

But how numerous, how wonderful, how splendid are the arguments by which human reason should most lucidly be convinced that this religion is divine, and "that every principle of our dogmas has taken its root from the Lord of the heavens on high." (1) And, moreover, that nothing more certain, more secure, more holy, or which is founded on firmer principles—exists: to wit, this faith, the instructress of life, the expeller of all vices, the fruitful parent and nurse of all virtues—confirmed by the birth, life, death, resurrection, wisdom, wonders, and prophecies of Christ Jesus, her author and finisher; radiant on every side with the light of heavenly doctrine, and laden with the treasures of heavenly riches: illustrated and distinctively marked by the predictions of so many Prophets, the splendour of so many miracles, the constancy of so many Martyrs, the glory of so many Saints; proclaiming the saving laws of Christ, gaining day by day more strength from the most cruel persecution themselves; hath the Cross her only banner, journeyed by land and sea the whole earth; having beaten down the falsehood of idolatry, scattered the darkness of error, triumphed over enemies of every kind, she has enlightened all people, all nations however savagely barbarous, however diversified by disposition, manners, laws, and institutions, with the light of Divine knowledge, and—announcing peace and good tidings—has brought them under the most sweet yoke of Christ; all which shine forth on every side with such a splendour of wisdom and power that every mind and thought may easily understand that the Christian faith is the work of God. Therefore human reason, from these most splendid and equally solid arguments, clearly and distinctly recognising that God is the author of this same faith, can go no farther, but throwing utterly aside every doubt and difficulty, is bound to yield every obedience to faith, knowing with certainty that whatever faith proposes to men to be believed and done, was delivered by God himself.

Hence, too, plainly appears in what error they continue, who, abusing their reasoning powers, and esteeming the words of God as a human production, dare rashly to interpret it, when God himself has appointed a living authority to teach the true and legitimate sense of his heavenly revelation, to establish it, to settle all controversies on matters of faith and morals with an infallible decision, so that the faith may not be carried about by every wind, of the wickedness of men to the circumventing of error. Which living and infallible authority exists only in that Church which, built by Christ our Lord on Peter, the Head, the Chief and Pastor of the whole Church, whose faith he promised should never fail—has ever her legitimate Pontiffs deducing their origin without intermission from Peter himself placed in his chair—heirs and possessors of the same doctrine, dignity, honour and power. And since "*where Peter is there is the Church*," (5) and Peter speaks by the Roman Pontiff, (6) and ever lives and exercises judgment in his successors, (7) and gives forth the truth of faith to those seeking it, (8) therefore the Divine words are clearly to be received in that sense which this Roman Chair of Blessed Peter, the Mother and Mistress of all Churches (9) hath always preserved whole and inviolate, and has ever taught to the Faithful, showing, to all the path of safety and the doctrine of uncorrupted truth. For this is the chief of Churches, from which the unity of the Priesthood hath arisen (10). This is the centre and metropolis of piety, wherein is the entire and perfect solidity of the Christian religion (11); in which the primacy of the Apostolic Chair hath ever flourished (12); to which, on account of its pre-eminent dignity, it is necessary that all Churches—that is to say, the Faithful—whosoever found, should repair (13); with which whosoever gathereth not, scattereth. We, therefore, who by the inscrutable judgment of God, have been seated in this chair of truth, appeal with earnestness in the Lord to your eminent piety. Venerable Brethren, that with all solicitude and zeal you may exert yourselves to admonish and exhort the Faithful committed to your care, to the end that firmly adhering to these principles they may never suffer themselves to be deceived or led away into error by those men who, having become abominable by their pursuits, under the pretence of human "progress" labour to undermine faith, impiously to subject

faith to reason, and to overthrow the revealed word of God; who hesitate not to offer the highest insult and outrage to God himself who hath deigned by His holy religion most graciously to provide for the good of men here and their salvation hereafter.

You are already well acquainted, Venerable Brethren, with other monsters of error, and the frauds with which the children of the present age strive bitterly to beset the Catholic religion and the divine authority of the Church; to oppress its laws, and to trample on the rights of the sacred as well as of the civil power. To this point tend those guilty conspiracies against this Roman Chair of the Blessed Peter, on which Christ laid the irremovable foundations of His Church. To this point tend the operation of those secret societies, emerging from their native darkness for the ruin and devastation of the common weal, as well sacred as social, who have been again and again condemned with anathema by the Roman Pontiffs, our predecessors, in their Apostolic letters, which we, in the plenitude of our Apostolic power, confirm, and command to be most strictly observed. This, also, is the tendency and design of those insidious Bible Societies, which, renewing the crafts of the ancient heresies, cease not to obtrude upon all kinds of men, even the least instructed, gratuitously and at immense expense, copies in vast numbers of the books of the Sacred Scriptures translated against the holiest rules of the Church into various vulgar tongues, and very often with the most perverse and erroneous interpretations, to the end that Divine tradition, the doctrine of the Fathers, and the authority of the Catholic Church being rejected, every man may interpret the Revelations of the Almighty according to his own private judgment, and perverting their sense, fall into the most dangerous errors. Which societies, emulous of his predecessor, Gregory XVI., of blessed memory, to whose place we have been permitted to succeed without his merits, reproved by his Apostolic letter (16), and we desire equally to condemn. Still to the same point tends that horrible system, extremely repugnant even to the light of natural reason, of indifference to any kind of religion, by which these impostors, abolishing all distinction between truth and falsehood, between honesty and baseness, pretend to secure eternal salvation to men of any form of worship whatsoever, as if it were possible that there should be any participation of justice with iniquity, any association of light with darkness, any agreement between Christ and Belial. To this point tends that infamous conspiracy against the sacred celibacy of the Clergy, which, oh! shame, has been encouraged even by some ecclesiastics, who, miserably forgetful of their proper dignity, have suffered themselves to be overcome and drawn aside by the seductions and the blandishments of illicit pleasure. To this point tends that perverse theory of education, especially in philosophy which in a most pitiable manner deceives and corrupts ingenious youth, and commands it to the gall of the dragon in the chalice of Babylon. To this point tends the shameful doctrine, so especially adverse to natural right, of what is called Communism; a doctrine which if once admitted, the rights of all men, their property, their privileges, nay, the social system itself, even from its foundation, would be overthrown. Again, to this same point tend the darkly hidden snares of those who, with the outside of the sheep but ravening wolves within, under the false and fraudulent pretence of a purer piety, of severer virtue, and with an appearance of humility enter in, mildly take, softly bind, secretly slay and deter men from the observance of any religious worship, and kill and tear to pieces the sheep of the Lord.

Lastly, to this point tends, omitting other things which are well observed by, and fully known to you, that most foul plague of books and pamphlets, flying everywhere and inculcating error, which books, being ably written and full of fallacies and artfulness, are spread abroad throughout all parts, among Christian people, at enormous expense, and everywhere disseminate pestiferous doctrines, depraving the minds and souls, especially of the incautious, and working the greatest possible injuries to religion.