

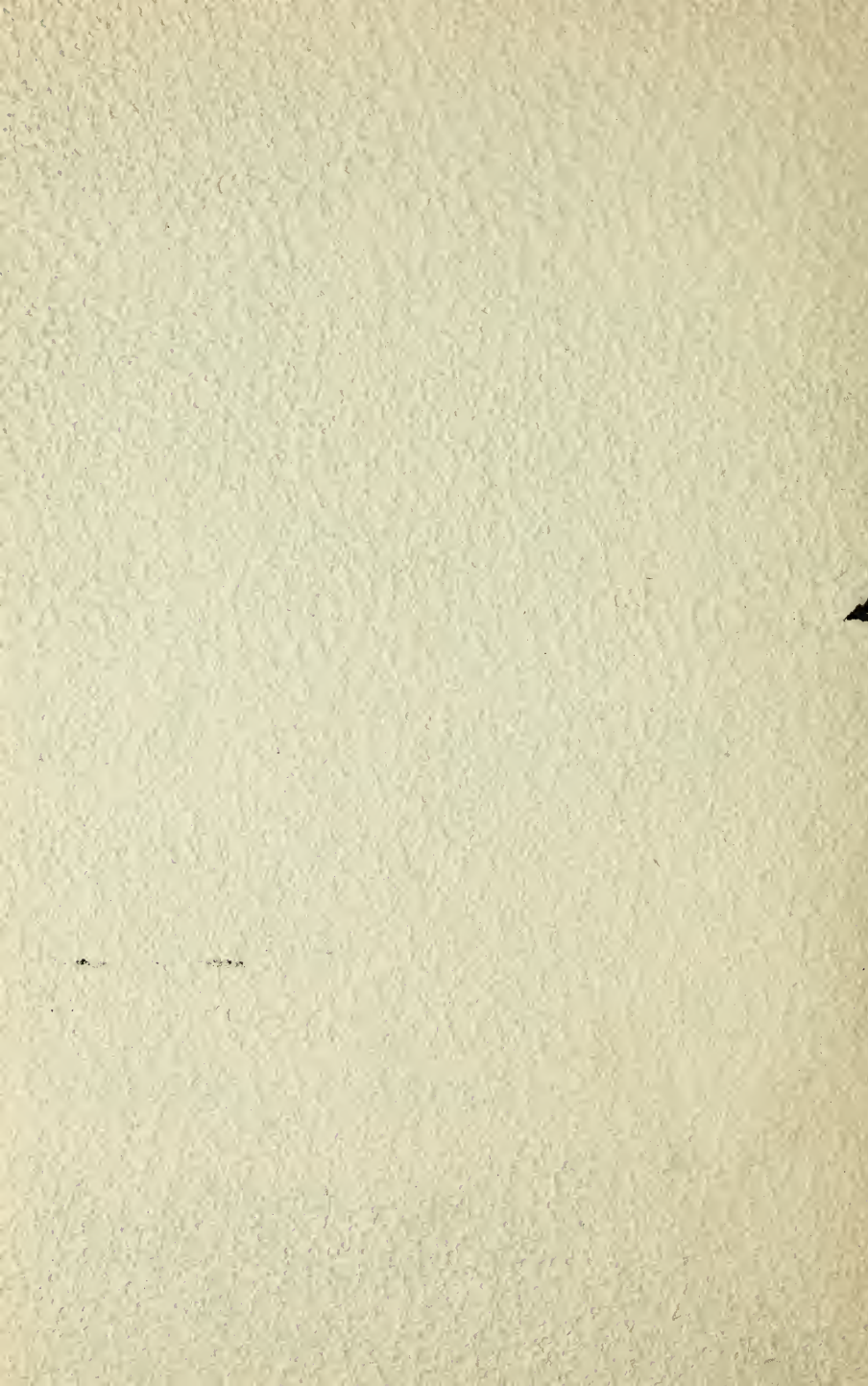
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**The XIII Centenary**  
of  
**St. Gregory**

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**Encyclical Letter of Pius X.**





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# The Thirteenth Centenary of St. Gregory

Encyclical Letter of Our Holy Father

**PIUS X.**

By Divine Providence

**POPE**



TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHREN, THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS, AND OTHER ORDINARIES IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE,

PIUS X., POPE.

VENERABLE BRETHREN,

HEALTH AND THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION.

JOYFUL indeed is the remembrance, Venerable Brethren, of that great and incomparable Pontiff, first of the name of Gregory, whose thirteenth centenary solemnity we are about to celebrate. By that God who *killeth and maketh alive*, who *humbleth and exalteth*, it was ordained, not, We think, without a special providence, amid the almost innumerable cares of Our Apostolic ministry, amid all the anxieties which the government of the Universal Church imposes upon Us, amid Our pressing solicitude to satisfy as best We may your claims, Venerable Brethren, who have been called to a share in Our Apostolate, and those of all the faithful entrusted to Our care, that Our gaze at the beginning of Our Pontificate should be turned at once towards that most holy and illustrious Prede-

cessor of Ours, the honor of the Church and its glory. For Our heart is filled with great confidence in his most powerful intercession with God, and strengthened by the memory of the sublime maxims he inculcated in his lofty office and of the virtues devoutly practiced by him. And since by the force of the former and the fruitfulness of the latter he has left on God's Church an impression so far reaching, so deep, so lasting, that his contemporaries and posterity have justly given him the name of Great, and that to-day, after all these centuries, the eulogy of his epitaph is still verified: "He lives eternal in every place by his innumerable good works,"<sup>1</sup> it will surely be given, with the help of Divine grace, to all followers of his wonderful example, to fulfil the duties of their own offices, as far as human weakness permits.

There is but little need to repeat here what public documents have made known to all. When Gregory assumed the Supreme Pontificate the disorder in public affairs had reached its climax; the ancient civilization had all but disappeared and barbarism was spreading throughout the dominions of the crumbling Roman Empire. Italy, abandoned by the Emperors of Byzantium, had been left a prey of the still unsettled Lombards who roamed over the whole country, laying waste everything with fire and sword and bringing desolation and death in their train. This very city, threatened from without by its enemies, tried from within by the scourges of pestilence, floods and famine, was reduced to such a miserable plight that it had become a problem how to keep the breath of life in the citizens and in the immense multitudes who flocked hither for refuge. Here were to be found men and women of

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<sup>1</sup> Apud Joann. Diac., *Vita Greg.* iv. 63.

all conditions, bishops and priests carrying the sacred vessels they had saved from plunder, monks and innocent spouses of Christ who had sought safety in flight from the swords of the enemy or from the brutal insults of abandoned men. Gregory himself calls the Church of Rome: "An old ship wofully shattered; for the waters are entering on all sides, and its timbers, buffeted by the daily stress of the storm, are growing rotten and herald shipwreck."<sup>2</sup> But the pilot raised up by God had a strong hand, and when placed at the helm succeeded not only in making the port in despite of the raging seas, but in saving the vessel from future storms.

Truly wonderful is the work he was able to effect during his reign of little more than thirteen years. He was the restorer of Christian life in its entirety, stimulating the devotion of the faithful, the observance of the monks, the discipline of the clergy, the pastoral solicitude of the bishops. *Most prudent father of the family of Christ* that he was,<sup>3</sup> he preserved and increased the patrimony of the Church, and liberally succored the impoverished people, the Christian commonwealth, and individual churches, according to the necessities of each. *Becoming truly God's Consul* (Epitaph), he pushed his fruitful activity far beyond the walls of Rome, and entirely for the advantage of civilized society. He opposed energetically the unjust claims of the Byzantine Emperors; he checked the audacity and curbed the shameless avarice of the exarchs and the imperial administrators, and stood up before the world as the defender of social justice. He tamed the ferocity of the Lombards, and did not hesitate

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<sup>2</sup> *Registrum* i., 4 ad Joannem episcop. Constantino.

<sup>3</sup> Joann. Diac., *Vita Greg.* ii. 51.



to meet Agulfus at the gates of Rome to prevail upon him to raise the siege of the city, just as the Pontiff Leo the Great did in the case of Attila; nor did he desist in his prayers, in his gentle persuasion, in his skilful negotiation, until he saw that dreaded people settle down and adopt a more regular government; until he knew that they were won to the Catholic faith, mainly through the influence of the pious Queen Theodolinda, his daughter in Christ. Hence Gregory may justly be called the saviour and liberator of Italy—*his own land*, as he tenderly calls her.

Through his incessant pastoral care the embers of heresy in Italy and Africa died out, ecclesiastical life in the Gauls was re-organized, the Visigoths of the Spains were welded together in the conversion which had already been begun among them, and the renowned English nation, which, "situated in a corner of the world, and which had hitherto remained obstinate in the worship of wood and stone,"<sup>4</sup> also received the true faith of Christ. Gregory's heart overflowed with joy at the news of this precious conquest, for his was the heart of a father embracing his most beloved son, while attributing all the merit of it to Jesus the Redeemer, "for whose love," as he himself writes, "we are seeking our unknown brethren in Britain, and through whose grace we are finding the unknown ones we were seeking."<sup>5</sup> And so grateful to the Holy Pontiff was the English nation that they called Him always: *our Master, our Doctor, our Apostle, our Pope, our Gregory*, and considered itself as the seal of his apostolate. In fine, so salutary and so

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<sup>4</sup> *Reg.* viii. 20, 30, ad Eulog. Episcop. Alexandr.

<sup>5</sup> *Reg.* xi. 36 (28), ad Augustin. Anglorum Episcopum.



efficacious was his action that the memory of the works wrought by him became deeply impressed on the minds of posterity, especially during the Middle Ages, which breathed, so to say, the atmosphere infused by him. It fed on his words, conformed its life and manners according to the example inculcated by him, with the result that Christian social civilization was happily introduced into the world in opposition to the Roman civilization of the preceding centuries, which now passed away for ever.

*This is the change of the right hand of the Most High!* And well may it be said that in the mind of Gregory the hand of God alone was operative in these great events. What he wrote to the most holy monk Augustine about this same conversion of the English may be equally applied to all the rest of his apostolic acts: "Whose work is this but His who said: My Father worketh till now, and I work?"<sup>6</sup> To show the world that He wished to convert it, not by the wisdom of men, but by His own power, He chose unlettered men to be preachers to the world; and the same He has now done, vouchsafing to accomplish through weak men great things among the nation of the Angles."<sup>7</sup> We, indeed, may discern much that the holy Pontiff's profound humility hid from his own sight: his knowledge of affairs, his talent for bringing his undertakings to a successful issue, the wonderful prudence shown in all his provisions, his assiduous vigilance, his persevering solicitude. But it is, nevertheless, true that he never put himself forward as one invested with the might and power of the great ones of the earth, for instead of using the exalted prestige of the Pontifical dignity, he preferred to call himself the *Servant of the Ser-*

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<sup>6</sup>John v. 17.

<sup>7</sup>Reg. xi. 36 (28).

*vants of God*, a title which he was the first to adopt. It was not merely by profane science or the "persuasive words of human wisdom" that he traced out his career, or by the devices of civil politics, or by systems of social renovation, skilfully studied, prepared and put in execution; nor yet, and this is very striking, by setting before himself a vast programme of apostolic action to be gradually realized; for we know that, on the contrary, his mind was full of the idea of the approaching end of the world which was to have left him but little time for great exploits. Very delicate and fragile of body though he was, and constantly afflicted by infirmities which several times brought him to the point of death, he yet possessed an incredible energy of soul which was forever receiving fresh vigor from his lively faith in the infallible words of Christ, and in His divine promises. Then again, he counted with unlimited confidence on the supernatural force given by God to the Church for the successful accomplishment of her divine mission in the world. The constant aim of his life, as shown in all his words and works, was, therefore, this: to preserve in himself, and to stimulate in others this same lively faith and confidence, doing all the good possible at the moment in expectation of the Divine judgment.

And this produced in him the fixed resolve to adopt for the salvation of all the abundant wealth of supernatural means given by God to His Church, such as the infallible teaching of revealed truth, and the preaching of the same teaching in the whole world, and the sacraments which have the power of infusing or increasing the life of the soul, and the grace of prayer in the name of Jesus which assures heavenly protection.

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\*1 Cor. ii. 4.

## THEN AND NOW.

These memories, Venerable Brethren, are a source of unspeakable comfort to Us. When We glance around from the walls of the Vatican We find that, like Gregory, and perhaps with even more reason than he, We have grounds for fear, with so many storms gathering on every side, with so many hostile forces massed and advancing against Us, who are at the same time so utterly deprived of all human aid to ward off the former and to help us to meet the shock of the latter. But when We consider the place on which Our feet rest and on which this Pontifical See is based, We feel Ourselves perfectly safe on the rock of Holy Church. "For who does not know," wrote St. Gregory to the Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria, "that Holy Church stands on the solidity of the Prince of the Apostles, who received his name from his firmness, for he was called Peter from the word rock?"<sup>9</sup> Supernatural force has never during the flight of ages been found wanting in the Church, nor have Christ's promises failed; these remain to-day just as they were when they brought consolation to Gregory's heart—nay, they are endowed with even greater force for Us after having stood the test of centuries and so many changes of circumstances and events.

Kingdoms and empires have passed away; peoples once renowned for their history and civilization have disappeared; time and again the nations, as though overwhelmed by the weight of years, have fallen asunder; while the Church, indefectible in her essence, united by ties indissoluble with her heavenly Spouse, is here to-day radiant with eternal youth, strong with the same primi-

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<sup>9</sup> *Registr.* vii. 37 (40).



tive vigor with which she came from the Heart of Christ dead upon the Cross. Men powerful in the world have risen up against her. They have disappeared, and she remains. Philosophical systems without number, of every form and every kind, rose up against her, arrogantly vaunting themselves her masters, as though they had at last destroyed the doctrine of the Church, refuted the dogmas of her faith, proved the absurdity of her teachings. But those systems, one after another, have passed into books of history, forgotten, bankrupt; while from the Rock of Peter the light of truth shines forth as brilliantly as on the day when Jesus first kindled it on His appearance in the world, and fed it with His Divine words: "Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass."<sup>10</sup>

We, strengthened by this faith, firmly established on this rock, realizing to the full all the heavy duties that the Primacy imposes on Us—but also all the vigor that comes to Us from the Divine Will—calmly wait until all the voices which now shout around Us, proclaiming that the Church has gone beyond her time, that her doctrines are passed away forever, that the day is at hand when she will be condemned either to accept the tenets of a godless science and civilization or to disappear from human society, be scattered to the winds. Yet at the same time We cannot but remind all, great and small, as Pope St. Gregory did, of the absolute necessity of having recourse to this Church in order to have eternal salvation, to follow the right road of reason, to feed on the truth, to obtain peace and even happiness in this life.

Wherefore, to use the words of the Holy Pontiff.

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<sup>10</sup> Matth. xxiv. 35.

“Turn your steps towards this unshaken rock upon which Our Saviour founded the Universal Church, so that the path of him who is sincere of heart may not be lost in devious windings.”<sup>11</sup> It is only the charity of the Church and union with her which “unite what is divided, restore order where there is confusion, temper inequalities, fill up imperfections.”<sup>12</sup> It is to be firmly held “that nobody can rightly govern in earthly things, unless he knows how to treat divine things, and that the peace of States depends upon the universal peace of the Church.”<sup>13</sup> Hence the absolute necessity of a perfect harmony between the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil, each being by the will of God called to sustain the other. For, “power over all men was given from heaven that those who aspire to do well may be aided, that the path to heaven may be made broader, and that earthly sovereignty may be handmaid to heavenly sovereignty.”<sup>14</sup>

From these principles was derived that unconquerable firmness shown by Gregory, which We, with the help of God, will study to imitate, resolved to defend at all costs the rights and prerogatives of which the Roman Pontificate is the guardian and the defender before God and man. But it was the same Gregory who wrote to the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch: “When the rights of the Church are in question, we must show, even by our death, that we do not, through love of some private interest of our own want anything contrary to the

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<sup>11</sup> *Reg.* viii. 24 ad Sabin. episcop.

<sup>12</sup> *Registr.* v. 58 (53) ad Virgil episcop.

<sup>13</sup> *Registr.* v. 37 (20) ad Mauric. Aug.

<sup>14</sup> *Registr.* iii. 61 (65) ad Mauric. Aug.

common weal."<sup>15</sup> And to the Emperor Maurice: "He who through vain glory raises his head against God Almighty and against the statutes of the Fathers, shall not bend my neck to him, not even with the cutting of swords, as I trust in the same God Almighty."<sup>16</sup> And to the Deacon Sabinian: "I am ready to die rather than permit that the Church degenerate in my days. And you know well my ways, that I am long-suffering; but when I decide not to bear any longer, I face danger with a joyful soul."<sup>17</sup>

Such were the fundamental maxims which the Pontiff Gregory constantly proclaimed, and men listened to him. And thus, with princes and peoples docile to his words, the world regained true salvation, and put itself on the path of a civilization which was noble and fruitful in blessings in proportion as it was founded on the incontrovertible dictates of reason and moral discipline, and derived its force from truth divinely revealed and from the maxims of the Gospel.

But in those days the people, albeit rude, ignorant, and still destitute of all civilization, were eager for life, and this no one could give except Christ, through the Church. He came "that they may have life and have it more abundantly."<sup>18</sup> And truly they had life and had it abundantly, precisely because as no other life but the supernatural life of souls could come from the Church, this includes in itself and gives additional vigor to all the energies of life, even in the natural order. "If the root be holy so are the branches," said St. Paul to the Gentiles, "and thou being a wild olive art ingrafted in them,

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<sup>15</sup>*Registr.* v. 41.

<sup>16</sup>*Registr.* v. 37.

<sup>17</sup>*Registr.* v. 6 (iv. 47).

<sup>18</sup>John x. 10.



and art made partaker of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree."<sup>10</sup>

To-day, on the contrary, although the world enjoys a light so full of Christian civilization, and in this respect cannot for a moment be compared with the times of Gregory, yet it seems as though it were tired of that life, which has been and still is the chief and often the sole fount of so many blessings—and not merely past but present blessings. And not only does this useless branch cut itself off from the trunk, as happened in other times when heresies and schisms arose, but it first lays the axe to the root of the tree, which is the Church, and strives to dry up its vital sap that its ruin may be the surer and that it may never blossom again.

In this error, which is the chief one of our time and the source whence all the others spring, lies the origin of so much loss of eternal salvation among men, and of all the ruins affecting religion which we continue to lament, and of the many others which we still fear will happen if the evil be not remedied. For all supernatural order is denied, and, as a consequence, the divine intervention in the order of creation and in the government of the world and in the possibility of miracles; and when all these are taken away the foundations of the Christian religion are necessarily shaken. Men even go so far as to impugn the arguments for the existence of God, denying with unparalleled audacity and against the first principles of reason the invincible force of the proof which from the effects ascends to their cause, that is God, and to the notion of His infinite attributes. "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen,

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<sup>10</sup> Rom. xi. 16, 17.

being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and divinity."<sup>20</sup> The way is thus opened to other most grievous errors, equally repugnant to right reason and pernicious to good morals.

The gratuitous negation of the supernatural principle, proper to *knowledge falsely so-called*, has actually become the postulate of a historical criticism equally false. Everything that relates in any way to the supernatural order, either as belonging to it, constituting it, presupposing it, or merely finding its explanation in it, is erased without further investigation from the pages of history. Such are the Divinity of Jesus Christ, His Incarnation through the operation of the Holy Ghost, His Resurrection by His own power, and in general all the dogmas of our faith. Science once placed on this false road, there is no law of criticism to hold it back; and it cancels at its own caprice from the holy books everything that does not suit it or that it believes to be opposed to the pre-established theses it wishes to demonstrate. For take away the supernatural order and the story of the origin of the Church must be built on quite another foundation, and hence the innovators handle as they list the monuments of history, forcing them to say what they wish them to say, and not what the authors of those monuments meant.

Many are captivated by the great show of erudition which is held out before them, and by the apparently convincing force of the proofs adduced, so that they either lose the faith or feel that it is greatly shaken in them. There are many too, firm in the faith, who accuse critical science of being destructive, while in itself it is

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<sup>20</sup> Rom. i. 20.

innocent and a sure element of investigation when rightly applied. Both the former and the latter fail to see that they start from a false hypothesis, that is to say, from science falsely so-called, which logically forces them to conclusions equally false. For given a false philosophical principle, everything deduced from it is vitiated. But these errors will never be effectually refuted, unless by bringing about a change of front, that is to say, unless those in error be forced to leave the field of criticism in which they consider themselves firmly entrenched for the legitimate field of philosophy through the abandonment of which they have fallen into their errors.

Meanwhile, however, it is painful to have to apply to men not lacking in acumen and application the rebuke addressed by St. Paul to those who fail to rise from earthly things to the things that are invisible: "They became vain in their thoughts and their foolish heart was darkened; for professing themselves to be wise they became fools."<sup>21</sup> And surely foolish is the only description of him who consumes all his intellectual forces in building upon sand.

Not less deplorable are the injuries which accrue from this negation to the moral life of individuals and of civil society. Take away the principle that there is anything divine outside this visible world, and you take away all check upon unbridled passions even of the lowest and most shameful kind, and the minds that become slaves to them riot in disorders of every species. "God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves."<sup>22</sup> You are well aware, Venerable Brethren, how truly the plague of

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<sup>21</sup> Rom. i. 21, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Rom. i. 24.



depravity triumphs on all sides, and how the civil authority, wherever it fails to have recourse to the means of help offered by the supernatural order, finds itself quite unequal to the task of checking it. Nay, authority will never be able to heal other evils as long as it forgets or denies that all power comes from God. The only check a government can command in this case is that of force; but force cannot be constantly employed, nor is it always available; yet the people continue to be undermined as by a secret disease, they become discontented with everything, they proclaim the right to act as they please, they stir up rebellions, they provoke revolutions, often of extreme violence, in the State; they overthrow all rights, human and divine. Take away God and all respect for civil laws, all regard for even the most necessary institutions disappears; justice is scouted; the very liberty that belongs to the law of nature is trodden under foot; and men go so far as to destroy the very structure of the family, which is the first and firmest foundation of the social structure. The result is that in these days hostile to Christ, it has become more difficult to apply the powerful remedies which the Redeemer has put into the hands of the Church in order to keep the peoples within the lines of duty.

Yet there is no salvation for the world but in Christ: "For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we may be saved."<sup>23</sup> To Christ then we must return. At His feet we must prostrate ourselves to hear from His divine mouth the words of eternal life, for He alone can show us the way of regeneration, He alone teach us the truth, He alone restore life to us. It is He who has said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Acts iv. 12.

<sup>24</sup> John xiv. 16.

Men have once more attempted to work here below without Him, they have begun to build up the edifice after rejecting the corner stone, as the Apostle Peter rebuked the executioners of Jesus for doing. And lo! the pile that has been raised again crumbles and falls upon the heads of the builders, crushing them. But Jesus remains forever the corner-stone of human society, and again the truth becomes apparent that without Him there is no salvation: "This is the stone which has been rejected by you, the builders, and which has become the head of the corner, neither is there salvation in any other."<sup>25</sup>

From all this you will easily see, Venerable Brethren, the absolute necessity imposed upon every one of us to revive with all the energy of our souls and with all the means at our disposal, this supernatural life in every branch of society—in the poor working-man who earns his morsel of bread by the sweat of his brow, from morning to night, and in the great ones of the earth who preside over the destiny of nations. We must, above all else, have recourse to prayer, both public and private, to implore the mercies of the Lord and His powerful assistance. "Lord, save us—we perish,"<sup>26</sup> we must repeat like the other Apostles when buffeted by the storm.

But this is not enough. Gregory rebukes the bishop who, through love of spiritual solitude and prayer, fails to go out into the battlefield to combat strenuously for the cause of the Lord: "The name of bishop, which he bears, is an empty one." And rightly so, for men's intellects are to be enlightened by continual preaching of the truth, and errors are to be efficaciously refuted by the

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<sup>25</sup> Acts iv. 11, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew viii. 25.

principles of true and solid philosophy and theology, and by all means provided by the genuine progress of historical investigation. It is still more necessary to inculcate properly in the minds of all the moral maxims taught by Jesus Christ, so that everybody may learn to conquer self, to curb the passions of the mind, to stifle pride, to live in obedience to authority, to love justice, to show charity towards all, to temper with Christian love the bitterness of social inequalities, to detach the heart from the goods of the world, to live contented with the state in which Providence has placed us, while striving to better it by the fulfilment of our duties, to thirst after the future life in the hope of eternal reward. But, above all, it is necessary that these principles be instilled and made to penetrate into the heart, so that true and solid piety may strike root there, and all, both as men and as Christians, may recognize by their acts, as well as by their words, the duties of their state and have recourse with filial confidence to the Church and her ministers to obtain from them pardon for their sins, to receive the strengthening grace of the Sacraments, and to regulate their lives according to the laws of Christianity.

With these chief duties of the spiritual ministry it is necessary to unite the charity of Christ, and when this moves us there will be nobody in affliction who will not be consoled by us, no tears that will not be dried by our hands, no need that will not be relieved by us. To the exercise of this charity let us dedicate ourselves wholly; let all our own affairs give way before it, let our personal interests and convenience be set aside for it, making ourselves "all things to all men,"<sup>27</sup> to gain all men to the

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 22.



Lord, giving up our very life itself, after the example of Christ, who imposes this as a duty on the pastors of the Church: "The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep."<sup>28</sup>

These precious admonitions abound in the pages which the Pontiff St. Gregory has written, and they are expressed with far greater force in the manifold examples of his admirable life.

Now since all this springs necessarily both from the nature of the principles of Christian revelation, and from the intrinsic properties which Our Apostolate should have, you see clearly, Venerable Brethren, how mistaken are those who think they are doing service to the Church, and producing fruit for the salvation of souls, when by a kind of prudence of the flesh they show themselves liberal in concessions to science falsely so-called, under the fatal illusion that they are thus able more easily to win over those in error, but really with the continual danger of being themselves lost. The truth is one, and it cannot be halved; it lasts forever, and is not subject to the vicissitudes of the times. "Jesus Christ, to-day and yesterday, and the same forever."<sup>29</sup>

And so too are all they seriously mistaken who, occupying themselves with the welfare of the people, and especially upholding the cause of the lower classes, seek to promote above all else the material well-being of the body and of life, but are utterly silent about their spiritual welfare and the very serious duties which their profession as Christians enjoins upon them. They are not ashamed to conceal sometimes, as though with a veil, certain fundamental maxims of the Gospel, for fear lest

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<sup>28</sup> John x. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Hebr. xiii. 8.

otherwise the people refuse to hear and follow them. It will certainly be the part of prudence to proceed gradually in laying down the truth, when one has to do with men completely strangers to us and completely separated from God. "Before using the steel, let the wounds be felt with a light hand,"<sup>30</sup> as Gregory said. But even this carefulness would sink to mere prudence of the flesh, were it proposed as the rule of constant and everyday action—all the more since such a method would seem not to hold in due account that Divine Grace which sustains the sacerdotal ministry and which is given not only to those who exercise this ministry, but to all the faithful of Christ in order that our words and our action may find an entrance into their heart. Gregory did not at all understand this prudence, either in the preaching of the Gospel, or in the many wonderful works undertaken by him to relieve misery. He did constantly what the Apostles had done, for they, when they went out for the first time into the world to bring into it the name of Christ, repeated the saying: "We preach Christ crucified, a scandal for the Jews, a folly for the Gentiles."<sup>31</sup> If ever there was a time in which human prudence seemed to offer the only expedient for obtaining something in a world altogether unprepared to receive doctrines so new, so repugnant to human passions, so opposed to the civilization, then at its most flourishing period, of the Greeks and the Romans, that time was certainly the epoch of the preaching of the faith. But the Apostles disdained such prudence, because they understood well the precept of God: "It pleased God by the foolishness of our preaching

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<sup>30</sup> *Registr.* v. 44 (18) ad Joannem episcop.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23.

to save them that believe."<sup>32</sup> And as it ever was, so it is to-day, this foolishness "to them that are saved, that is, to us, is the power of God."<sup>33</sup> The scandal of the Crucified will ever furnish us in the future, as it has done in the past, with the most potent of all weapons; now as of yore in that sign we shall find victory.

But, Venerable Brethren, this weapon will lose much of its efficacy or be altogether useless in the hands of men not accustomed to the interior life with Christ, not educated in the school of true and solid piety, not thoroughly inflamed with zeal for the glory of God and for the propagation of His kingdom. So keenly did Gregory feel this necessity that he used the greatest care in creating bishops and priests animated by a great desire for the divine glory and for the true welfare of souls. And this was the intent he had before him in his book on the *Pastoral Rule*, wherein are gathered together the laws regulating the formation of the clergy and the government of bishops—laws most suitable not for his times only but for our own. Like an "Argus full of light," says his biographer, "he moved all round the eyes of his pastoral solicitude through all the extent of the world,"<sup>34</sup> to discover and correct the failings and the negligence of the clergy. Nay, he trembled at the very thought that barbarism and immorality might obtain a footing in the life of the clergy, and he was deeply moved and gave himself no peace whenever he learned of some infraction of the disciplinary laws of the Church, and immediately administered admonition and correction, threatening canonical penalties on transgressors, sometimes imme-

<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor. i. 21.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Cor. i. 18.

<sup>34</sup> Joann. Diac., lib. ii. c. 55.

diately applying these penalties himself, and again removing the unworthy from their offices without delay and without human respect.

Moreover, he inculcated the maxims which we frequently find in his writings in such form as this: "In what frame of mind does one enter upon the office of mediator between God and man who is not conscious of being familiar with grace through a meritorious life?"<sup>35</sup> "If passion lives in his actions, with what presumption does he hasten to cure the wound, when he wears a scar on his very face?"<sup>36</sup> What fruit can be expected for the salvation of souls if the apostles "combat in their lives what they preach in their words?"<sup>37</sup> "Truly he cannot remove the delinquencies of others who is himself ravaged by the same."<sup>38</sup>

The picture of the true priest, as Gregory understands and describes him, is the man "who, dying to all passions of the flesh, already lives spiritually; who has no thought for the prosperity of the world; who has no fear of adversity; who desires only internal things; who does not permit himself to desire what belongs to others but is liberal of his own; who is all bowels of compassion and inclines to forgiveness, but in forgiveness never swerves unduly from the perfection of righteousness; who never commits unlawful actions, but deploras as though they were his own the unlawful actions of others; who with all affection of the heart compassionates the weakness of others, and rejoices in the prosperity of his neighbor as in his own profit; who in all his doings so renders himself a model for others as to have nothing whereof to be

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<sup>35</sup> *Reg. Past.* i. 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Reg. Past.* i. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Reg. Past.* i. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Reg. Past.* i. 11.



ashamed, at least, as regards his external actions; who studies so to live that he may be able to water the parched hearts of his neighbors with the waters of doctrine; who knows through the use of prayer and through his own experience that he can obtain from the Lord what he asks."<sup>39</sup>

How much thought, therefore, Venerable Brethren, must the Bishop seriously take with himself and in the presence of God before laying hands on young levites! "Let him never dare, either as an act of favor to anybody or in response to petitions made to him, to promote any one to sacred orders whose life and actions do not furnish a guarantee of worthiness."<sup>40</sup> With what deliberation should he reflect before entrusting the work of the apostolate to newly ordained priests! If they be not duly tried under the vigilant guardianship of more prudent priests, if there be not abundant evidence of their morality, of their inclination for spiritual exercises, of their prompt obedience to all the forms of action which are suggested by the ecclesiastical custom or proved by long experience, or imposed by those whom "the Holy Ghost has placed as bishops to rule the Church of God,"<sup>41</sup> they will exercise the sacerdotal ministry not for the salvation but for the ruin of the Christian people. For they will provoke discord, and excite rebellion, more or less tacit, thus offering to the world the sad spectacle of something like division amongst us, whereas in truth these deplorable incidents are but the pride and the unruliness of a few. Oh! let those who stir up discord be altogether removed from office. Of such apostles the

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<sup>39</sup> *Reg. Past.* i. 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Registr.* v. 36 (58 ad universos episcopos per Hellad).

<sup>41</sup> Acts xx. 28.

Church has no need; they are not apostles of Jesus Christ Crucified but of themselves.

We seem to see still present before Our eyes the Holy Pontiff Gregory at the Lateran Council, surrounded by a great number of bishops from all parts of the world. Oh, how fruitful is the exhortation that falls from his lips on the duties of the clergy! How his heart is consumed with zeal! His words are as lightnings rending the perverse, as scourges striking the indolent, as flames of divine love gently enfolding the most fervent. Read that wonderful homily of Gregory, Venerable Brethren, and have it read and meditated by your clergy, especially during the annual retreat."<sup>42</sup>

Among other things, with unspeakable sorrow he exclaims: "Lo, the world is full of priests, but rare indeed it is to find a worker in the hands of God; we do indeed assume the priestly office, but the obligation of the office we do not fulfil."<sup>43</sup> What force the Church would have to-day could she count a worker in every priest! What abundant fruit would the supernatural life of the Church produce in souls were it efficaciously promoted by all. Gregory succeeded in his own times in strenuously stimulating this spirit of energetic action, and such was the impulse given by him that the same spirit was kept alive during the succeeding ages. The whole mediæval period bears what may be called the Gregorian imprint; almost everything it had indeed came to it from the Pontiff—the rules of ecclesiastical government, the manifold phases of charity and philanthropy in its social institutions, the principles of the most perfect Christian asceticism and of monastic life, the arrangement of the liturgy and the art of sacred music.

<sup>42</sup> Hom. in Evang. i. 17.

<sup>43</sup> Hom. in Evang. n. 3.

The times are indeed greatly changed. But, as We have more than once repeated, nothing is changed in the life of the Church. From her Divine Founder she has inherited the virtue of being able to supply at all times, however much they may differ, all that is required not only for the spiritual welfare of souls, which is the direct object of her mission, but also everything that aids progress in true civilization, for this follows as a natural consequence of that same mission.

For it cannot be but that the truths of the supernatural order, of which the Church is the depository, promote also everything that is true, good and beautiful in the order of nature, and this the more efficaciously in proportion as these truths are traced to the supreme principle of all truth, goodness and beauty, which is God.

Human science gains greatly from revelation, for the latter opens out new horizons and makes known sooner other truths of the natural order, and because it opens the true road to investigation and keeps it safe from errors of application and of method. Thus does the lighthouse show many things they otherwise would not see, while it points out the rocks on which the vessel would suffer shipwreck.

And since, for our moral discipline, the Divine Redeemer proposes as our supreme model of perfection His heavenly Father,<sup>44</sup> that is, the Divine Goodness itself, who can fail to see the mighty impulse thence accruing to the ever more perfect observance of the natural law inscribed in our hearts, and consequently to the greater welfare of the individual, the family, and universal society? The ferocity of the barbarians was thus

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<sup>44</sup> Matthew v. 48.

transformed into gentleness, woman was freed from subjection, slavery was repressed, order was restored in the due and reciprocal dependence upon one another of the various classes of society, justice was recognized, the true liberty of souls was proclaimed, and social and domestic peace assured.

Finally, the arts, modelled on the supreme exemplar of all beauty which is God Himself, from whom is derived all the beauty to be found in nature, are more securely withdrawn from vulgar concepts and more efficaciously rise towards the ideal, which is the life of all art. And how fruitful of good has been the principle of employing them in the service of divine worship and of offering to the Lord everything that is deemed to be worthy of Him, by reason of its richness, its goodness, its elegance of form. This principle has created sacred art, which became and still continues to be the foundation of all profane art. We have recently touched upon this in a special *Motu Proprio*, when speaking of the restoration of the Roman Chant according to the ancient tradition and of sacred music. And the same rules are applicable to the other arts, each in its own sphere, so that what has been said of the chant may also be said of painting, sculpture, architecture; and towards all these most noble creations of genius the Church has been lavish of inspiration and encouragement. The whole human race, fed on this sublime ideal, raises magnificent temples, and here in the House of God, as in its own house, lifts up its heart to heavenly things in the midst of the treasures of all beautiful art, with the majesty of liturgical ceremony, and to the accompaniment of the sweetest of song.

All these benefits, We repeat, the action of the Pontiff



St. Gregory succeeded in attaining in his own time and in the centuries that followed; and these, too, it will be possible to attain to-day, by virtue of the intrinsic efficacy of the principles which should guide us and of the means we have at our disposal, while preserving with all zeal the good which by the grace of God is still left us and "restoring in Christ"<sup>45</sup> all that has unfortunately lapsed from the right rule.

We are glad to be able to close these Our Letters with the very words with which St. Gregory concluded his memorable exhortation in the Lateran Council: "These things, Brethren, you should meditate with all solicitude yourselves and at the same time propose for the meditation of your neighbour. Prepare to restore to God the fruit of the ministry you have received. But everything we have indicated for you we shall obtain much better by prayer than by our discourse. Let us pray: O God, by whose will we have been called as pastors among the people, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may be enabled to be in Thy sight what we are said to be by the mouths of men."<sup>46</sup>

And while by the intercession of the holy Pontiff Gregory We trust that God may graciously hear Our prayer, We impart to all of you, Venerable Brethren, and to your clergy and people the Apostolic benediction with all the affection of Our heart, as a pledge of heavenly favors and in token of Our paternal good-will.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's on March 12, of the year 1904, on the feast of St. Gregory I. Pope and Doctor of the Church, in the first year of Our Pontificate.

PIUS X., POPE.

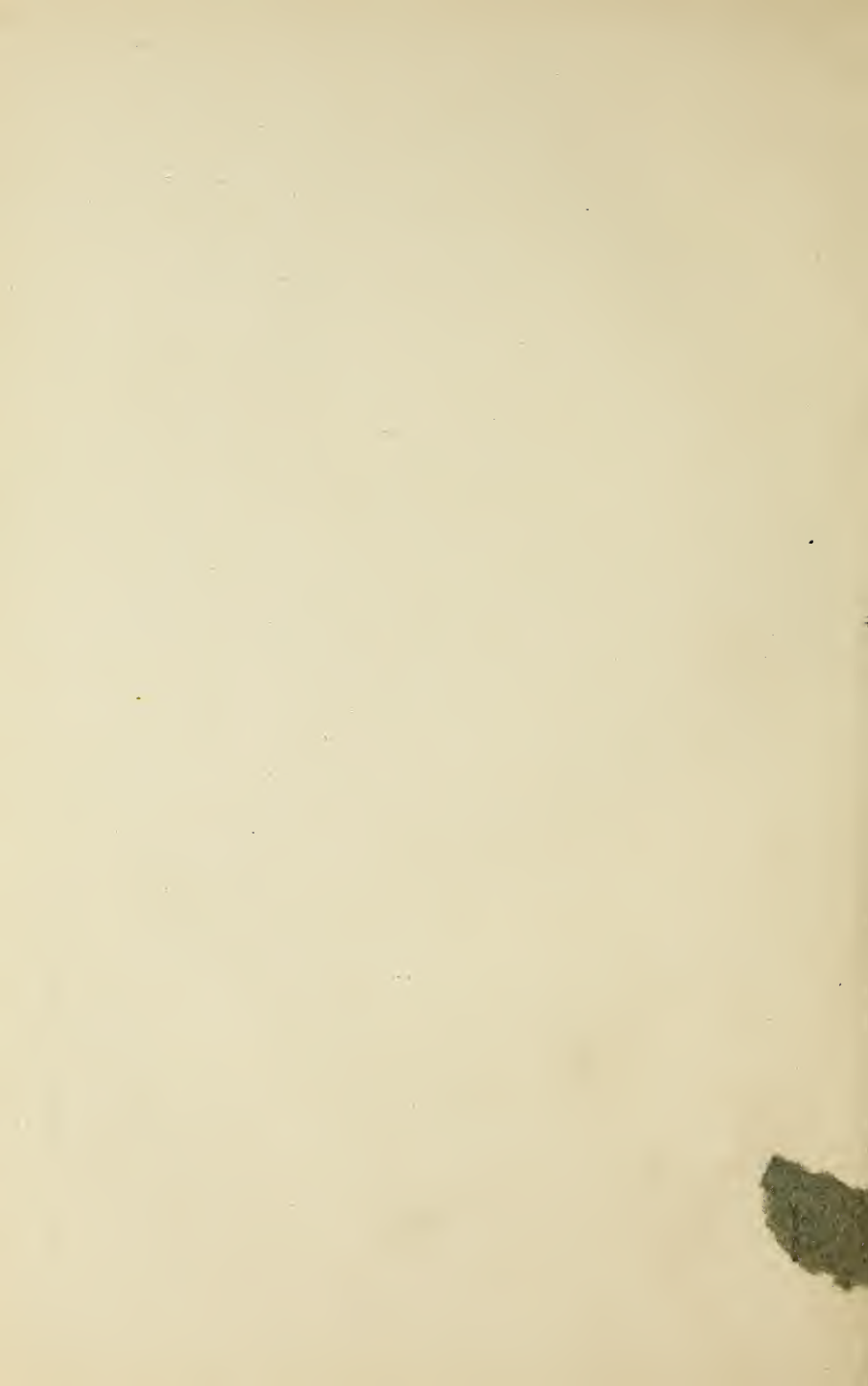
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<sup>45</sup> *Ephes.* i. 10.

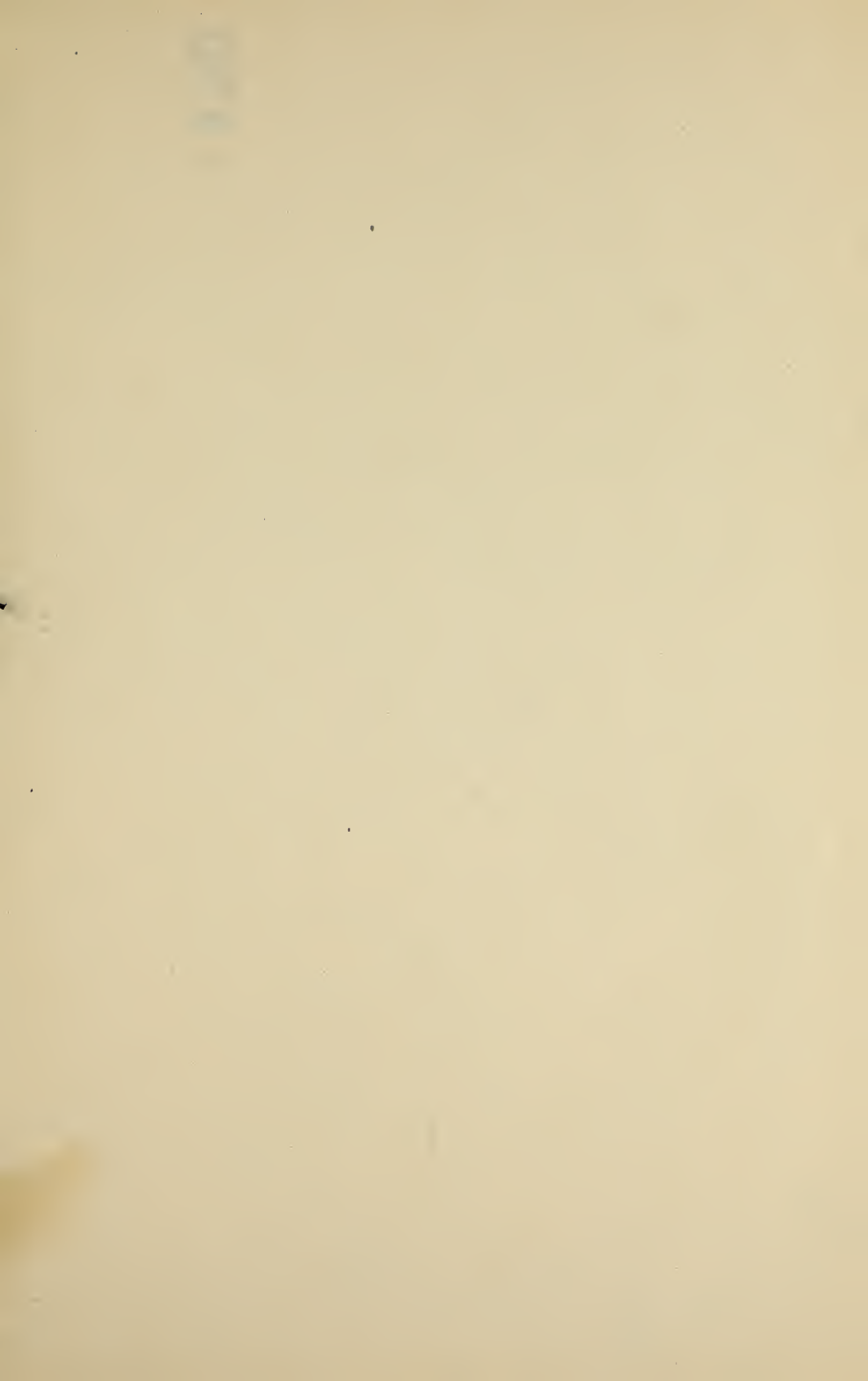
<sup>46</sup> *Hom. cit.*, ii. 18.













125



