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<a href="#">Letter 97</a>	<a href="#">Letter 99</a>
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*Usbek to \*\*\**

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They are always talking here about the Constitution. [1] The other day I entered a home where at once I saw was a fat man of red complexion who was saying in a loud voice : I have issued my pastoral, [2] I am not about to reply to everything you say ; but read my pastoral, and you will see that in it I have resolved all your doubts. It cost me a lot of sweat to write it, he said, putting his hand to his forehead ; I needed all my erudition, and I had to read many Latin authors. I believe it, said a man who was there, for it is a fine piece of work, and I defy that Jesuit who comes to see you so often to write a better one. Well, read it then, he rejoined, and you will be better informed on these matters in fifteen minutes than if I had spent two hours talking to you about them. That is how he avoided entering into conversation and risking his self-importance. But as he being pressed, he was obliged to come out from behind his barricades, and he began theologically to utter numerous idiocies, supported by a dervich who very respectfully replied in kind. When two men who were present would deny him some principle, he would first say : That is certain ; we have so judged it, and we are infallible judges. [3] And how is it, I asked at that point, that you are infallible judges ? Do you not see, he rejoined, that the Holy Spirit enlightens us ? That is a good thing, I replied ; for given the manner in which you have been talking all day, I acknowledge that you have great need of being enlightened.

*Paris this 18th day of the moon of Rebiab I, 1717*

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[1] The bull *Unigenitus* has already been mentioned in letter 22. It was promulgated by Pope Clement XI on 8 September 1713 in order to help Louis XIV contain Jansenism. Opposition to the bull revived during the Regency ; the controversy continued in episcopal pastorals, in university assemblies, and in flurries of pamphlets. In 1717, four bishops, supported by the assembly of the Sorbonne, appealed against the Constitution to a general counsel of the Church, and were banished from Paris. By royal decree on 7 October 1717, the regent tried in vain to silence the opposing parties. See Lucien Ceyskens and Joseph A. G. Tans, *Autour de l'Unigenitus* (Louvain : Leuven University Press, 1987).

[2] A bishop's pastoral was destined to be read from the pulpit at the churches in his diocese. Its purpose was often to condemn a writing judged to be heterodox or impious ; bishops on both sides made use of this tool. This could possibly refer to Fleury, bishop of Fréjus, who had issued one such pastoral against the bull *Unigenitus* on 6 May 1714. In 1717 Fleury became preceptor of the young king.

[3] The notion of infallibility was an important question in the Constitution debate. The bull required the approval of the bishops because the Gallican Church subordinated the infallibility of the Holy See to that of a general council. Since a minority of the bishops had refused to accept the bull, could the majority be regarded as infallible ?