manifesteth the odor of the knowledge of Him by us in every place. For we are a good odor of Christ unto God, both in them that are saved and in them that perish; in the one indeed an odor of life, in the other an odor of death unto death.—2 Corinthians 2:14-16. (Douay Version.)

Such was the confidence of the Apostle in the face of all that was most hostile, mighty, and triumphant in the judgment of this world. He was confident that through God his mission in the world was being accomplished, that the Word of God was triumphing over all the power of man. They may well have said to him, "What is this triumph you speak of? If this be triumph, what is defeat? You were stoned the other day in Lystra; you were imprisoned at Philippi; you were scourged at Jerusalem; you were saved out of the hands of the people only by Roman soldiers; you were confounded by the philosophers at Athens; and you were refuted out of the holy Scriptures by the Jews of Berea. If this is triumph, you are welcome to it." Such, no doubt, was the lordly and confident language of men in the face of the apostles of Jesus Christ then, and such is the language of confidence with which the world looks on the Catholic Church at this hour. It counts it to be a comedy played out, a stale medieval superstition, and a name that is trampled in the earth. In every age the Church has been militant and in warfare. It is under the same law of suffering which crucified its divine Head. His throne was a cross, and His crown was of thorns. Nevertheless He triumphed, and He triumphs still, and shall triumph to the end. And so at this moment, in this nineteenth century, in the century of modern civilization, of light, of progress, of scientific affectation, the Catholic Church is derided. They say to us, "Look at the Catholic Church in Germany; look at it in Italy; the head of the Church dethroned; and not a spot on earth for the incarnation to set its foot upon. If this be triumph you are welcome to it." Our answer is: "Yes, even now we triumph always and in every place. The Catholic Church is triumphing now in America, and in Ireland, and in the colonies of the British empire; aye, and in the midst of the confusions in Spain, and in France through revolution after revolution, and in the furnace of infidelity; aye, and in Germany, in the midst of all that the might of man can do against it; and in Italy too, where the head of the Church is morally a prisoner, it is triumphing even now." But how can I verify this assertion? It would be enough indeed to quote the words of the apostle, but I hope to do more. The world esteems the triumph of the Church to be in wealth, power, glory, honor, public sway over empires and nations. There was a time indeed when the world laid these things at the feet of the apostles of Jesus Christ. There was a time when the Catholic Church and the Christian world knew how to sanctify the society of men; but there is this difference—the world then believed, and the world now is apostate. Nevertheless, there is a triumph in the Christian world and there is a triumph in the anti-Christian world; and what is it? It is that the Church in every age and in every condition, and in the midst of all antagonists, fulfils its mission and accomplishes its work, and no power of man can hinder it. Men may, as we shall see hereafter, to their own destruction, resist the mission of the Church, but its work will be accomplished nevertheless, and accomplished even in

them; and its work will be a good odor of Christ unto God both in those that are saved and in those that perish. The world has neither tests nor measures by which to understand what the mission and the work of the Church are; but they who see by the light of faith have both. Let us examine, then, what is its mission, what is its work, and how it is fulfilled.

First of all, the mission of the Church among men is this—to be a witness for God, and for the incarnation of God in the face of the world. Our Divine Lord said of Himself: “For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony unto the truth.” As it was with Him, so it is with His Church; and therefore He said to His apostles: “You shall be witnesses unto me,” and St. John said: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands handled, of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and do bear witness, and declare unto you, the life eternal which was with the Father, and hath appeared unto us; that is to say, the manifestation of God in the flesh, the incarnation of the Son of God.” The Church was the witness of this divine fact to the world, and it is witness to this hour. I may say it is an eyewitness. It was eyewitness of what it declares. It was an ear-witness of what it affirms. I may say in truth that the Church of God, which testifies at this hour, saw the Son of God, and heard His words, and was witness of His miracles. So St. Peter expressly declares, speaking of His transfiguration: “We have not, by artificial fables, made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eye-witnesses of his greatness. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, this voice coming down to him from the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And his voice we heard brought from heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount.” More than this: it was a witness of the day of Pentecost, and upon it the Holy Ghost descended. It heard the sound of the mighty wind and it saw the tongues of fire. The Church therefore testifies at this day as an ear-witness and an eyewitness of the divine facts which it declares. And how can this be said? Because that which the apostles saw and heard they delivered to others who believed in them upon a full test and knowledge of their truth, and those who received their testimony held it as a sacred trust and declared it to those who came after. From age to age the testimony of the apostles has descended unbroken. The intrinsic certainty of their witness, resting on their own eyewitness and ear-witness of the facts, has not diminished by a shade, jot, or tittle in the lapse of time, and the external evidence of that fact has multiplied and extended throughout all time and throughout the world. Therefore the testimony of the apostles to these divine realities and truths is as living and fresh at this day as it was in the beginning. Then twelve men testified; now the nations of the world, united in one body by faith and by baptism, take up and perpetuate that testimony. And part of that testimony is this—that when the Son of God ascended into heaven, as they saw Him ascend, He fulfilled His promise that He would send the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost, to abide with them forever; that when one divine Teacher had gone up to His Father’s throne, another should come in His stead; that the world should never be without a divine Person and a divine Teacher in the midst of it; and that the Spirit of Truth by which they were united to their divine Head in heaven should unite them also to each other as His members in one mystical body, and should form to Himself a dwelling-place in which to abide forever. As the soul abides in the body of the man, so the Holy Ghost abides in the body of the Church. It is the sanctuary in which He dwells; the organ by which He speaks, so that the words of our Divine Lord are fulfilled to the very letter—“He that heareth you heareth me;” for the voice of the head and that of the body, as St. Augustine says, are one and the same voice. As they make one moral person, so their voice

is identical, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit keeps the voice of the Church always in perfect harmony with the voice of its divine Head, fulfilling the promise of the Lord by His prophet: “My spirit which is upon thee and my word which I put in thy mouth, shall never depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed from this time and forever.” Thus, then, the mission of the Church is fulfilled always; whether the world believe or disbelieve, whether it gainsay or assent, it matters not; the testimony of the Church forever triumphs in every place.

Another part of the mission of the Church is this—to teach the doctrines of Jesus Christ in the midst of all the controversies and contradictions of men. In the face of all the errors and heresies of men there is one divine Teacher perpetually declaring the same immutable truth. In the clamor and confusion of the human voices of philosophers and human guides, of the scribes and Pharisees of the new laws, there is one divine voice—articulate, clear, and piercing—which cleaves through all the confusion, and is to be heard above the clamor of men and of nations—the voice of that one holy, Catholic, and Roman Church, spreading from the sunrise to the sunset, immutable in its doctrine, teaching the same truths identically in every place, and abiding always the same unchanging teacher in every age. This is a fact legible in human history. I need not offer proof of it from histories written by ourselves; it is proved by histories and controversies of those who are most opposed to us. There is an accusation which is repeated from age to age against the Catholic and Roman Church; and what is it? That it always persists in its old errors. I accept the accusation. Its persistence proves its immutability, and that which they account error we know to be the doctrine of Jesus Christ; because, as I have already shown from the Word of God, neither can the Catholic Church ever err in believing, nor can the Catholic Church err in teaching. These are two impossibilities, and they descend from one and the same divine truth. God, the Holy Ghost, abiding forever in the mystical body of Christ, illuminates the whole body of the faithful from the time of their baptism. From the time that the graces of faith, hope, and charity are infused into their souls, they are illuminated with the light of faith as the world is illuminated by the splendor of the sun at noonday; and the faithful throughout the world continue passively in their persistence in that one baptismal faith wherewith they were enlightened from their earliest consciousness. And further, they can never err in believing, because the Church which teaches them can never err in teaching. The episcopate throughout the world, which is the college of the apostles multiplied and expanded among all nations, has always the assistance of the Spirit of Truth to guide and preserve it, so that the errors of men and infirmities of our intellect never prevail over the light of faith by which the whole Episcopate and the Church is sustained in the revelation of the day of Pentecost. And more than this: nineteen general councils, from the first which declared the coequality and consubstantiality of the Son with the Father and the Holy Ghost, down to the last which declared the infallibility of the vicar of Jesus Christ,—those nineteen councils have been the organ of the Holy Ghost, preserving the truth in all ages; and the pontiffs, two hundred and fifty-seven in number, have also been guided and assisted by the same Spirit of Truth; so that no doctrine of faith and morals from their hand and from their lips has been out of harmony with the revelation of Jesus Christ. For these reasons the Church is fulfilling its mission, always and in every place, and it can say in every age, with a divine certainty of knowledge and with a divine authority of teaching: “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.”

Once more, and lastly: there is another part of the mission of the Church which never fails, and is never baffled—and that is, that the Church judges between the truth of God and the errors of men, and gives decision with divine certainty what is truth, what is falsehood, what is light and what is darkness. Here again the world, in the confusion of its discordant witnesses, bears testimony to our truth. The world disclaims altogether the presence of any divine teacher in the midst of us. It derides the very notion. There is not a sect or a communion, or a so-called church, which lays claim to this divine guidance. They say infallibility exists nowhere but in God. As the Pharisees said: “Who can forgive sins but God only?” thereby acknowledging the divinity of Him who forgave the palsied man. And while they say: “We have no infallibility in us; we do not claim it; we deny its existence on the face of the earth,” the one Teacher, who never varies in His voice, says: “He that heareth me heareth him that sent me.” It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and unto us that we should claim that infallibility, and we cite you before the tribunal of God to answer for your denial of that truth. We say further that no man knows that any revelation was ever made to man except through our testimony. You never saw the Word made flesh, you nor your forefathers; and you have no unbroken succession of witnesses who trace upward these eighteen hundred years to the day when the Holy Ghost descended with wind and fire; you are not in contact with the original revelation of God. How can you rise up and say: “This was revealed upwards of eighteen hundred years ago,” when you have no proof to give, except that which you borrow from me, that the Son of God ever came into the world? You take my witness for the fact of Christianity, and you then contradict me when I teach you what the doctrines of Christianity are. And if men appeal to the Scriptures, our answer is the same. How do you know the Scriptures were ever written? How can you prove that there ever was a book called the Word of God? You had it from me; you snatched it out of my hand, and you then read it and interpret it in contradiction to my teaching. How do you know that there were four greater prophets and twelve lesser in the Old Testament; that there were four evangelists and fourteen epistles of St. Paul in the New? Who told you all these things? You had them all from me—from me alone, to whom these Scriptures were committed in custody and in guardianship; from me, who preserved and handed them on to this day. You, who are denying the inspiration of this book and of that, of this text and of that text, and who are gnawing away, as a moth fretteth a garment, the whole written word of God, you rise up and tell us: “This is the meaning of the holy Scriptures,” and you reject the holy Catholic faith.

Dear brethren, it needs great patience to hear these things; nevertheless, the judge is always calm and patient while he is fulfilling his work among men, and that because it is a grave thing to be the odor of life unto life and of death unto death to the eternal souls of men. And when men appeal to antiquity and tell us that “this is not the primitive tradition,” the Church answers: Were you ever in antiquity, or anyone that belongs to you? I was there, and as a perpetual witness antiquity is to me nothing but my early days. Antiquity exists in my consciousness to this hour, as men grown to riper years remember their childhood. Men of the world know that the contemporaneous interpretation of a law is the most authentic and certain interpretation. But I have the contemporaneous interpretation of holy Scripture; and more than this, men who practise before human tribunals know that the continuous usage of a country is the interpretation of its laws written and unwritten. But I have the contemporaneous and the continuous usage of the Church of God. The seven sacraments are institutions of Jesus Christ and every one of them interprets a cluster of truths. The existence of the Church itself is an interpretation of the words: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The jurisdiction that I

have over the world, which the hearts of men recognize and to which their consciences respond, is the interpretation of the words: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." But lastly there is another appeal which men make in this day. We are now told that scientific history is the test of truth; and I saw the other day in a document having great pretension from a certain body of men who are troubling Germany and attempting to trouble even England with the name of Old Catholics, that the way to know the pure faith of Jesus Christ is to interpret history by science. Alas, as I said before, the world is full of pretensions to science; but those who claim to be Catholics, and who yet appeal from the living voice of the Catholic Church to any other tribunal whatsoever, are all of them identical in their principle, and that principle is heresy. Luther appealed from the voice of the Catholic Church to Scripture, and thereby became a heretic. There are others who appeal to antiquity, and the appeal is the same—it is an appeal from the living voice, from the divine authority of the Church, to something of their own choice and creation. It matters not to what the appeal is made. That which constitutes both the treason of the act and the heresy of the principle is that they appeal from the living voice, that is from the divine voice. This it is that is being done at this moment by a body of men who profess to be and to intend to live and die Catholics; and what is more, to purify and reform the Church by staying in it. What is their appeal? Their appeal is to history, to scientific history; that is, to history interpreted by themselves. Luther was much more direct and much wiser. He appealed to a book which is certainly written by the Holy Ghost; they appeal to I know not what books, but to books certainly written only by men, and not by the Spirit of God; to human history, the authenticity of which and the purity of the text of which no one can guarantee; and even this they interpret for themselves.

Now bear with me further if I dwell a few moments longer upon this. At the time I speak, in the old Catholic city of Cologne there is assembled together a number of these men—some four or five hundred—with a handful of unhappy priests, perhaps six or eight, of whom the greater part had already the note of unsoundness upon them before they took their deadly step. And what are they? What are these men who are rising up to purify the Church? What do they believe? Some believe all the Council of Trent, but not the Council of the Vatican. Some believe the Church to be infallible, but not its Head; others propose to reject the invocation of saints, and purgatory, and compulsory confession, and I know not what. Others ask for either half or altogether rationalism. And who have they to assist them? Excommunicated Jansenists from Holland, and members, I grieve to say, of the Established Church from England; and those chosen, as it were, by a happy fatality, one the most extreme of old-fashioned high-church orthodoxy—an estimable and excellent man, whose person I both respect and love; and another whose advanced rationalism is such that even his own brethren can hardly forbear protesting against him. So that we have assembled in this congress, which is to reform and purify the Catholic and Roman Church of all ages, men so irreconcilably in contradiction with themselves that they cannot touch a religious doctrine without discord, and they cannot find anything on which to unite except in opposition to the one immutable truth. There was a day when all the Scribes, and all the Pharisees, and all the Herodians, and all the hypocrites, and all the men who could agree in anything else or at any other time, were united together in one conspiracy, and though their witnesses did not agree together and their discordant voices could not be combined they all had one will and one purpose against the Son of God and against His truth. These men, I bear witness—many of them at least—have no such intention; but we know from the Word of God that neither had they who crucified our divine Master a knowledge

of what they did: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Which none of the princes of this world knew; for if they had known it they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." But they are at this moment fulfilling the very words of the apostles: "And to some the testimony of the Church is life unto life, to others death unto death."

Such then, is the mission and the work of the Church—to bear its witness, to teach and to judge; and in doing this, whether men will believe or whether men will not believe, it is accomplishing its triumph in the world. The world forgets that there is not only salvation, but there is also judgment; and God, the just judge of all, is putting men on their trial. The Church is fulfilling its office by proposing the way of salvation to men, visibly to the eye by its own presence, audibly to the ear by its own teachings, clearly to the intellect by the evident truth of its doctrines. It is putting men upon trial and applying the test to their hearts. It tests their faith to see whether men will believe; it tests their candor to see whether they will choose God above all things; it tests their courage to know whether they are ready to take up their cross and follow their divine Master. The Church says to the men of this day: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it." And in saying this God is separating between nation and nation and between man and man. His "fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff will be burnt with unquenchable fire." "He that believeth and is baptized will be saved; but he that believeth not is condemned." "We thank God, who always maketh us to triumph in Christ Jesus and manifesteth the odor of him by us in every place;" for we now, at this hour, in the midst of the nineteenth century, in the midst of science and progress, are the odor of life unto life and the odor of death unto death. For the purpose of God in the world is this—to gather out, as He did of old, a people for His name. Among the Gentiles of the old world He chose Israel; so now amongst the nations of the new world He chooses those that believe. He knows the number of His elect and He calls them by their name. He proposes to them the way of salvation and puts all things necessary—truth and grace—within their reach. God is putting them on trial, and the Church in this is fulfilling its mission and accomplishing its work. The world is on its probation now. It has been for generations and generations driving God and Christianity out of its public life. Christianity is cancelled from its public law; Christianity is silent in the legislature; Christianity at this moment lingers in education, but men are endeavoring to close the doors of the schools against it and so to shut Christianity out of the knowledge of the rising generation. Wo to the people the tradition of whose Christian education is cut asunder! Wo to your children and to your posterity, if they are brought up without the knowledge of Christianity! The world is laboring with all its might, and all its fraud, and all its riches, and all its public authority, to accomplish this end. I do not say that the men who are doing it know what they do; but I affirm that they are doing what I say. Unbelievers like those who created the infidel revolution of France in the last century knew well what they were doing. "Let us destroy the accursed one," was the language in which they frankly spoke of Jesus Christ. Men are more refined in the present day. They talk only of the religious difficulty. "Let us evade or get around the religious difficulty;" and, under this plea of evading the religious difficulty, Christianity is to be excluded from our schools; that is to say, because grown men choose to controvert and contradict each other as to what is the truth of God, the little ones of Jesus Christ are to be robbed of their faith. Again, the world is separating its civil powers, its public authority from the unity of the faith and of the Church everywhere. It is making it a part of high and perfect legislation, of what we hear called in these days "progress and modern civilization," to separate the Church from the State, and the school from the Church. Progress has

deposed the Head of the Church; it has put in derision a crown of thorns upon his head; and it believes that at last it has the whole world to itself. This indeed is the triumph of the world. But meanwhile the Church is triumphing, though men know it not. The Church was never more widespread than at this moment; never more luminous in the eyes of men, never more explicitly known in its faith; never more united, vigorous, pure, and confident in its work. Its kingdom is not of this world: that is, it is not derived from it; the foundation of its jurisdiction is in eternity; the source of its truth is in the Holy Ghost, and its imperishable Head is the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. His kingdom is in the world, but not of it. The world may prosper and go its way; it may stop its ears against the voice of the divine witness to the truth; nevertheless that witness will be the odor of death unto death. And England also is on its probation. I bear witness that in England errors are vanishing away, as the snow melts before the sun—passing away, as the hard frosts before the coming of the spring. The errors which were once dominant, lordly, confident, and persecuting—where are they now? At this day men are proclaiming that they are not certain of what their forefathers bequeathed to them; that they cannot precisely tell what was the doctrine which was intended in the Thirty-nine Articles, and was incorporated in statute laws. They are no longer certain of these things; and I bear them witness that a gentler spirit and a kindlier disposition is working in the hearts of many. In the midst of this darkness, truth is rising again, and the old Catholic Church and faith, for which Ireland has stood inflexible as a martyr, with the aureola upon her head, at this day is multiplying the children of faith here and throughout the world. Here too in Lancashire, where the faith of England has never been extinct—where to this day the little children of our flock are the descendants of those who were martyrs and confessors some three hundred years ago—the lingering tradition of faith once more is embodied in the perfect hierarchy of the Church of God, in its perfect order, perfect unity, perfect jurisdiction, perfect authority. And, what is more, the men of England have learned to know it better. They have heard it speak; they have seen it worship; they have even knelt together with us before the same altar, perhaps hardly knowing what they did; and that because the Spirit of God is working for His truth, and multitudes will be saved. We are only in the twilight of the morning; but we can see Jesus standing on the shore, and there is a net in the hands of His apostles let down in the water. But when we are long gone to our rest, who can say what shall be the great draft of souls which shall be miraculously taken in England?

I must bear witness that in England there are tokens full of hope. England never rejected the holy Catholic faith. A tyrannous and guilty king, a corrupt and covetous court, men full of the conceit of false learning, schemers and intriguers, men that hungered to spoil the Church for their own enrichment—these tyrannized over the people of England. The people of England held to their faith and died for it. The people of England never rejected it. They were robbed of it; they were deprived of their inheritance, and their children were born disinherited of their faith; every century from that hour to this they have gone farther and farther from the light of the one truth. Poor English people! Bear with them—I speak as an Englishman—bear with them; they know not what they do in believing that we worship images, that we imbrued our hands in the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Let the men who write these things look at their own hands; there is blood enough upon them. But the English people do not believe these things now; they are passed away. And there has come in the place of these impostures a desire after truth—“Only let me find it;” a craving after unity—“Can we never make an end of these divisions?” a thirsting for the presence of Jesus Christ upon the altar—“Where can I find Him?” And what are all these aspirations? They are

the evidences of the good odor of life unto life. And if so, then, dear brethren, you that have the inheritance of faith are on your probation too. You are called to let the light of your faith shine like the day. The silent, penetrating, convincing light of a man who, knowing the faith, speaks it calmly, without controversy, without bickering, without contention, sheds a grace around him. As men that possess the greatest gift of God, and who desire to make everybody else share it to the full, so let your faith shine. And next, as you have faith, so you ought to have the warmth of charity. Where there is light, there is warmth; and where there is greater light there is greater warmth. Where there is perfect truth, there ought to be perfect charity. You who have the whole revelation of God ought to have the whole charity of God in you. Let your neighbors who are round about, even those who are not of the faith, feel that there is something in you—a warmth, a kindness, a sympathy and generosity which they find in no other man. And, lastly, let there be the fragrance of a holy life. This is the good odor of Christ unto God, and this diffuses life unto life wherever you go. You are upon this probation. Be worthy of the great gift which has been given to you. You have it in its fulness. Be then, worthy of its fulness, in faith and in charity. And now, dear brethren, in the midst of all the lordly triumph of the world, of all that which no doubt we shall hear to-morrow, be of good heart. As they said to the apostles so they will say to us: "If this be triumph, what can be defeat? We do not quarrel if you are content with these victories." Overhead there is a throne, and round about it are those whom no man can number; the powers and prerogatives of Him who sits upon that throne are working mightily in the world. There is one who sits above the water-flood, with all its confusions, whose voice penetrates through all the jangling contradictions of men. He is bringing to its fulfilment the purpose which from all eternity He has predestined. He knows His own by number and by name, and He will gather them out as the shepherd gathers his flock, and He will separate the goats from the sheep. He will reign until the whole of that work is accomplished. When it is done, and when the last of His elect has been gathered in, and the last of His redeemed has been made perfect, then He will manifest Himself to all men, and the world shall then know that He has triumphed always and in every place. The Triumph of the Church

We give thanks unto God, who maketh us always to triumph in Christ Jesus, and manifesteth the odor of the knowledge of Him by us in every place. For we are a good odor of Christ unto God, both in them that are saved and in them that perish; in the one indeed an odor of life, in the other an odor of death unto death.—2 Corinthians 2:14-16. (Douay Version.)

Such was the confidence of the Apostle in the face of all that was most hostile, mighty, and triumphant in the judgment of this world. He was confident that through God his mission in the world was being accomplished, that the Word of God was triumphing over all the power of man. They may well have said to him, "What is this triumph you speak of? If this be triumph, what is defeat? You were stoned the other day in Lystra; you were imprisoned at Philippi; you were scourged at Jerusalem; you were saved out of the hands of the people only by Roman soldiers; you were confounded by the philosophers at Athens; and you were refuted out of the holy Scriptures by the Jews of Berea. If this is triumph, you are welcome to it." Such, no doubt, was the lordly and confident language of men in the face of the apostles of Jesus Christ then, and such is the language of confidence with which the world looks on the Catholic Church at this hour. It counts it to be a comedy played out, a stale medieval superstition, and a name that is trampled in the earth. In every age the Church has been militant and in warfare. It is under the same law of suffering which crucified its divine Head. His throne was a cross, and His crown was of thorns.

Nevertheless He triumphed, and He triumphs still, and shall triumph to the end. And so at this moment, in this nineteenth century, in the century of modern civilization, of light, of progress, of scientific affectation, the Catholic Church is derided. They say to us, "Look at the Catholic Church in Germany; look at it in Italy; the head of the Church dethroned; and not a spot on earth for the incarnation to set its foot upon. If this be triumph you are welcome to it." Our answer is: "Yes, even now we triumph always and in every place. The Catholic Church is triumphing now in America, and in Ireland, and in the colonies of the British empire; aye, and in the midst of the confusions in Spain, and in France through revolution after revolution, and in the furnace of infidelity; aye, and in Germany, in the midst of all that the might of man can do against it; and in Italy too, where the head of the Church is morally a prisoner, it is triumphing even now." But how can I verify this assertion? It would be enough indeed to quote the words of the apostle, but I hope to do more. The world esteems the triumph of the Church to be in wealth, power, glory, honor, public sway over empires and nations. There was a time indeed when the world laid these things at the feet of the apostles of Jesus Christ. There was a time when the Catholic Church and the Christian world knew how to sanctify the society of men; but there is this difference—the world then believed, and the world now is apostate. Nevertheless, there is a triumph in the Christian world and there is a triumph in the anti-Christian world; and what is it? It is that the Church in every age and in every condition, and in the midst of all antagonists, fulfils its mission and accomplishes its work, and no power of man can hinder it. Men may, as we shall see hereafter, to their own destruction, resist the mission of the Church, but its work will be accomplished nevertheless, and accomplished even in them; and its work will be a good odor of Christ unto God both in those that are saved and in those that perish. The world has neither tests nor measures by which to understand what the mission and the work of the Church are; but they who see by the light of faith have both. Let us examine, then, what is its mission, what is its work, and how it is fulfilled.

First of all, the mission of the Church among men is this—to be a witness for God, and for the incarnation of God in the face of the world. Our Divine Lord said of Himself: "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony unto the truth." As it was with Him, so it is with His Church; and therefore He said to His apostles: "You shall be witnesses unto me," and St. John said: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands handled, of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and do bear witness, and declare unto you, the life eternal which was with the Father, and hath appeared unto us; that is to say, the manifestation of God in the flesh, the incarnation of the Son of God." The Church was the witness of this divine fact to the world, and it is witness to this hour. I may say it is an eyewitness. It was eyewitness of what it declares. It was an ear-witness of what it affirms. I may say in truth that the Church of God, which testifies at this hour, saw the Son of God, and heard His words, and was witness of His miracles. So St. Peter expressly declares, speaking of His transfiguration: "We have not, by artificial fables, made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eye-witnesses of his greatness. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, this voice coming down to him from the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And his voice we heard brought from heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount." More than this: it was a witness of the day of Pentecost, and upon it the Holy Ghost descended. It heard the sound of the mighty wind and it saw the tongues of fire. The Church therefore testifies at this day as an ear-witness and an eyewitness of the divine facts which it declares. And how can this be

said? Because that which the apostles saw and heard they delivered to others who believed in them upon a full test and knowledge of their truth, and those who received their testimony held it as a sacred trust and declared it to those who came after. From age to age the testimony of the apostles has descended unbroken. The intrinsic certainty of their witness, resting on their own eyewitness and ear-witness of the facts, has not diminished by a shade, jot, or tittle in the lapse of time, and the external evidence of that fact has multiplied and extended throughout all time and throughout the world. Therefore the testimony of the apostles to these divine realities and truths is as living and fresh at this day as it was in the beginning. Then twelve men testified; now the nations of the world, united in one body by faith and by baptism, take up and perpetuate that testimony. And part of that testimony is this—that when the Son of God ascended into heaven, as they saw Him ascend, He fulfilled His promise that He would send the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost, to abide with them forever; that when one divine Teacher had gone up to His Father's throne, another should come in His stead; that the world should never be without a divine Person and a divine Teacher in the midst of it; and that the Spirit of Truth by which they were united to their divine Head in heaven should unite them also to each other as His members in one mystical body, and should form to Himself a dwelling-place in which to abide forever. As the soul abides in the body of the man, so the Holy Ghost abides in the body of the Church. It is the sanctuary in which He dwells; the organ by which He speaks, so that the words of our Divine Lord are fulfilled to the very letter—"He that heareth you heareth me;" for the voice of the head and that of the body, as St. Augustine says, are one and the same voice. As they make one moral person, so their voice is identical, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit keeps the voice of the Church always in perfect harmony with the voice of its divine Head, fulfilling the promise of the Lord by His prophet: "My spirit which is upon thee and my word which I put in thy mouth, shall never depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed from this time and forever." Thus, then, the mission of the Church is fulfilled always; whether the world believe or disbelieve, whether it gainsay or assent, it matters not; the testimony of the Church forever triumphs in every place.

Another part of the mission of the Church is this—to teach the doctrines of Jesus Christ in the midst of all the controversies and contradictions of men. In the face of all the errors and heresies of men there is one divine Teacher perpetually declaring the same immutable truth. In the clamor and confusion of the human voices of philosophers and human guides, of the scribes and Pharisees of the new laws, there is one divine voice—articulate, clear, and piercing—which cleaves through all the confusion, and is to be heard above the clamor of men and of nations—the voice of that one holy, Catholic, and Roman Church, spreading from the sunrise to the sunset, immutable in its doctrine, teaching the same truths identically in every place, and abiding always the same unchanging teacher in every age. This is a fact legible in human history. I need not offer proof of it from histories written by ourselves; it is proved by histories and controversies of those who are most opposed to us. There is an accusation which is repeated from age to age against the Catholic and Roman Church; and what is it? That it always persists in its old errors. I accept the accusation. Its persistence proves its immutability, and that which they account error we know to be the doctrine of Jesus Christ; because, as I have already shown from the Word of God, neither can the Catholic Church ever err in believing, nor can the Catholic Church err in teaching. These are two impossibilities, and they descend from one and the same divine truth. God, the Holy Ghost, abiding forever in the mystical body of Christ, illuminates the whole body of the faithful from

the time of their baptism. From the time that the graces of faith, hope, and charity are infused into their souls, they are illuminated with the light of faith as the world is illuminated by the splendor of the sun at noonday; and the faithful throughout the world continue passively in their persistence in that one baptismal faith wherewith they were enlightened from their earliest consciousness. And further, they can never err in believing, because the Church which teaches them can never err in teaching. The episcopate throughout the world, which is the college of the apostles multiplied and expanded among all nations, has always the assistance of the Spirit of Truth to guide and preserve it, so that the errors of men and infirmities of our intellect never prevail over the light of faith by which the whole Episcopate and the Church is sustained in the revelation of the day of Pentecost. And more than this: nineteen general councils, from the first which declared the coequality and consubstantiality of the Son with the Father and the Holy Ghost, down to the last which declared the infallibility of the vicar of Jesus Christ,—those nineteen councils have been the organ of the Holy Ghost, preserving the truth in all ages; and the pontiffs, two hundred and fifty-seven in number, have also been guided and assisted by the same Spirit of Truth; so that no doctrine of faith and morals from their hand and from their lips has been out of harmony with the revelation of Jesus Christ. For these reasons the Church is fulfilling its mission, always and in every place, and it can say in every age, with a divine certainty of knowledge and with a divine authority of teaching: “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.”

Once more, and lastly: there is another part of the mission of the Church which never fails, and is never baffled—and that is, that the Church judges between the truth of God and the errors of men, and gives decision with divine certainty what is truth, what is falsehood, what is light and what is darkness. Here again the world, in the confusion of its discordant witnesses, bears testimony to our truth. The world disclaims altogether the presence of any divine teacher in the midst of us. It derides the very notion. There is not a sect or a communion, or a so-called church, which lays claim to this divine guidance. They say infallibility exists nowhere but in God. As the Pharisees said: “Who can forgive sins but God only?” thereby acknowledging the divinity of Him who forgave the palsied man. And while they say: “We have no infallibility in us; we do not claim it; we deny its existence on the face of the earth,” the one Teacher, who never varies in His voice, says: “He that heareth me heareth him that sent me.” It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and unto us that we should claim that infallibility, and we cite you before the tribunal of God to answer for your denial of that truth. We say further that no man knows that any revelation was ever made to man except through our testimony. You never saw the Word made flesh, you nor your forefathers; and you have no unbroken succession of witnesses who trace upward these eighteen hundred years to the day when the Holy Ghost descended with wind and fire; you are not in contact with the original revelation of God. How can you rise up and say: “This was revealed upwards of eighteen hundred years ago,” when you have no proof to give, except that which you borrow from me, that the Son of God ever came into the world? You take my witness for the fact of Christianity, and you then contradict me when I teach you what the doctrines of Christianity are. And if men appeal to the Scriptures, our answer is the same. How do you know the Scriptures were ever written? How can you prove that there ever was a book called the Word of God? You had it from me; you snatched it out of my hand, and you then read it and interpret it in contradiction to my teaching. How do you know that there were four greater prophets and twelve lesser in the Old Testament; that there were four evangelists and fourteen epistles of St. Paul in the New? Who told you all these things? You had them all from me—from me alone, to whom these Scriptures were committed in custody

and in guardianship; from me, who preserved and handed them on to this day. You, who are denying the inspiration of this book and of that, of this text and of that text, and who are gnawing away, as a moth fretteth a garment, the whole written word of God, you rise up and tell us: "This is the meaning of the holy Scriptures," and you reject the holy Catholic faith.

Dear brethren, it needs great patience to hear these things; nevertheless, the judge is always calm and patient while he is fulfilling his work among men, and that because it is a grave thing to be the odor of life unto life and of death unto death to the eternal souls of men. And when men appeal to antiquity and tell us that "this is not the primitive tradition," the Church answers: Were you ever in antiquity, or anyone that belongs to you? I was there, and as a perpetual witness antiquity is to me nothing but my early days. Antiquity exists in my consciousness to this hour, as men grown to riper years remember their childhood. Men of the world know that the contemporaneous interpretation of a law is the most authentic and certain interpretation. But I have the contemporaneous interpretation of holy Scripture; and more than this, men who practise before human tribunals know that the continuous usage of a country is the interpretation of its laws written and unwritten. But I have the contemporaneous and the continuous usage of the Church of God. The seven sacraments are institutions of Jesus Christ and every one of them interprets a cluster of truths. The existence of the Church itself is an interpretation of the words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The jurisdiction that I have over the world, which the hearts of men recognize and to which their consciences respond, is the interpretation of the words: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." But lastly there is another appeal which men make in this day. We are now told that scientific history is the test of truth; and I saw the other day in a document having great pretension from a certain body of men who are troubling Germany and attempting to trouble even England with the name of Old Catholics, that the way to know the pure faith of Jesus Christ is to interpret history by science. Alas, as I said before, the world is full of pretensions to science; but those who claim to be Catholics, and who yet appeal from the living voice of the Catholic Church to any other tribunal whatsoever, are all of them identical in their principle, and that principle is heresy. Luther appealed from the voice of the Catholic Church to Scripture, and thereby became a heretic. There are others who appeal to antiquity, and the appeal is the same—it is an appeal from the living voice, from the divine authority of the Church, to something of their own choice and creation. It matters not to what the appeal is made. That which constitutes both the treason of the act and the heresy of the principle is that they appeal from the living voice, that is from the divine voice. This it is that is being done at this moment by a body of men who profess to be and to intend to live and die Catholics; and what is more, to purify and reform the Church by staying in it. What is their appeal? Their appeal is to history, to scientific history; that is, to history interpreted by themselves. Luther was much more direct and much wiser. He appealed to a book which is certainly written by the Holy Ghost; they appeal to I know not what books, but to books certainly written only by men, and not by the Spirit of God; to human history, the authenticity of which and the purity of the text of which no one can guarantee; and even this they interpret for themselves.

Now bear with me further if I dwell a few moments longer upon this. At the time I speak, in the old Catholic city of Cologne there is assembled together a number of these men—some four or five hundred—with a handful of unhappy priests, perhaps six or eight, of whom the greater part had

already the note of unsoundness upon them before they took their deadly step. And what are they? What are these men who are rising up to purify the Church? What do they believe? Some believe all the Council of Trent, but not the Council of the Vatican. Some believe the Church to be infallible, but not its Head; others propose to reject the invocation of saints, and purgatory, and compulsory confession, and I know not what. Others ask for either half or altogether rationalism. And who have they to assist them? Excommunicated Jansenists from Holland, and members, I grieve to say, of the Established Church from England; and those chosen, as it were, by a happy fatality, one the most extreme of old-fashioned high-church orthodoxy—an estimable and excellent man, whose person I both respect and love; and another whose advanced rationalism is such that even his own brethren can hardly forbear protesting against him. So that we have assembled in this congress, which is to reform and purify the Catholic and Roman Church of all ages, men so irreconcilably in contradiction with themselves that they cannot touch a religious doctrine without discord, and they cannot find anything on which to unite except in opposition to the one immutable truth. There was a day when all the Scribes, and all the Pharisees, and all the Herodians, and all the hypocrites, and all the men who could agree in anything else or at any other time, were united together in one conspiracy, and though their witnesses did not agree together and their discordant voices could not be combined they all had one will and one purpose against the Son of God and against His truth. These men, I bear witness—many of them at least—have no such intention; but we know from the Word of God that neither had they who crucified our divine Master a knowledge of what they did: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” “Which none of the princes of this world knew; for if they had known it they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.” But they are at this moment fulfilling the very words of the apostles: “And to some the testimony of the Church is life unto life, to others death unto death.”

Such then, is the mission and the work of the Church—to bear its witness, to teach and to judge; and in doing this, whether men will believe or whether men will not believe, it is accomplishing its triumph in the world. The world forgets that there is not only salvation, but there is also judgment; and God, the just judge of all, is putting men on their trial. The Church is fulfilling its office by proposing the way of salvation to men, visibly to the eye by its own presence, audibly to the ear by its own teachings, clearly to the intellect by the evident truth of its doctrines. It is putting men upon trial and applying the test to their hearts. It tests their faith to see whether men will believe; it tests their candor to see whether they will choose God above all things; it tests their courage to know whether they are ready to take up their cross and follow their divine Master. The Church says to the men of this day: “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it.” And in saying this God is separating between nation and nation and between man and man. His “fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff will be burnt with unquenchable fire.” “He that believeth and is baptized will be saved; but he that believeth not is condemned.” “We thank God, who always maketh us to triumph in Christ Jesus and manifesteth the odor of him by us in every place;” for we now, at this hour, in the midst of the nineteenth century, in the midst of science and progress, are the odor of life unto life and the odor of death unto death. For the purpose of God in the world is this—to gather out, as He did of old, a people for His name. Among the Gentiles of the old world He chose Israel; so now amongst the nations of the new world He chooses those that believe. He knows the number of His elect and He calls them by their name. He proposes to them the way of salvation and puts all things necessary—truth and grace—within their reach. God is

putting them on trial, and the Church in this is fulfilling its mission and accomplishing its work. The world is on its probation now. It has been for generations and generations driving God and Christianity out of its public life. Christianity is cancelled from its public law; Christianity is silent in the legislature; Christianity at this moment lingers in education, but men are endeavoring to close the doors of the schools against it and so to shut Christianity out of the knowledge of the rising generation. Wo to the people the tradition of whose Christian education is cut asunder! Wo to your children and to your posterity, if they are brought up without the knowledge of Christianity! The world is laboring with all its might, and all its fraud, and all its riches, and all its public authority, to accomplish this end. I do not say that the men who are doing it know what they do; but I affirm that they are doing what I say. Unbelievers like those who created the infidel revolution of France in the last century knew well what they were doing. "Let us destroy the accursed one," was the language in which they frankly spoke of Jesus Christ. Men are more refined in the present day. They talk only of the religious difficulty. "Let us evade or get around the religious difficulty;" and, under this plea of evading the religious difficulty, Christianity is to be excluded from our schools; that is to say, because grown men choose to controvert and contradict each other as to what is the truth of God, the little ones of Jesus Christ are to be robbed of their faith. Again, the world is separating its civil powers, its public authority from the unity of the faith and of the Church everywhere. It is making it a part of high and perfect legislation, of what we hear called in these days "progress and modern civilization," to separate the Church from the State, and the school from the Church. Progress has deposed the Head of the Church; it has put in derision a crown of thorns upon his head; and it believes that at last it has the whole world to itself. This indeed is the triumph of the world. But meanwhile the Church is triumphing, though men know it not. The Church was never more widespread than at this moment; never more luminous in the eyes of men, never more explicitly known in its faith; never more united, vigorous, pure, and confident in its work. Its kingdom is not of this world: that is, it is not derived from it; the foundation of its jurisdiction is in eternity; the source of its truth is in the Holy Ghost, and its imperishable Head is the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. His kingdom is in the world, but not of it. The world may prosper and go its way; it may stop its ears against the voice of the divine witness to the truth; nevertheless that witness will be the odor of death unto death. And England also is on its probation. I bear witness that in England errors are vanishing away, as the snow melts before the sun—passing away, as the hard frosts before the coming of the spring. The errors which were once dominant, lordly, confident, and persecuting—where are they now? At this day men are proclaiming that they are not certain of what their forefathers bequeathed to them; that they cannot precisely tell what was the doctrine which was intended in the Thirty-nine Articles, and was incorporated in statute laws. They are no longer certain of these things; and I bear them witness that a gentler spirit and a kindlier disposition is working in the hearts of many. In the midst of this darkness, truth is rising again, and the old Catholic Church and faith, for which Ireland has stood inflexible as a martyr, with the aureola upon her head, at this day is multiplying the children of faith here and throughout the world. Here too in Lancashire, where the faith of England has never been extinct—where to this day the little children of our flock are the descendants of those who were martyrs and confessors some three hundred years ago—the lingering tradition of faith once more is embodied in the perfect hierarchy of the Church of God, in its perfect order, perfect unity, perfect jurisdiction, perfect authority. And, what is more, the men of England have learned to know it better. They have heard it speak; they have seen it worship; they have even knelt together with us before the same

altar, perhaps hardly knowing what they did; and that because the Spirit of God is working for His truth, and multitudes will be saved. We are only in the twilight of the morning; but we can see Jesus standing on the shore, and there is a net in the hands of His apostles let down in the water. But when we are long gone to our rest, who can say what shall be the great draft of souls which shall be miraculously taken in England?

I must bear witness that in England there are tokens full of hope. England never rejected the holy Catholic faith. A tyrannous and guilty king, a corrupt and covetous court, men full of the conceit of false learning, schemers and intriguers, men that hungered to spoil the Church for their own enrichment—these tyrannized over the people of England. The people of England held to their faith and died for it. The people of England never rejected it. They were robbed of it; they were deprived of their inheritance, and their children were born disinherited of their faith; every century from that hour to this they have gone farther and farther from the light of the one truth. Poor English people! Bear with them—I speak as an Englishman—bear with them; they know not what they do in believing that we worship images, that we imbrued our hands in the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Let the men who write these things look at their own hands; there is blood enough upon them. But the English people do not believe these things now; they are passed away. And there has come in the place of these impostures a desire after truth—“Only let me find it;” a craving after unity—“Can we never make an end of these divisions?” a thirsting for the presence of Jesus Christ upon the altar—“Where can I find Him?” And what are all these aspirations? They are the evidences of the good odor of life unto life. And if so, then, dear brethren, you that have the inheritance of faith are on your probation too. You are called to let the light of your faith shine like the day. The silent, penetrating, convincing light of a man who, knowing the faith, speaks it calmly, without controversy, without bickering, without contention, sheds a grace around him. As men that possess the greatest gift of God, and who desire to make everybody else share it to the full, so let your faith shine. And next, as you have faith, so you ought to have the warmth of charity. Where there is light, there is warmth; and where there is greater light there is greater warmth. Where there is perfect truth, there ought to be perfect charity. You who have the whole revelation of God ought to have the whole charity of God in you. Let your neighbors who are round about, even those who are not of the faith, feel that there is something in you—a warmth, a kindness, a sympathy and generosity which they find in no other man. And, lastly, let there be the fragrance of a holy life. This is the good odor of Christ unto God, and this diffuses life unto life wherever you go. You are upon this probation. Be worthy of the great gift which has been given to you. You have it in its fulness. Be then, worthy of its fulness, in faith and in charity. And now, dear brethren, in the midst of all the lordly triumph of the world, of all that which no doubt we shall hear to-morrow, be of good heart. As they said to the apostles so they will say to us: “If this be triumph, what can be defeat? We do not quarrel if you are content with these victories.” Overhead there is a throne, and round about it are those whom no man can number; the powers and prerogatives of Him who sits upon that throne are working mightily in the world. There is one who sits above the water-flood, with all its confusions, whose voice penetrates through all the jangling contradictions of men. He is bringing to its fulfilment the purpose which from all eternity He has predestined. He knows His own by number and by name, and He will gather them out as the shepherd gathers his flock, and He will separate the goats from the sheep. He will reign until the whole of that work is accomplished. When it is done, and when the last of His elect has been gathered in, and the last of His redeemed has been made perfect, then He will manifest Himself to all men, and the world shall then know

that He has triumphed always and in every place.

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