

# **THE VICTORIES OF ROME AND THE TEMPORAL POWER**

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The Victories of Rome and the Temporal Power by Kenelm Digby Best

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AND

## THE TEMPORAL POWER

BY

KENELM DIGBY BEST

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## THE VICTORIES OF ROME.

"Sedes Roma Petri; quæ pastoralis honoris  
Facta caput mundo, quidquid non possidet armis  
Religione tenet."—S. PROSPER AQUITANUS.

THE thoughts of men, their whole attention and interest, have of late been fixed, with painful intensity, upon one great absorbing subject—the destinies of Rome. Not an intelligent mind but has made Rome its subject-matter of research and study; not a loyal heart but has made Rome its object of perpetual prayer. The thought of Rome, the prayer for Rome, are in this year as world-wide and universal as Civilization and Christianity. Moreover, this sentiment, whereby the souls of men have been strangely stirred, has been outwardly manifested in a manner almost miraculous, by the spontaneous pilgrimage of peoples, priests, and prelates to the tomb of the Apostles, by the unsolicited collections throughout Christendom of Offerings and Peter's Pence, by the religious ardour with which the chivalry of Catholicism has gloriously begun a new Crusade, and rallied triumphantly around Rome. Let us not deny it: an appalling, almost unprecedented hostility towards the House of God has been displayed by the world, and imperatively demanded

our own marvellous counter-demonstration, as "fellow-citizens of the Saints, the domestics of God" (Ephesians ii. 19). In the beginning of the world, angels in heaven parted for conflict into two mighty camps and armies; in the end of the world, men on earth, for a like purpose, also divide and separate. The first battle was brief, for those who fought were strong; the last battle is slow, for a protracted struggle is alike suited to the changeful nature and the successive generations of the human race: but, for intensity of purpose, for the stake at issue, for the terrible consequences to follow, both battles, the celestial and the terrestrial, are most similar. The present champions of the Church are profoundly conscious that they fight, as fought the angelic host of old, under the eye of the God of Armies, and in His sacred cause:

The first war was declared against the Divine design of an Incarnation; this last is waged against its Divine results. The rebel angels revolted against Christ, their predestined King and Head; their earthly allies are now in revolution against His Kingdom and Headship. Therefore it is around Rome, the See of Peter, the seat of the Government of Christ, that the conflict takes place. Thither, either actually or in spirit, flock all powers for good and evil. Truth and falsehood, hope and despair, love and hatred, religion and irreligion, reason and passion, justice and lawlessness, purity and viciousness, probity and depravity—in a word, Christian and Antichristian, modern Crusader and modern Mussulman, the fellow-soldiers of Michael, and the



followers of the Dragon, are confronted before the Eternal City.

Christ is always with the Church, and the Holy Ghost is her Divine Guide throughout all ages. She needs not, therefore, at any time, to recur to the past to prove her conduct right. Always "Wisdom is justified by her children" (S. Matthew xi. 19); for they know well that she cannot err in what she does or teaches. But there are others, not her children, who in all honesty ask for explanations; and there are also many who maliciously belie her, who falsify history in order to accuse her of inconsistency and unfaithfulness to the mission assigned to her by her Divine Founder. It will then be pleasant to ourselves, and perhaps useful, and not unnecessary to others, if we look back upon the past, and thereby qualify ourselves to celebrate with all gladness this last victory of Rome over Revolution. We shall see that be the adversary Heathenism, Heresy, Barbarism, Statecraft, or Revolution, the contest has always ended in the discomfiture of the gates of Hell, and the triumph of the Tiara.

"Rome, Peter's See, the Source of pastoral power,  
The world's Capital,  
What realms she does not rule by arms  
She governs by Religion."

A poet of the fifth century thus sang the praises of Rome. His words are noble and simple, and his description is, to this day, exact and accurate; we of the nineteenth century can but re-echo them, when speaking of the unchanged Eternal City.

Great and glorious was that ancient Roman

empire which succumbed to the spiritual dominion of the Christian Church. In recognition of whatever was good and great, she sanctioned, in their pristine simplicity, many of its wisest laws. Great and glorious, too, was the ancient city; and the modern city has respected its ruins, and spared the unhallowed walls, whose chief plea for mercy is their tottering age. Let human pride and ambition wander awhile among the remains of heathen Rome, and they may learn a useful lesson. These old dull piles of bricks and rubbish were once the residence of the conquerors and rulers of the earth: this heap of dusty ruins was once the capital city of the world, not merely of the surrounding territories, but equally of all other countries, nations, and races. Rome was *The City*—the central seat of government; and the whole world was to receive the edicts which she sent forth.

Nay, with astuteness which is astounding, and haughtiness which is sublime, she summoned to her altars the idols and false deities of all nations, thus contriving and claiming to be the centre of religion, as well as the centre of temporal authority. Heathen mythologies often contain distorted foreshadowings of those Christian doctrines which one day shall destroy them, and thus does this grand but groundless claim of ancient Rome foretell her fate; it is a prediction of a power and supremacy that will be hers, but only when she has broken those idols, and allowed their temples to return to dust and decay, while the Christians of the Catacombs come forth to build their churches upon her seven hills.

Heathen Rome resisted her Christian conquerors with all the resources that man can command or devil suggest. After 300 years she confessed herself defeated, and submitted, on one point absolutely and unconditionally; her idols were removed, their false worship was renounced for ever at the bidding of Christian Rome. On the other point, heathen Rome found in the new City a generous rival—she was allowed to retain the temporal power, she might even carry it elsewhere, it was not coveted nor asked for: not then, nor since, has the Church contended for its acquisition—or even interfered with it, except to keep it true to itself. Part of that old temporal dominion she has maintained, by admitting it at its urgent entreaty to a participation in ecclesiastical privileges, and with the other portion, divided out amongst new nations, she has never interfered, except at times to accord sanctuary protection to it in seasons of danger and distress. Between those two Romes, heathen and Christian, there has long been perfect peace: the one stands built upon the Rock of Peter, the other sleeps peacefully in ruins at her feet. Their conflict could have had no other end. Their principles were so different, their methods so opposed, their results so contrary, their monuments so dissimilar. Of heathen Rome, the principle was human glory; the means, war and terror; the result, the slavery of nations; the monuments, triumphal arches, amphitheatres, thermal halls, temples reared to deities who were vices personified. Of Christian Rome, the principle is the service of the true God; the means, the extension of the true Faith; the result, the salvation