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AN ORATION OR FUNERAL SERMON

Uttered at Rome at the burial of the Holy Father, Gregory the 13, who departed in Jesus  
Christ the 11 of April, 1585

Containing his manners, life, deeds, and last words at his death concerning the affairs of  
this present time, together with the lamentations of the cardinals and whole clergy

Faithfully translated out of the French copy printed at Paris for Peter Jobert, dwelling in  
Harp Street, 1585, with the King's privilege

Otherwise to be intituled:

A sermon full of papistical adulation and matter sufficient to procure the wise and  
virtuous-minded to contemn such gross and palpable blindness, and all persons to laugh  
at their absurd and erroneous follies

Imprinted Anno 1585

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To the courteous and Christian reader

Such and so great (gentlemen) is the obstinate and perverse blindness of the fond and fantastical papists that unworthily they challenge unto themselves all ecclesiastical rites and privileges, underpropping their ruinous Roman church with such fair but rotten posts, and extolling (even above God) their whorish Antichrist with such glorious tiles of holiness & honour, that if God did not turn their wordly [sic for 'worldly'?] wisdom to folly, and cause them by running headlong into gross & palpable errors to discover their own dotings, many true and perfect Christians might by their charming allurements be sinisterly seduced. As I was thus sorrowfully meditating of these their politic illusions, there came to my hands a copy of the oration or sermon pronounced at Rome over the corps of Gregory the XIII, their last and lewd Pope, which taking in my hand & thinking to find some excellent (though erroneous) show of skill and learning, after I had viewed and reviewed it over carefully, I found such a confused chaos of dotting conceits, such an absurd form both of learning, reason, and method, that I could not but wonder how either Mas Doctor the preacher could be so impudent to utter such bald stuff afore so many stately cardinals, or such mighty potentates suffer the corps of their new Saint Gregory or their own reverend gravities to be abused with the rehearsal of such fantastical toys. But seeing their own words may be best witnesses of their follies, I thought good to translate it into English, that even the simplest may see how simply, God wot, these great schoolmasters deal in their greatest & most weighty affairs. For who would have thought that the cardinals would not have appointed such a learned prelate to preach at the funeral of so mighty a man -- nay, as they say, more than a man -- that his excellent sermon might have been a glory to the dead corps of their good Pope Gregory, but seeing in such weighty affairs they bring forth such weak divinity, let the world judge how carelessly and unskilfully they will gloss over their small and ceremonious trumperies. This show of their own dotings, then, I hope shall be a proof or caveat for the godly to beware of their poisoned potions, and to lean only to the true church that is builded on the rock Christ Jesus, which happy success in godliness wishing to all men, I commit you to the Almighty.

Robert Greene

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*In Papam Theodori Bezae Carmen*

*Si qua fides Romane tibi est adhibenda Tyran  
Larua tegit summi quem sacra Pontificis:  
Auspicijs cuicunque tuis manus vncta refulget  
Et capite raso vertice splendet apex  
Quinque ubi conceptas tacito cum murmure voces  
Fuderit (haec etenim pandere sacra nefas)  
Ecce manus inter medias (si credere fas est)  
Vera caro euadit, qui modo panis erat.  
Non igitur te Pontificem nunc dixero, verum  
Carnificem & patrem dixero carnificum.*

*In eundem.*

*Non Pontifex, sed Potifex:  
Non Potifex, sed Panifex:  
Non Panifex, sed Carnifex.  
Est Papa, Pater, Pontifex.*

An Oration and Funeral Sermon uttered over the corps of the Holy Father, Pope Gregory the XIII, who deceased in Jesus Christ the 11 of April, 1585

There is nothing so certain as death, either uncertain as the moment thereof. Wherefore the holy Doctor saith: Keep thyself continually in that estate wherein thou desirest to die. And the proverb goeth that many a one thinketh himself in perfect health when he beareth death in his bosom. To say the troth, we do continually carry death about with us. It is in us immediately after we take life and moving in our mother's womb, and wheresoever we walk, it is still at our heels; if we take horse, it is with us; if we be on the water, it is the guide of our ship, so as we can never say death to be absent from us, for ourselves are very death, and no part of our body immortal, wherefore those that suppose themselves to live in this world are far deceived in their own opinions, and the pilgrimage of man in this world is but a shadow of life, which unto us seemeth life, but indeed is none. The better therefore to describe the said shadow, I will make an abstraction of the dead time of man's age from the full and greatest age that a creature can live in the world. First, the longest age that man can live in this world is but six score years.

Popish de[vises] do rather imitate [any] dunce [than] the prophet [David] who [said] [ ] the [life] of man [doth] consist of [70] years.

From six score years we must deduct the nights, for man when he sleepeth liveth not, besides that sleep is termed the image of death, so that deducting the nights, which comprehend one half of the time, man liveth but three score years in the world.

Whiles man liveth these sixty years, he liveth but the one half of them, for if he have one day of mirth and quiet, he hath another of sorrow and care, because grief doth still secretly creep into mirth. And any person troubled with cares or vexed in mind doth rather die than live; we must therefore take from the sixty years aforesaid the one half, and so there remain but thirty.

Now let us see whether in the space of six score years a man may not pass away ten at the least in sickness, mischances, or other infirmities. I may tell you there is no man that liveth six score years in the world but at several times and during his said age he hath above ten years infirmity, and therefore we must take from the thirty years which are the remainder of man's life yet ten years, and then there are but twenty left.

Which are now the twenty years of his life? We must take them at his infancy and in his oldest age, that is, ten years from his very childhood, and the other ten from his extreme old age, but sith as well in infancy as in extremity of age there is no life, but rather a living death, I conclude that man hath not one only hour of life in this world; also, that whosoever seeketh life in this world doth much deceive himself. In heaven therefore it is that we must assure ourselves to live, and seek for life, but not upon earth where death doth continually haunt us. For we ought to die to the world, to the end to be born in Jesus Christ.

Happy [news] to [the] true church [when] the members [of] Antichrist decease.

According to the sovereign sentence and decree, O ye inhabitants of Rome, we see your great bishop and mine is dead; behold, our crown is fallen, our lodestar vanished away, and our light extinguished. And for my own part, O wretch and miserable man who am deprived of him, of two things I wish for; one, that is either never to remember the good

that we have lost, either else calling the same to mind to find someone that were able to give me comfort correspondent to the greatness of the heaviness whereinto I am fallen. And indeed myself do now come into the pulpit upon two several occasions mere contrary each to other, viz., to rehearse the greatness of the good that is taken from us, and to comfort those that sustain the loss, nay, rather to do two things which seem to repugn each other, for if it be true that nothing doth more aggravate the grief of the loss than the remembrance of the value of the thing lost, then doth nothing seem more contrary to the comfort of the living than the praises of him that is dead, as in this case, wherein so far do the merits of the deceased exceed that the arrows which pierce his heart that is deprived of him are the more sharp and grievous. Howbeit some man would answer that, contrariwise, by the commendations of him that is departed we do declare that he is not dead, but liveth, and thus we may by little and little assuage the sorrow of our loss and damage in whatsoever manner. But as it were hard for a painter in the face of a sorrowful person to represent a smiling countenance, so doth it seem to me a difficult enterprise to undertake to comfort a man by rehearsing the virtues of him that is taken away from us, and that the more if we should enter into consideration of him that is spoken of, of yourselves that are the hearers, & of me that do make the discourse, for in each of these three the same circumstances that seem to make my enterprise easy are those that indeed do yield it most difficult and troublesome. As if a man should in respect of him say that if the multitude of his great virtues do seem to abridge my labour in seeking some argument whereupon to ground his praises, so contrariwise the abundance of so great virtues do hold me so short that I cannot certainly resolve upon the choice of one only whereupon worthily to commend him; for you, if a man should say, in that you all knew him and used him to your great profit, it should seem sufficient for me only to decipher matters, so contrariwise your own perfect knowledge together with your dealings with him would sufficiently open unto you all my defaults in displaying of him. And for my own part, if an [sic?] infinite courtesies and great favours wherewith he hath always gratified me do seem without seeking any cunning to breed in me as much affection as is requisite, so by contrary reason the great favours and benefits wherewith he hath always gratified me do not leave me any cunning means to hinder me from having greater affection than is here to be required of me. And this was the principal reason that moved me somewhat to refuse this so honourable a commission, & unto me in many other respects most welcome, and to request you to appoint and commit to some other the charge to discourse hereupon, and to leave unto me tears and lamentations only.

**Childish reasons  
and worse divinity.**

But now unto thee, oh my good master and father (for so will I always call thee) do I turn myself; may it be possible that this my oration, which lately in thy life thou didst hearken unto, should now be employed in praising of thee being dead, either that this my tongue, which employing me to the service of this country thou didst too greatly honour, should now be occupied, helas, in lamentations for thy so hurtful death to all Christiandom? And what? hast thou then brought me so joyfully to Rome to the end here to celebrate thy funerals? Oh how that commission to read Jeremy might well foreshow unto me (but I perceived it not) that my lecture thereof should end in lamentations, and now behold that divination accomplished! See *quomodo sedet sola ciuitas*, how the city sitteth desolate, notwithstanding it be *plena populo*, full of people; also how this spouse, the church of Rome, who by great brightness seemed to be *domina gentium*, Lady of Nations, now

**No spouse, but a  
strumpet spotted  
with spiritual  
fornication.**

Beastly and  
blasphemous  
divinity, fit for so  
lewd a bishop and  
so unlearned a  
chaplain.

having lost thee, *est facta quasi vidua*, is made as it were a widow, and as a widow all dipped in tears and lamentations, willeth me to celebrate the praises of her dear spouse, which she all wholly together cannot celebrate, wherein although I cannot (as in truth I am not able) attain to the least parcel of thy deserts, which are not well to be expressed, yet at all adventures I assure myself, O happy soul, that as in thy lifetime thou didst pardon me a number of other imperfections, so now thou wilt likewise forgive me this; I know that as thou wert accustomed, thou wilt make better account of the goodwill than of the gloss and pomp of words, and as discreet shalt well see that not only I, but also that no orator, is able to attain to the type of thy commendations. Among the which, my lords and ye my hearers, I do freely confess that I have greatly doubted whether I were best to begin, as I take the manner to be, at the greatness and eminency of the family from whence he is extract, and at the first I was purposed so to do, and that the rather because it is not yet scarce two months since that myself heard him in this temple discourse how our Saviour Jesus Christ was content to be born of a mother though poor yet noble, and descended of a noble race, also that nobility was very effectual even to spiritual life, as it may be said of him that is noble that whether it be through conformity or resemblance of mind with his predecessors, either through the remembrance of such things as they have done, either else through the effect of good bringing up, or for whatsoever other reason, he is better disposed to do well, that nobility serveth him as a spur to goodness and a bridle to evil, also that as the precious stone being set in gold maketh a greater show than in iron, even so the same virtuous deeds do give a more effectual example when they proceed from noble personages than from men of base estate, with other things which he spake to the same purpose. Howbeit I will not speak thereof in that it might be accounted rashness in me even in Rome to seek to make his Holiness' family more famous than it is. It may be that some may say that this family doth want glorious titles, pre-eminence, riches, possessions, jurisdictions, pretensions of rights, patronages, ancient pedigrees of their predecessors, commendations of learning, praise of arms, noble & famous alliances either in Italy or without, and, to be brief, all such things collected into one, as being severally taken are sufficient to set a fair show upon a whole progeny. Notwithstanding all these things which are terrestrial and too common with others, and for the causes aforesaid his Holiness perceiving, as he perceived all things, that it is not enough for a horse to be of a good race except himself be also good, and that they are happy and wise who as the sea do not receive the sweetness of this vainglory of the rivers of their predecessors, but returning their course, and swelling over the mouths of the rivers themselves, can yield to their forerunners the reward of firm and permanent commendation, so of that great nobility which he had brought forth of his mother's womb with him, he did therein only yield thanks to God for that his actions, with their circumstances, thereby and in respect thereof were more notable and exemplary.

A similitude most  
fondly applied.

Oh most happy person, who in the midst of so great eminency of birth could so well subdue pride, and in himself give example unto other! Even like unto the pearl which, although it lieth in the bottom of the sea, yet keeping itself close in the shell and never opening until(?) it ascendeth to receive the dew of heaven, we find therein no smell, no savour or drop that tasteth of her [sic?] sea, but being pure, clear, and white, it seemeth to be formed even in heaven. We must not therefore take commendations of this, people, at

the transitory things of the sea of this world, and although he be therein extract of a most noble birth, yet will I not say any more thereof, as of that which is none of his.

But discoursing and speaking of that which properly appertaineth to himself, I would ask whether his mind commanded not his body? Also whether it were possible to find a body more withered, afflicted, macerated, dried up, or pale through the effect of austere and hard penance? Other men's bodies (O Christian hearers) are for the most part wished to be of this or that form because they yield such or such inclination to the mind, but in this I will show you a matter worth the noting, that is, that here the case was altered, for it was the mind that ministered inclination to the body, so that being waxen altogether spiritual, had not extreme need forced him, he never desired meat, drink, or bodily rest, and he lived in such sort as it was a miracle (whereof, helas, we have but too soon seen the issue) how he could live so many years, but rather living was dead, and for my part, I assure you, I never, even in the heat of summer, kissing his holy hands (good God, shall I never do so more?) found them other than cold, wherein there was no heat except the same proceeded of some excess or immoderate labour, or of some motion of a sudden fever. O most dear body! O most holy members! But look yet once again upon them, O ye Roman people, and say: Are not these the very hands which so often have been joined together and lifted up to pray & offer sacrifice for us? Be not these the feet that have travelled so far for our sakes? Is not this the head that never imagined anything but for our benefit? Is not this the heart that burned in love of us? O dear members! O members so dear! What? you then shall go under the earth? And what? you must be buried? Helas, my God! Who is it that thou hast taken away from us! And wherefore do ye hide yourselves? For my part, none but only death shall ever pluck out of my heart the lively image of that so well-beloved countenance. Especially in this act wherein with your eyes toward heaven, as it were smiling, and with an angelical countenance, I see you depart and remain dead.

**The head which sought to overthrow the true church, dissuade subjects from their allegiance to their prince, & to maintain his own power and glory.**

But it is time for us, O Christian hearers, to proceed to matters of greater importance, which are so many & withal so entangled one within another that I could not find any more fit mean to part and divide them, neither do I think that we can take any better course than the very course of his holy life, and there to begin.

When he was a little child he was very devout, and it is well known that God even in his first youth wrought in him marvellous signs of singular goodness. The like is read of St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. Dominic, St. Francis, and many others as was to be seen in this young child (say they that do remember it), namely that at his return from the college all the delight that that age used to take in any other thing, he took only in framing of little altars, adorning of small chapels, and counterfeiting of holy things. Matters which, although the wisest may think too base for this place & for the occasion now ministered, yet would I not only not disdain, but also take great and singular pleasure in the same. And although some do say that among such serious affairs such small trifles should have no place, yet do I delight to show how commendable not only grave matters but even such small things were in him. Concerning the rest, according to the proportion of his age, or rather beyond the reach of that age (as occasions do increase, so must my style arise), his Holiness being past the inferior schools and coming to study the law, it is not

**The continency  
and virginity of the  
popish clergy doth  
consist in keeping  
of concubines.**

The head which sought to overthrow the true church, dissuade subjects from their allegiance to their prince, & to maintain his own power and glory. possible to make an end of writing with what modesty and gravity he there passed the years of his study; he was apparelled in clerk's attire, but which was of greater importance, he observed clergy manners, much continency, (as it is supposed) perpetual virginity, with modest behaviour, no vanity, continual study; these were his exercises, and to be brief, although through our mishaps the university wherein he studied were not usually either the quietest or the holiest in the world, yet might the writing of Nazianzen(?) concerning the Great Basil and the town of Albens(?) be applied to him. Like as there is one river which flowing through the sea taketh no bitterness thereof, also a certain beast that liveth in the fire & consumeth not, even so he with great quietness passing these troubles, and with sovereign virtue such vices, did first and most worthily attain to the doctoral degree, and afterward was called to Rome and made cardinal only through desert for his learned studies, and not by favour as the most part do now usually practise.

**Good companion  
to traitors, but evil  
companion to the  
godly.**

A happy departure, a blessed journey for all the holy church, but especially for this great city of Rome, which have received so great benefits and so much comfort at his hands. Notwithstanding whatsoever affairs he had in hand, yet did he daily apply his study at a certain hour, and so continued his study even to his death, with so deep judgement and good success that although his intellectual habitudes had not very far been surmounted and darkened through the marvellous brightness of his moral and theological virtues, yet in respect of his learning and study only he deserved great praise, and in troth he was never other than most learned, and a great favourer of learned men. Who did ever show them more pleasure, or receive them more courteously? Beside the seminaries and colleges, as well at Pavy as here, the lectures, the stipends, with such and so many things done to behoof of learning, & besides the books which he hath of himself written, and now that the bridle of his modesty doth no longer detain, I hope, as myself have seen them, so coming to light all the world shall behold them, & in them perceive as in himself whether were more the holy writings or good manners. This love of learning and holiness of life he practiced so diligently in himself that through God's grace and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he was, in respect of his virtues, knowledge, and holy life, elected Pope, & his name from Hugh Good Companion was changed and called Gregory the XIII. During his papacy he lived so religiously and devoutly that the whole life of a man were little enough to rehearse the same. But herein I repose myself upon that zeal which I perceive in everyone to commend him, whereby I may shortly see so many proses, verses, and rhythms, with such histories, so many orations, and volumes to his honour, that all these things, as well such as I cannot touch as the rest which I mention and speak of, shall briefly be deciphered and lively coloured forth. For now to rehearse all the holy works of our good shepherd, or to endeavour to set forth that very pattern of a bishop which he hath expressed in himself, to say truth, I think impossible, and much less to believe that the very summary of those things that he hath done may be drawn into any annals or chronicle. Neither can I conceive any means to attain thereto, unless someone have in form of remembrances been daily collecting the course of his deeds & works. For my part, in this short discourse that I have to prosecute, as one not able to to [sic] restrain the whole sea, I will go see if I may gather the water at the rivers and brooks from whence this sea doth arise, that is, from his virtues, which in him have wrought so many holy

**The wolf is dead,  
and the sheep want  
a good shepherd.**

**How could the  
Pope plead the  
prayers of men  
sith himself can  
forgive sins?**

**Some traitorous  
device for the  
persecution of the  
gospel.**

works, notwithstanding I might at once in general words say that all virtues beseeming a bishop which St. Paul and others do speak of were to be found in him. Helas, how this holy shepherd burned in love, how he made himself lean for you! O ye poor artificers, ladies, young infants and poor beggars; helas, ye all have lost your father; the shepherd is dead, and the sheep remain a prey to the wolves. Howsoever it is, hereof may we plainly see, O Rome, that he bare thee singular goodwill, and indeed (for I will not conceal thy commendation) it is evident that thou didst answer his goodwill with reciprocal amity; witness this thy assembly; these sobs and these tears do testify thy acknowledging thereof, besides all other things, helas, too bitter and too sweet together; even the night of his departure was to you and to me infortunate; O great, O great pity, what could be seen more worthy compassion and tears than the fearful stir of the people? It seemed when the most horrible sound of the bell called Ave Maria that gave notice of his death, to the end to pray to God for him, sent the Furies to all, both men and women; one ran here, another there, some two together, others without order or reason; all wept, all cried, all howled out, saying, Ah, good God, whereto are we brought? What shall become of us? If the infection doth afflict us, who shall pray for us? Ah, that we had not deserved it! Oh how God is wroth with us, with many other exclamations sufficient to have rent the marble stones and cloven the walls in sunder. He was a man of much prayer and reading, as ever was any, and in private behaviour had not his like. Two things there were that made him wonderful wise; the one, he would in all affairs hear counsel; the other, he had still recourse to prayer. Truly he was as wise as holy; I confess that in respect of his example only I leaned to understand this place of St. Paul concerning his care of all the churches: *Quis infirmatur & ego non infirmor; Quis scandalitatur, & ego non vror?* Who is weak, and I am not sick? Or who is offended, and I burn not? And that which followeth. To be brief, toward the end of his days, and being hoar-haired, he conceived two excellent imaginations, the one concerning that great and wonderful college that is now at building in your Rome for the teaching (a wonderful matter) of all languages in the word [sic?]; the other, the same which he propounded and began to put in execution touching the recovery of the goods of the Cath. Apost. Romish church. The same was it which he did so highly commend to the clergy, yea, to the Christian princes, and to his successor, to the end that the Roman see might recover the full brightness of her glory, and to deprive the enemy of mankind of that innumerable gain of souls that through his subtilty he doth daily make.

These were his last words when he left us with the water in our eyes and sorrow in our hearts for the loss of a thing of so great value. Nevertheless, sith it is to no purpose to weep, it resteth that we do two things: the one, that so much as in us lieth we endeavour to retain those notable institutions and walk in that path which he hath prescribed for us; the other, that we have recourse to God with prayer that he will send us a successor worthy him, and that as Simplician succeeded St. Ambrose, so to this Ambrose another Simplician in virtue and holiness may succeed.

This is that small matter, Oh blessed soul, which my foolish and unmeet tongue is able this day to utter of thee in midst of these sighs and lamentations. Now shall it cease, howbeit at time convenient, both this day and ever, my heart shall discourse of thee. Oh wretch that I am, O ye Roman people, to whom happeneth still the contrary of that which

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happened to the Roman soldier that was wounded and maimed upon one of his legs at a certain victory that he obtained, for he said that at every step that he set(?), and upon the least pain that he felt of his leg, he called to mind the most honourable blazon of his glory, but I, contrariwise, in the least commendations that I may obtain shall think upon my losses, for whensoever I shall boast that I have been servant to such a holiness & so great a personage, I must necessarily withal remember what a good I am deprived of. Let us therefore pray to our good God that it may please him, of his grace, with his holy spirit to inspire the most reverent cardinals, the electors of the holy, apost. and Romish see, to the end his Holiness' successor, succeeding in the holy see, may likewise succeed in those virtues and holiness wherewith he was endued and replenished.

AMEN.