

Gregory XVI:

A Pope For Our Times

by
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The pontificate of Gregory XVI has been contrasted with that of Pius IX who succeeded him in 1846 and who reigned until 1878. Whereas Pius IX tried to conciliate the “revolutionary elements of Italy” with “mildness,” Pope Gregory XVI had kept these evil forces “in restraint by severity.” Gregory was all along the realist that Pius IX would become after De Rossi, his “energetic minister of the Papal States” was murdered and he himself was obliged to flee Rome to the Kingdom of Naples.

Gregory was an uncompromising defender of the rights of the Church who labored with a divinely inspired zeal against the enemies of God who sought to subvert all civil and ecclesiastical authority and to destroy the papacy. This was especially the program of the secret societies that harbored the conspiracy against the state and Church and especially of the *Carbonari* which is believed by many to have become the center of the world wide conspiracy that caused the French Revolution of 1789, which brought into existence the Communist International, caused the Russian Revolution of 1917 and which has not ceased to labor for the destruction of Christianity even in our day.

Of these secret societies Gregory was a tireless enemy. He did not see world revolution as the result of ac-

cidental historical forces but rather as the work of anti-Christian conspiracies pure and simple. He wrote to the bishops:

You are well aware by what evils and what calamities we have been assailed from the first instant of our pontificate; and how, carried away as we were, suddenly into the midst of the tempest, a miracle of

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our enemies.

He fully understood why religion was the chief object of hate for the conspirators. He wrote:

When the sacred bonds of religion are once contemptuously cast aside, bonds which preserve kingdoms and maintain the power and vigor of authority, public order is seen to disappear, sovereignty perish, and all legitimate power menaced by an ever-approaching revolution—abyss of bottomless miseries, which these conspiring societies have especially dug, in which heresy and sects have, so to speak, vomited, as in a sewer, all that their bosom holds of license, sacrilege, and blasphemy.

So keen was his awareness of the danger of the work of these conspirators that when he sensed his time

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was coming to an end, he commissioned the writing of a complete exposé. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* put it this way: "on 20 May, 1846, he felt himself failing, and ordered Crétineau-Joly to write the history of the secret societies, against which he had struggled..."

The enemies of the Church were not all outside. As Pius X would point out at the beginning of this century, they were to be found within and were that much more dangerous for it. The spirit of the changes which today have caused such terrible destruction was not born at Vatican Council II. Indeed, this spirit goes back even beyond the modernist movement which St. Pius X fought. This spirit formented by the same conspiracy is the same which sought the subversion of the Church in the time of Gregory XVI. The reason the Church was saved from "aggiornamento" back then was precisely because of the pontificate of this wonderful, holy, scholarly, courageous, godly minded man—Gregory XVI. He condemned in

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no uncertain terms the very idea which was the heart and soul of Vatican II. And what was that? It was the desire, in effect, to blame the Church for not appealing to modern man—the idea that something was wrong with the sacred rites and practices as they were and hence that these had to be changed to be restored and regenerated and replaced with a new discipline. Gregory condemned this notion as criminal, absurd and outrageous towards the Church stemming from "an insane liberty." He wrote:

"It would, therefore, be a crime, a formal derogation from the respect due the ec-

clesiastical laws, to blame, by an insane liberty of opinion, the discipline which the Church has consecrated, by

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which the administration of holy things and the conduct of the faithful are regulated, which determines the rights of the Church and the obligations of its ministry, and to declare that discipline hostile to certain principles of natural law, or incapable of acting by inherent imperfection. ... "

"...it is the height of absurdity and outrage towards it (i.e. the Church) to pretend that a restoration and regeneration have become necessary to secure its existence and its progress; as if it could be believed that it was thus subject to faintness, darkness, or other alterations of this kind. And what do these bold innovators seek, except to give new foundations to an institution which would thereby be only man's work, and realize what Saint Cyprian cannot sufficiently detest, by rendering the Church human, from all-divine that it is?"

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Showing kindness to win back the modernized clergy, he nevertheless acted in a swift and certain manner in disarming them. Lamennais and the directors of "L'Avenir" sought to elicit his tolerance in their struggle against the French hierarchy. In response Gregory issued *Mirari vos*, the wonderful Encyclical which dealt a devastating blow to the liberals and which inspired the bishops of the world to do battle with the enemy. "It is not sufficient to deplore these unnumbered

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misfortunes," he wrote, "unless we also use every effort to remove the source..." "It is for us to raise our voice," he declared to the Catholic bishops of the world, "to prevent, by our united efforts, the wild boar of the forest from trampling down the vineyard, and the wolves from ravaging the flock of the Lord." He went on:

"It is for us to lead the sheep only to wholesome pasturage, where not a hurtful weed need be dreaded by them. Far, then, from us, most dear brethren, amid scourges, multiplied and menacing dangers, far from us the indifference and fears of pastors who abandon their sheep, or sink into fatal slumbers beside the flock deprived of their care. Let us then act in a spirit of unity for our common cause, or rather for that of God; and against

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common enemies, for the salvation of all the people, let us unite our vigilance and efforts.

"This you will do perfectly if you watch yourselves and your doctrine, as your office makes it your duty, repeating incessantly to yourselves that *every novelty attempts to undermine the Universal Church*, and that, according to the warning of the holy Pope Agatho, 'nothing that has been regularly defined can bear diminution, or change, or addition, and repels every alteration of sense, or even words.'..."

"This should be, then, the aim of your efforts and the object of a continual vigilance, to guard the deposit of faith amid this vast conspiracy of impious men, whom we see, with the liveliest grief, formed to scatter and ruin it."

Pope Gregory had in addition to this glorious record of devotion and courage countless other extraordinary achievements. He was a brilliant intellectual, a fine theologian, a patron of the arts, founder of the Etruscan and Egyptian museums at the Vatican as well as of the Christian museum at the Lateran; he encouraged and aided the great churchmen of his day including Guéranger, he gave enormous aid for the rebuilding of St. Paul's Outside-the Walls and of Santa Maria degli Angioli, at Assisi. He aided in the researches in the Roman Forum and in the catacombs. He was deeply devoted to his people and sought their well being in all things. He founded hospitals and orphanages, etc. The list of his accomplishments goes on and on. His greatest accomplishment of all was of course that he protected the deposit of Faith and fed the flock and thus fulfilled his mission as successor of St. Peter and Vicar of Christ. Truly was he "a great priest, who in his days pleased God, and was found just; and in the time of wrath he was made a reconciliation."

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He was stricken with erysipelas in the face which at first did not seem too serious. On May 31, 1846 his strength left him and he died early in the day on June 9th, "with two attendants near him. His tomb, by Amici, is in St. Peter's."

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tificate point the finger of judgment at the authors of the reform and at the secret powers behind many governments of the world condemning what they have done by his apostolic authority—by the authority of Christ the King whose Vicar he was. It is clear, one cannot be in communion with the faith of Gregory XVI and the faith of the new religion. One must choose or be condemned to wallow in the mud of contradiction and illegitimacy.

We choose Gregory, his predecessors and successors. We reject anyone and everyone who rejects them and is an enemy of the faith he proclaimed and the Church he defended.

"We choose Gregory..."
