

philosophers will jeer and mock you." "I come to bend their understanding to the yoke of mysteries, and teach them to quell their passions. The philosophers will be my docile disciples." "But Caesar will not suffer a change in the religion and morals of the empire." "I come to strip Caesar of the sovereign pontificate, and I will degrade his ancestors from the rank they have assumed among the gods. I will destroy the temples where, in the name of so many gods, you adore so many vices." "And you believe that Caesar will tamely bear your injuries?" "Caesar will put me to death, but another Caesar will embrace my religion." "What! you pretend to create a race and have successors?" "That race shall spread over the world, and my successors shall be enthroned in the Capitol." "And for many a day no doubt?" "For all ages." "The poor idiot!" exclaims the Roman, as he proudly walks away, "would any man have ever thought that folly could come to this? He sincerely believes what he says." That lowly, despised Galilean is St. Peter, the first Pope, and the message he brings to the world is Christian faith. And that faith has overcome the world, for "this is the victory which overcometh the world—our faith." Faith in the person of Peter and such as he, came to the foot of the Capitol. She accosted the slave, not with the sword of Spartacus, but with the gospel and the cross, saying to him—"Obey your masters." She met the ruthless slave-owner in the forum, and said to him—"Be just and humane to your slaves, for they are your own flesh and blood, and you have a master who hears their groans and will avenge their cruel treatment." She met the crowds issuing from the circus, and she preached charity to barbarous men and women, and boys and girls, who had just been gloating for hours on human bloodshed, and frantically applauding lions and tigers and panthers, gorged with the reeking flesh of gladiators. She preached purity to human brutes that the mere representation of vices was unable to satisfy, and that required to see them in action on the stage, ashamed of its own abominations. She approached the wealthy, whose morals, parties, banquets, spectacles, were the horror of Nature, and she announced to them that "it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle." She sat beneath the chair of the conceited philosophers—Roman, Greek, Oriental—who busied themselves in gathering into one eclectic system all the errors of the Old World—that is, the maxims of pride, pleasure, and selfish interest, and she said to them—"Cease your vain efforts; now you must believe what you cannot understand—the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption—you must crucify your pampered flesh, and humbly bend your knee to a crucified Jew." She entered the very palace of the Caesars, trampled on their altars, degraded them from the rank of gods, and told them that they must soon die and be judged for weal or woe eternal by an all-holy and all-powerful Judge. With concentrated rage they answered—"No; thou shalt die, and all the base sectaries of thy vile superstition." "Die thou shalt," echoed the unanimous voice of slaves, masters, rich men, philosophers, and emperors. Mind and might were leagued against faith. Celsus and Porphyrius attacked it in the name of philosophy and criticism; Tacitus branded it in the name of history as the enemy of the human race; Pliny wielded the sword to slay it and the pen to defend his dealings with it in the eyes of his master, the Emperor Trajan. But as regards the faith, Trajan was a Nero. The current literature which stigmatised it was but the expression of society which condemned and scouted it. For three centuries the empire was deluged with Christian blood, and Rome put forth all her might, genius, wealth and craft to drown faith in a sea of blood. It was pursued in town and country and desert—it hid itself in the dreary gloom of the Catacombs. All the woes of the empire were laid to its charge. If an earthquake occurred, if the lightning smote a temple or a theatre, the cry was, "To the lions with the Christians!" and frightful tortures followed. Nay, Christians were commonly known by the name of the instruments of their torture—men called them "wretches of the rack, or the gibbet, or the pile" (Tertullian). Neither age, nor sex, nor rank, nor services rendered to the commonwealth, found mercy before the tyrants. Twelve million Christians are said, on the best authority, to have died martyrs for their faith during the 10 chief persecutions in the space of 300 years. At length in this tremendous struggle faith seemed conquered, and the triumph of heathenism secured. The Emperor Diocletian had medals struck, and pillars erected with the inscription, "Christiani nomine deleti." ("The Christian name abolished.") Vain illusion! Absurd flattery! Why, it was paganism which fell, while faith shouted victory. Ten years after Diocletian's miserable death, faith rose triumphant from the Catacombs, and, in the person of Constantine, sat crowned with victory—immortal victory—on the throne of the converted Caesars. "This is the victory which overcometh the world—our faith." And what instruments did faith use for so glorious an achievement? Men such as I have described St. Peter, men without any adequate human means. Poor, weak, illiterate, meek, humble, despised men—"lamb among wolves," as their Master called them—rich in nothing but in faith, and in hope and charity which springs from faith, rich in a living faith which "worketh by charity," rich in faith able to work stupendous miracles, rich in faith which the Apostle calls "an admirable light," rich in charity which is strong unto martyrdom and death, they went forth, at their Master's command, to be "the light of the world" in the darkness of error, and the "salt of the earth" in its deepest corruption. There was no natural proportion between the work undertaken by faith and its immense result, and, therefore, the spread of Christianity, the victory of faith, was entirely Divine. Because, unless the Apostles had known for certain that God had sent them, their attempt at the conversion of the world would have been the height of folly, and, therefore, an impossible supposition; and because the conversion of the world could be determined by no other motive than the certain and evident apprehension of truth, since prejudice, custom, passion, interest, everything was against it. Evidence alone could induce assent, the evidence of miracles such as none could gainsay. And, finally, because God's grace supernaturally subdued and illumined the hearts of men; for even miracles do not

extort assent, and require for conversion the interior and efficacious prompting and assistance of the Holy Ghost; so that a miracle of the moral order was Divinely wrought in favour of faith. "This is the victory which overcometh the world—our faith." The rapid spread of Christianity was one victory of faith; its preservation down to our day is another equally glorious. Catholic faith, as held by the one only Catholic Church, now spread throughout the world, perseveres morally the same for eighteen hundred years. This is shown positively, from the fact that in this same society of the Catholic Church, we go back from the present generation without interruption unto the Christian era and, negatively, because we have the unimpeachable historic record of the rise and founders of numerous sects, and the exact time of their separation from the Catholic Church, whereas there is not the shadow of a record to inform us of the Catholic Church having been ever separated from a more ancient Christianity. Now, such a preservation is a manifold miracle and a series of victories. First miracle and victory—Its preservation from destruction arising from its own duration and universality; for it is the natural condition of things human to fade and fall away with time, and to decay the more rapidly in proportion to the rapidity of their rise and extension. But the Catholic faith so quickly spread throughout the whole world, had no adequate external force to keep the members of its social body together. How, then, could it persevere intact and universal for so many ages? That was evidently the work of God's right hand, Who, holding all times and places in His all-powerful and provident sway, ordained (1) that the constitution of His religion should be perfectly accommodated to all times and places and conditions of mankind, and (2) that in every time and place He would subdue by His grace and assistance the minds and wills of men, although that religion always and everywhere runs counter to man's corrupt nature. Second miracle and victory—Its preservation from destruction, despite the want of those natural means whereby false religions are wont to subsist and continue. As a false religion cannot stand by the weight of its own motives, since falsehood is a weak and rotten foundation, or, rather, no foundation at all, and as it cannot claim or have the assistance of Divine protection, for the God of essential truth cannot favour error, its preservation for a more or less extensive duration must be ascribed only to human means, whether purely so or greatly assisted by unholy spirits. Accordingly it may pander to human passions, or its adherents may be confined to some out-of-the-way region, cut off from wholesome communication with other men; or it may be held by a stagnant race in which genius flags, the spirit of inquiry is extinct, and intellectual torpor prevails; or it may be propped up and fostered by State protection, or maintain its votaries by sheer force; or it may resort to dissimulation and adulteration, or decline controversy, or sophisticate and quibble, or fraudulently corrupt and deny historical facts; or, being devoid of solid arguments, may enforce silence by organised coercion. But no such charges can fairly be brought against the Catholic faith of religion. Surely, as everybody knows, it is no pander to human passions; its followers have free and open intercourse with all nations, exhibit a marvellous intellectual activity, and promote immensely the cultivation of science, arts, and literature; its means of propagation are persuasion alone, and over and over again it meets with no support, but direct persecution from the rulers of the State; it solves objections, not by dissembling its doctrines, not by bending them to complacently suit the whim of natural reason, but by a series of solid principles and invincible arguments; it courts honest inquiry and *bona fide* discussion, is always ready to give its opponents a reason for its claims, and dreads nothing so much as ignorance: neither does it impose silence on its contradictors by imperious coercion, but readily and patiently hears and weighs every reason of their doubts or misgivings, proving thereby that it is actuated by the pure and sincere love of truth, and has unbounded confidence in its own unfailing life and endurance. Could there be a greater contrast between it and any sect or religion which assails it? Third miracle and victory: Its preservation from destruction against the natural peril of its own constitution. Catholic faith, by the divine obscurity of its mysteries, offends the pride of many minds, and constantly affords occasion to the lovers of novelty to broach all sorts of opinions ending often in a swarm of heresies. Catholic faith, by the inflexible authority of its moral precepts, angers and exasperates the wills of men impatient of any yoke, and hence necessarily arises a multitude of scandals. Catholic faith admits the existence of numbers of Bishops equal among themselves and subject to the Roman Pontiff; it admits ecclesiastical dignities, which bring with them great honours and often considerable emoluments, and, moreover, are elective. Hence, as history relates, ambition and cupidity have before now engendered countless factions, intrigues, and rebellions. Again Catholic faith professes the Church to be a perfect society, independent in spirituals from all authority of civil rulers, and supreme in its own order. Hence a fruitful source of jealousy on the part of the powers that be; hence their frequent and stubborn endeavours to usurp the ecclesiastical power and combine it with the temporal; hence no end of storms and struggles, no end of schisms. And yet despite all these obstacles, the constitution of the Church, the embodiment of Catholic faith has remained substantially inviolate; nay, its rights and prerogatives have become more and more conspicuous; the spiritual power of the Roman Pontiff has been splendidly exalted, and to-day there exists a union between the Bishops and the faithful and the Pope more close and admirable than in any preceding century. Surely the hand of God is there. Fourth miracle and victory: The preservation of Catholic faith in all its integrity against the assaults of innumerable foes. Early in the first century many able and subtle adversaries strove to prevent it. Gnostics, Marcionites, Ebionites, Manicheans, etc. Posterior to the third century a cloud of heretics arose—Arians, Donatists, Nestorians, Pelagians, Eutychians, Monothelites, Iconoclasts, and others without number, to which, later on, succeeded the Albigenses, the Hussites, the Wickliffites, and especially the swarms of Protestant sects in the sixteenth century. Lastly, the Jansenists, Deists, Rationalists, Agnostics, Liberals, and Socialists, who have assailed the Catholic faith by speech and publication, by sophistry, by malignant calumnies and