

God whose cause you represent is only the production of a superstitious imagination."

"Cease, emperor!" interrupted the pope, with uplifted hands. "The God of old still lives!"

"What do you mean?"

"He who has said, 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool,' hears your sacrilegious words."

"I wish no sermon from your Holiness," exclaimed the angry emperor, "but tell me simply what you mean by your words, 'The God of old still lives!' Perhaps a threat?"

"Yes, and at the same time a kind, paternal warning."

"You probably wish to say that God feels himself at length impelled to execute the anathema which your Holiness has pronounced against me?"

"According to the laws of the Church, an anathema was pronounced against the church-robber, Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France. Before Almighty God, sire, all men are alike; princes also are bound to keep the commandments of God."

Napoleon laughed uneasily. He walked up and down the room several times. "Ha, ha! to tell me that! Me! This is another unwarrantable liberty taken by the vicar of Christ."

"It is the sacred duty of the vicar of Christ," responded the pope with earnestness. "Who shall remind the powerful of the earth of their duties, if the pope does not?"

"Enough, enough!" exclaimed Bonaparte. "You must remember that we are not living in the Middle Ages."

He continued his walk through the apartment. Disquiet and anger were visibly striving for the mastery within him.

"You said, 'The God of old is yet living.' What does your Holiness expect and hope from him?"

"I expect and know that the Almighty and Faithful God will keep his word," said Pius VII.

"What has the Almighty and Faithful God promised you?" ironically asked the emperor.

"He has promised assistance and protection to his church against all her enemies, and her continuance even unto the end of the world," solemnly answered the venerable pontiff.

"That is a great promise! We shall see! I am dissatisfied with the pope and with the church of the God of old. Perhaps I shall form a national religion, whose head will be, not the vicar of Christ, but the emperor."

"You overrate your power, sire!"