

CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST:

A SERMON

AT THE MASS OF REQUIEM

FOR

THOSE WHO FELL IN DEFENCE OF ROME.

BY

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CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST.



We fools counted their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold, they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints.—WISDOM, v. 4-5.

THERE is a day to come which will reverse the confident judgments of men. In that day 'the first shall be last and the last first.' The wise in this world will be fools, and the fools in this world wise. The mad in this world will be the heirs of a better. It is no wonder to us that, day after day, base, craven, hireling names should be showered upon the noble-hearted men who have joyfully laid down their lives for the Vicar of Jesus Christ. I should break the peace of this hour if I were to repeat the heartless and bitter railings which have been pelted at them. They would taint the fragrance of this sanctuary. I will, therefore, examine the cause for which they fell; and I will appeal from their nameless accusers to a tribunal which is seldom unjust—to the broad, calm, common sense of Englishmen, and to the nobler and higher instincts of Christians.

The dead for whose repose we offer the Holy Sacrifice to-day were slain in battle for the defence of the sacred person of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, of his

lawful authority over the city which, under the providence of God, he and his predecessors have held, by martyrdom, suffering, and sovereignty, for 1,800 years; for the liberty of his person and office as Head of the Universal Church, for his supreme guardianship of the faith and law of Jesus Christ, in which all Christendom has its vital interest; and finally, for the rights and spiritual liberties of the whole Catholic world.

If it be madness or baseness to die for such a cause, tell me what cause is holy, what cause is glorious? If the world call such men hirelings, the whole Christian world will honour them as martyrs; and we will bide the sentence of the Judge from Whom is no appeal.

There was a time when the whole of Western Christendom held it to be noble and glorious to volunteer in arms to defend the Holy Sepulchre from the powers of Mahometanism. Why is it not in like manner noble and glorious to defend the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the liberty, the purity of the Church itself from an anti-Christian revolution? If it was an act of Christian chivalry to defend the frontiers of Christendom, why is it not both Christian and chivalrous to defend its head and centre? If it was a noble courage to fight and to fall for the Christian liberty and purity of souls and of homes threatened by Mahometanism, how is it ignoble and hireling to defend the Christian Church at the centre of its liberty, purity, and life, against the violence of men who have blasphemously trumpeted their hatred of Christianity, and stained the cities of Italy with impurity and blood? If a war for justice be sacred, and if all Christians may lawfully and with dignity help their brethren of every

nation, and die in such a cause, how can a Christian hand write names of infamy upon them? I appeal from such wresting of judgment to the Christian conscience and Christian justice of Englishmen. I say, of Englishmen, because the hearts and consciences of Irishmen are already wounded and burning at this violation of every instinct of their faith.

But perhaps we shall be told that Rome is the capital of Italy.

We deny it. Rome is not the capital of Italy. It is the capital of Christendom. God has so made it, and man cannot unmake it. All Christian nations have a right in it. Italy has its share in Rome as France has, and all other Catholic people; and neither less nor more. But Rome is in Italy, and Italians speak one tongue. Geography and language create no rights. If it were so, Canada would justly be annexed to the United States. North America, 'one and united,' would not be 'made' till it had incorporated Canada in its national unity of language and geography. Spain may say the same of Gibraltar, Italy of Malta, and the races of India in their several limits of territory and language. To this portentous theory of nationalism we answer, that it is a denial of all true national and international justice, the source of schism in religion, and of revolution in politics. Until the schism of the sixteenth century shattered the unity of Christian Europe, this theory of confusion was never known. A higher unity and a higher law bound together the nations of the Christian world, and consecrated the authority of States, while it protected the liberties and rights of the

people. As Christians, and as Catholics, we refuse to break up the unity of Christendom for the unity of Italy, and to sacrifice the Christian and supernatural order of the world to the 'national aspirations' of any people.

For the last thirty years the doctrine of nationalities and non-intervention has been preached with a subtlety and a confidence which has seduced many and stunned more. Men have been afraid of raising their heads against the claim of a nation's right to make revolutions. The doctrine which the Protestant Reformation used as a wedge to split off nations from the unity of the Church has been since applied as the lever to overturn thrones, and to destroy international rights. It is now wielded to overturn the Holy See. We are told that the highest and ultimate unity on earth is the unity of a nation; that each nation may isolate itself both in religion and politics at will; and that non-intervention is a reciprocal and universal duty of all nations to each other. Against this system of national supremacy, anti-Christian and immoral, we protest in the name of Christendom. There is a unity higher than the unity of any nation, in which the welfare of all nations is bound up: the unity of the Christian world. The maintenance of this unity, in its head and centre, in its order, and laws of national justice and co-operation, is the highest interest of all nations, and the guarantee of their reciprocal duties and rights. England isolated itself from the Christian world in religion three hundred years ago, and its present attitude of political isolation is the inevitable result. Russia in like manner is cut

off from Europe by its schism, and its schism dictates its policy. Prussia is still half united to the Catholic world. The other nations of Europe are, for the most part, or altogether, members of the Catholic unity. It is not possible for any one of them to claim the Russian or English exemption from national responsibility to a higher unity, without renouncing their Catholic character. This, in an evil hour, Italy has been lured, taunted, tempted to do. And in an evil hour it has listened. It has claimed the capital of Christendom by a vote of its Parliament as the capital of Italy. But the Catholic world will not submit to this usurpation: and France, not as France, but as the mandatory of the Catholic Powers, has defeated, and will defeat, the usurpation, and protect the centre of Catholic unity and the Head of the Catholic world. This is our answer. The unity of Christendom will not make way for the unity of Italy.

It was for this cause these brave men fell.

And yet it was not against the Monarchy of Italy they fought. They were face to face with an anti-Christian horde, which the King of Italy disowned. Some ten thousand men of all parts of Italy, and of many other countries, armed and organised, without authority of public law, and in direct violation of the same, invaded the States of the Church. They made a private war in the name of the Red Revolution. This horde was led by the man who in 1848 stained Rome with innocent blood, and the other day demanded the overthrow of the Christian religion as essential to the welfare of the world. They were on

their way to Rome to dethrone, not the Pontiff only, but Jesus Christ. God has not permitted the outrage to be perpetrated. While we were praying, day by day, in the Holy Mass, and before the most Holy Sacrament; while in Rome households were saying at the first hour of night the Litany of our Blessed Mother, with an invocation of St. Peter and St. Paul for the protection of the City; the head of the revolution, with its leader in all his prestige, was crushed and swept off the Patrimony of the Church by a blow so sudden and so complete that not a vestige, except the dead, wounded, and arms of the invaders remained on the field. Men will read this event differently. Some will see in it no more than a battle and a victory. We see in it also an answer to prayer, and an act of the power of God. It has once more saved the head and centre of Christianity from outrage and sacrilege; and they who gave their lives in the defence of Christianity may be numbered with the martyrs. But over that field of slaughter and of flight there hangs a gloom as of a funeral pall. The unhappy men who fell with weapons in their hands raised against the Vicar of Jesus Christ were regenerate in baptism, and once illuminated with faith, and members of the Holy Catholic Church. In boyhood they had made their first confession and first communion as you did. But some terrible illusion of Satan, and the snares of secret societies, blinded and entangled them. I would fain say, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!' But how could they be ignorant of their sin? There is mourning for them in many homes, and we mourn over their misery;

but our tongues are tied, and our thoughts suspended. Our hearts can only ascend in secret to the infinite perfection of the Divine mercy.

I have said that those for whom we pray did not fall before the Italian Monarchy. But there are depths in these events which we cannot fathom. The armies of the King of Italy did not disarm or hinder the invaders. They were bound to do it, but did it not. They entered the Roman State in the rear of the revolution, and stood awaiting its success. I know not how to interpret this conduct: but I know how it would have been interpreted in England if the armies of the United States had not repressed the armed bands which a year ago, from their frontier, threatened Canada; still more, if they had advanced in the rear of the marauders to hold for the American Union what might be successfully seized by force. Such a course would not be ignoble because Great Britain is strong, nor is it noble because the Pope is weak. Neither are the 'national aspirations' of Italy for Rome more legitimate than the national aspirations of the Union for Quebec. Italy has no more claim on Rome than on Dresden or Paris. Rome is protected by as sacred a right of sovereignty against the usurpation and ambition of Italy as Vienna or Madrid. Sovereigns do not lose their rights because they are in the neighbourhood of stronger powers. If proximity and geography and the unity of language constitute a right for the greater powers to absorb the weaker, then Brussels may be lawfully annexed by France, and Amsterdam by Germany. We have loudly aided and encouraged Italy in this usurping policy. We

have lavished upon it 'the moral support' of leading articles, and we shall reap the fruit of our labours.

It is a strange simplicity which pretends to wonder why France should ever have made a Convention when it withdrew its protection from the Holy See; and why it should have surrounded it with 'a moral cordon,' reserving to itself the right of intervention.

It did so because the Holy See is to France and to the Catholic world a centre in which they have supreme and vital rights; and it placed the security of the Holy See within the same defence which protects our persons and properties from burglars and murderers: the justice and conscience of Christian men, the public law of Christendom, backed by a supreme power which 'bears not the sword in vain.'

I have no doubt that they who counsel to Italy moderation 'for the present,' and hold out the hope of Rome in reversion when Pius IX. goes to his rest, sincerely believe themselves to be wise and equitable men. We are told also that the signs of the times are enough to show that Pius IX. is the last Pontiff who will hold a temporal sceptre. Some men will read even Holy Scripture backwards. They can also reverse the signs of the times. Those signs rather indicate that so long as there is a Christian world so long the Pontiff will be Sovereign. If the world should apostatise from Christianity, it then may be that God would scourge it by the fulfilment of its heart's desire.

But it is well for them to know that the Catholic world, neither now nor hereafter—neither at the

decease of Pius IX., nor yet at any time—will yield one shadow of the inalienable right of the Sovereign Pontiffs to the capital of Christendom; nor will it for a moment suffer the denial of its own supreme right and duty to intervene for the protection of the Holy See. The moral cordon of justice and order will be always drawn around it; and the right of execution will never depart from the Catholic world. In the days of Pius IX. it is France alone which has executed the will of Christendom; in the days of his successor it may be a league of Catholic Powers, or the force of two hundred millions concentrated and brought to bear by some future organisation which shall give expression and effect to their will.

For twenty years the anti-Christian seditious of all the world have aimed at the overthrow of Rome, at the destruction of the Temporal Power first, of the Spiritual Power afterwards. They hate the Temporal Power much, but they hate the Spiritual Power more. They think that if it were possible to destroy the Temporal Power, the Pontiffs would be either persecuted or subject. A Pope subject to a Royal Supremacy would reduce the Spiritual Supremacy to absurdity; and derision would be a keener and more deadly weapon against Christianity than persecution. For this end, therefore, all the spirits of anti-Christian revolution have united against Rome. They have poisoned the public opinion of Europe against it by lying, or by truths perverted, which are the worst of lies. They have misled and influenced Governments, stirred up popular bigotry, painted the Government

of Rome in the darkest and falsest colours, organised in secret a propaganda of sedition to disgust, alienate, and goad on the subjects of the Holy See to discontent and to rebellion. Finally, when the people of Rome would not rebel, nor accept them as deliverers, nor take the baits of sedition, the revolutionary hordes of all countries entered the Roman State in arms. It was at once proclaimed as the rising and insurrection of the Roman State. Foreign invasion played the part of domestic insurrection. Every act to seduce or to compel the peaceful population to rise has been used. Provisional Governments, revolutionary committees, petitions signed by imaginary thousands, plebiscites, proclamations, conspiracies in Rome, shells thrown among the loyal inhabitants, gunpowder plots, mines under the walls—all has been tried, but all in vain. In the end, moved by a just indignation, delayed, through Christian endurance, only too long, the soldiers and protectors of the Holy See crushed and scattered the lawless bands of the revolution. It was a just and noble act for the Catholics of all countries to sweep the seditions, conspiracies, and armed outrages of foreign invaders* out of the Patrimony of the Church. If the unbelievers of other countries, banded in secret societies, have a right to plot the overthrow of the Sovereign Pontiff, the faithful of other nations have likewise a just and perfect right, in open and lawful array, to defend his

* A private letter from one who is in attendance on the prisoners in Rome states that there are ten Englishmen among them. The foreign correspondent of one of our newspapers stated that four Spaniards fought under Garibaldi in the uniform of General Prim's army.

person and his throne. If the revolution invade his State, the Catholic world has a right to turn it out. Foreign aggressors may justly be destroyed by foreign troops. And yet no Catholic power is foreign in Rome. Every Catholic has a right in the Holy See, and in the city where God has placed it. The theory of non-intervention has no application in this case. Non-intervention may be a policy of the natural order; but it must be confined to the sphere of politics, and to the mutual respect of civil Governments. When applied to Rome, it is a mere deceit, in order to mask the question. No Catholic Power can proclaim the policy of non-intervention when the Vicar of Christ and the Head of the Catholic Church is threatened. To do so would be to renounce the Catholic character and name. Protestant or schismatical Governments may, perhaps, proclaim non-intervention as their policy, because they have forfeited their rights in Rome. They may also in their theories divide the Temporal from the Spiritual Power of the Pontiffs. But all Catholics know these things to be providentially united for the free and peaceful exercise of the mission of the Church among the nations of the world. The intervention of the French people to defend the person and authority of Pius IX. against external violence, from whatsoever nation, race, or Government it may come, would be, by all the prescriptions of Christian international law, an honourable, just, and noble act. How much more, when France has intervened against a lawless and immoral band of invaders, rebels to their own Government, and disturbers of the peace of the Christian world! By this act, which is only one

more in the traditional office of France in protecting the Centre and Head of Christendom, she has placed herself in the lead of the Christian order, the Christian justice, the Christian chivalry of the world. May God maintain her firm and inflexible in this noblest mission upon earth! The Catholic world will confirm her acts by the sympathy and assent of its heart and conscience. France has thereby invoked upon herself the enmity, scorn, and railing of anti-Catholic and anti-Christian factions. But she has won to herself the confidence and the sympathy of every man among the two hundred millions in all lands, who refuse to offer up the supernatural unity, order, and purity of the Christian world as a homage to the tyranny of modern Nationalism, the deification of the civil power, the anti-Christian hatred against the Church of God. Let France stand firm, and she may stay the plague which is devouring Christian Europe. The prayers of all good men will ascend for her. These things bring to my mind others of a sadder cast, and nearer to ourselves. But I forbear to speak of my own country.

There are, however, happier thoughts, to which I gladly turn.

The late events have detected and exposed with a terrible but just retribution the hollowness, the imposture, the falsehood, the vainglory, the impotence of the Revolution. Grandiloquence, mystery, pretended ubiquity, for a long time terrified or distracted the friends of order. But the veil is rent, and the idol is broken. On the 1st of November the ring-leader of this godless anarchy proclaimed to the world

from Monte Rotondo: 'I here, alone a Roman General, with full powers from the only lawful Government—that is, of the Roman Republic, and elected by universal suffrage—have the right to maintain myself in arms on this territory of my jurisdiction.'* Before the moon was up on the night of the 3rd, he and his hordes were swept away, not by the soldiers of Christendom, nor by the armies of France, but by the just judgment of God, Whom, in the Vicar of His Incarnate Son, he had outraged and defied.

Thus, then, is one vast scandal and danger swept out of Italy. Year by year there have been arising in Italy the harbingers of a better day. It has suffered much, and the shadow of a greater suffering which may yet come is cast before upon it. But there is yet time, and there is yet hope. Italy is both Christian and Catholic. Infidelity and Revolution have tormented and tainted Italy, but Italy is neither revolutionary nor infidel. Factions have risen, from time to time, to the surface; and the traditional mind and will of Italy is for a while confused and paralysed. But it is evidently rising again in vigour and control; and if only wise and Christian counsels prevail, the Christian mind of Italy will be once more in the ascendant. Then, and only then, can the reconciliation of Italy and Rome be accomplished. No worse enemy ever came between them than the Infidel Revolution. When Italy returns upon the path of its old Catholic glories, the heart of the Catholic world will return to it. We love and venerate it as the soil on which the greatest glories of the Catholic Church are inscribed,

* *Unita Cattolica*, Nov. 7, 1867.

and the Head of the Christian world is divinely placed. Apart from these prerogatives Italy has no claim upon our goodwill beyond other nations; against these supreme laws of Providence Italy has no rights. We pray that all temporal prosperity may be upon her, but on condition of her fidelity to the order and unity of the Christian world.

There remains but one more thought; an image which rises in our minds high above all in calmness, dignity, and grandeur—the Vicar of Jesus Christ, immovable in confidence, inflexible in justice, the Father of his people. Against him can be found no accusation. Many have borne witness against him, but their testimonies do not agree together. No man can convict him of injustice, of cruelty, of oppression, of even lawful severity. He has been conspired against and betrayed; but he has pardoned the conspirators and betrayers, to be conspired against and betrayed again. He has taken no man's goods, not so much as a shoe's latchet. He has never harassed the poor of his people, nor driven them from the humble homes of their fathers, nor wounded their conscience in that which is dearest to a Catholic people. The line of Pontiffs stands alone for justice and mercy in the history and the assembly of kings. One accusation against him can alone be proved. He is a Priest of Jesus Christ. Some men are to be found who think this enough to justify his dethronement. The Christian world is not yet of their opinion. Neither were these noble hearts who gave their life-blood, as millions in all nations are likewise willing at this hour to do, in order to forbid this great sacrilege. In that little

band were men of noble blood, of time-honoured memory, of high culture, fighting side by side with simple, hard-handed, broad-hearted peasants, who, full of devotion, left their hamlets and their homes to defend the Vicar of our Lord, and with striplings of seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen years of age, mature in faith, and the manhood of Christian chivalry. These were the men who, forsaking home and all that life holds best and dearest, went to bear arms as private soldiers, without hire and without hope, except that of defending the person and authority of the Vicar of Christ, and of shedding their blood, if need be, in the justest warfare and for the holiest cause. God has accepted this offering only from a few; but there will be fathers, mothers, sisters, wives, who will mourn over this bier. You will pray for the dead, though the sanctity of their cause almost forbids it, that they may enter into the joy of those who, face to face, see Him for whom they died. And we may trust that their places here will be filled up tenfold—a hundredfold—that the manhood and chivalry of Catholics in all nations will spring forward with a new energy of devotion and close around the person of Pius IX. and of those who shall come after him, as an impenetrable wall of living strength, against which, if revolutionary violence or ambitious nationalism shall hereafter dash itself again, it may be for ever broken.

This outrage and its chastisement warn all nations of the Christian and civilised world to provide for their own safety. It is but one more of the outbursts of anti-Christian and anti-social revolution which have in time past struck at the head and centre of Christen-

dom. It will soon renew its assault. It has been utterly and bitterly foiled, but we do not deceive ourselves with the hope that it is crushed or extinct. It will return again. Its hordes are driven out of view, but they lie under the horizon. They will reform their array, and return hereafter. We have need, therefore, to prepare more solidly and resolutely than ever.

Three things, we may trust, will come of this offence against the Christian order of nations, which has all but plunged Europe into war.

First: That France declare to all comers, and to all who may affect to doubt it, that the traditional mission of a thousand years as the Protector of the Holy See will not be relaxed; that it will execute it hereafter, as it has now, with inflexible decision; that in all diplomatic calculations this must be taken into account; that, while others talk, France will do.

Secondly: That all European nations take security against the renewal of these dangers to both their external and internal peace. The Catholic nations have a vital and all-pervading interest in the safety and independence of the Head of their Religion. The nations not Catholic have among them so many millions of Catholic brethren and fellow-subjects that their own internal welfare, as well as their external peace, is perpetually threatened by these outrages and scandals. It is the highest interest of all to protect, by international law and reciprocal engagements, the neutrality and exemption of Rome from all political conspiracies and conflicts, and to secure the

independence and dignity of the Head of the Catholic world.

Lastly: The example of this noble blood from Rome, from France, from Switzerland, from Belgium, from Holland, from Ireland, from England, and from other lands, which has been generously shed, calls with the voice of a trumpet upon the youth of all Catholic people to form a circle around the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Let the world count their Christian chivalry to be madness, and their end to be without honour. There is One reigning in the realms of light above this dark world Who will accept their reproach, and, if so be, their life-blood, as an offering to Himself.