

Encyclical on Modernist Errors

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

OF OUR MOST HOLY LORD

PIUS X

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE

TO THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS
AND OTHER LOCAL ORDINARIES IN PEACE AND
COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE
ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE MODERNISTS.

*To the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and
other local Ordinaries in peace and communion with the
Apostolic See*

PIUS X POPE

VENERABLE BRETHREN, HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENE-
DICTION.

The office divinely committed to us of feeding the Lord's flock has especially this duty assigned to it by Christ, namely, to guard with the greatest vigilance the deposit of the faith delivered to the saints, rejecting the profane novelties of words and oppositions of knowledge falsely so-called. There has never been a time when this watchfulness of the supreme pastor was not necessary to the Catholic body; for, owing to the efforts of the enemy of the human race there have never been lacking "men speaking perverse things" (Acts. xx., 30), "vain talkers and seducers" (Tit. i., 10), "erring and driving into error" (2 Tim. iii. 13). Still it must be confessed that the number of the enemies of the cross of Christ has in these last days increased exceedingly, who are striving by arts, entirely new and full of subtlety, to destroy the vital energy of the Church, and, if they can, to overthrow utterly Christ's kingdom itself. Wherefore We may no longer be silent, lest We should seem to fail in Our most sacred duty, and lest the kindness that, in the hope of wiser councils, We have hitherto shown them, should be attributed to forgetfulness of our office.

GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.

That we make no delay in this matter is rendered necessary especially by the fact that the partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church's open enemies; they lie hid, a thing to be deeply deplored and feared, in her very bosom and heart, and are the more mischievous, the less conspicuously they appear. We allude, Venerable Brethren, to many who belong to the Catholic laity, nay, and this is far more lamentable, to the ranks of the priesthood itself, who, feigning a love for the Church, lacking the firm protection of philosophy and theology, nay more,

thoroughly imbued with the poisonous doctrines taught by the enemies of the Church, and lost to all sense of modesty, vaunt themselves as reformers of the Church; and, forming more boldly into line of attack, assail all that is most sacred in the work of Christ, not sparing even the person of the Divine Redeemer, whom, with sacrilegious daring, they reduce to a simple, mere man.

Though they express astonishment themselves, no one can justly be surprised that We number such men among the enemies of the Church, if, leaving out of consideration the internal disposition of soul, of which God alone is the judge, he is acquainted with their tenets, their manner of speech, their conduct. Nor indeed will he err in accounting them the most pernicious of all the adversaries of the Church. For, as we have said, they put their designs for her ruin into operation not from without but from within; hence, the danger is present almost in the very veins and heart of the Church, whose injury is the more certain, the more intimate is their knowledge of her. Moreover they lay the axe not to the branches and shoots, but to the very root, that is, to the faith and its deepest fibres. And having struck at this root of immortality, they proceed to disseminate poison through the whole tree, so that there is no part of Catholic truth from which they hold their hand, none that they do not strive to corrupt. Further, none is more skilful, none more astute than they, in the employment of a thousand noxious arts; for they double the parts of rationalist and Catholic, and this so craftily that they easily lead the unwary into error; and since audacity is their chief characteristic, there is no conclusion of any kind from which they shrink or which they do not thrust forward with pertinacity and assurance. To this must be added the fact, which indeed is well calculated to deceive souls, that they lead a life of the greatest activity, of assiduous and ardent application to every branch of learning, and that they possess, as a rule, a reputation for the strictest morality. Finally, and this almost destroys all hope of cure, their very doctrines have given such a bent to their minds, that they disdain all authority and brook no restraint; and relying upon a false conscience, they attempt to ascribe to a love of truth that which is in reality the result of pride and obstinacy.

Once indeed we had hopes of recalling them to a better sense, and to this end we first of all showed them kindness as Our Children, then We treated them with severity, and at last we have had recourse, though with great reluctance, to public reproof. But you know, Venerable Brethren, how fruitless has been Our action. They bowed their head for a moment, but it was soon uplifted more arrogantly than ever. If it were a matter which concerned them alone, We might perhaps have overlooked it: but the security of the Catholic name is at stake. Wherefore, as to maintain it longer would be a crime, We must now break silence, in order to expose before the whole Church in their true colours those men who have assumed this bad disguise.

DIVISION OF THE ENCYCLICAL.

But since the Modernists (as they are commonly and rightly called) employ a very clever artifice, namely, to