

Retraction

Of **L'ABBE CHARTIER**, formerly Curate of St. Benoit, in the Diocese of Montreal, addressed to the right Reverend Ignatius Bourget, the Lord Bishop of Montreal.

My Lord :

Without admitting the truth of all the rumours which have been circulated concerning me during the political troubles of 1837, (for I was perfectly a stranger to the more deplorable events of 1838,) I must acknowledge that my conduct in these critical circumstances, has not been such as became a priest and a pastor of the church. It is to satisfy my own conscience, that I make this spontaneous, sincere, and public avowal. I feel that I could not with propriety present myself in this country at the altar of the Lord, if I carried with me in the eyes of the public the scandal of their suspicion, that I still approved of the deeds of that unhappy period; and of the anarchical and anti-Catholic principles, in which they originated.

I acknowledge to-day with regret, that I have suffered myself to be blinded with the political mania of the time; and that I formed to myself a false conscience of abstract distinctions of captious metaphysical reasonings, to support my guilty and scandalous resistance to the decisions of my ecclesiastical superiors, who only promulgated at the time the formal doctrine of the universal church at all times.

By my refusal of the deference justly due to them, I have derogated, as much as in me lay, from the episcopal authority, in diminishing the respect and influence which it should have with the people; and besides I have offered a grievous injury to the person of my late Bishop, the illustrious prelate Lartigue, who was too well versed in the doctrine and history of the church, not to be perfectly acquainted with what she teaches; and too good a Canadian, too much above all human considerations, too genuine a patriot, I may say, to over strain the doctrine of Christianity, and refuse his fellow citizens, (whom he never hesitated to own, had cause to complain,) all the right of such legitimate opposition as strict morality might allow; but was too conscientious to neglect his duty to suppress the wild outbreak of the time, so opposed to Christian morality and sound politics.—Indeed the late date of his *mandement*, (which appeared only a few days before the troubles in Montreal took place,) shews what struggle it cost his conscience to tear him from his patriotism. I owe this just tribute to his memory; and it is with inexpressible delight that I make it to the deserving memory of that great Bishop, worthy of being the root of Episcopacy in Montreal, from whom his successors will glory in being descended, and to whom I have given more cause of complaint than ever I had of him; although my clamours have sometimes been very loud against him.

My conduct also in 1837, is not justifiable in another point of view. Had I even been sincere in my theories, altogether metaphysical; in my theology

altogether political; in that theology more Protestant than Catholic; it was always a temerity much to be condemned, and quite inexcusable on my part, to constitute myself practically the judge of my Bishop; to make his decisions, and those of the other Bishops, bend to the private and particular opinions of so insignificant an individual as myself. And I could have been guilty of such an act of insubordination, without remorse! I could have strayed to such a degree, without feeling the least qualms of conscience! I could have witnessed all the illegal proceedings of the period, which seem now to me so detestable, and could excuse all these hideous excesses! Yet all the while I had a lively faith on every other subject; a conscience I may say, delicate in every other sense, I had not certainly then lost all fear of God. How can all this be satisfactorily accounted for? Let all others learn two lessons from me; first that the political passions, the passions which I call public ones, blind us as every individual one does for private ends; and I never was on my guard against the former. And I never dreamed that they were as much to be avoided as the latter, considering them not so mean as these last were. And then with me, as the study of law preceded that of theology; and as I had brought to this last, a mind predisposed and vitiated by the too relaxed notions of publicists, who too commonly in their speculations are their own dupes, without knowing it, by listening too eagerly to the inculcated but disorderly sentiment of independence, so agreeable to human pride; ever impatient under the yoke of authority; and which has given rise to the doctrine of "the sovereignty of the people;" too revolting it is true, for me to have ever become duped to it, as well as to other notions more specious though less dangerous in practice, but such as are not admissible in Christianity; which is the religion essentially of order; the religion that opposes every sentiment & passion that has its source in original depravation. This explains the reason why public characters at the time, more imbibed with, and instructed in politics than in Christianity, have listened, like me, to the political discontents of the time; and have found, and still find for the most part, that the doctrine of the Catholic clergy is *outré* and too severe; that it restricts too much the "rights of man;" and those rights which are but too truly natural to him in his fallen state by sin; but not the natural rights of man in his primitive state, from which original sin has deprived him; and to which state the divine mission has so graciously restored him; by granting to the individual the grace, derived from redemption as a counterpoise to his irregular passions; and by re-establishing in his mind the natural order of his primitive state of innocence, whence it follows that in every society composed of true Christians, there could never be an occasion of revolt; and in offering for compensation the eternal rewards for the evils he has to endure from the ways of the wicked. Logical reason, why Christianity can never allow, with-

out blame, revolt in a people to avenge, or correct the evils it endures from the disorders of its governments, as I am perfectly convinced of at present, and that the holy scriptures forbid us to do so. Such are the sublime notions, which the political mania of 1837 has made me overlook for a time. This may explain how I could then continue to exercise my sacred functions, without thinking myself guilty in doing so; and certainly I was not capable of doing so knowingly. The Laity would then wish that the Canadian clergy should cease to be a Christian clergy, should they exact of that clergy to make its theology stoop to the passions of the multitude, for the pleasure of being inconsistent, and to cause **** I do not say to finish my sentence; but it is a fact, of which the proofs are still fresh on our soil, to cause the misfortunes of the people.

I have therefore done much mischief. I am exceedingly to blame for not having followed the route that was pointed out to me by the conviction and prudence of my superiors; and which was followed by the rest of the clergy. I have suffered for it, as I deserved to do. I no more complain of this. I own that the singularity of my conduct has been not only reprehensible but even insulting to the clergy; and, I must say, ridiculous, and that I also owe an ample apology to my brethren for the unpopularity of which they were then the objects; for the vexations they had to endure from the patriots generally owing to the marked contrast between my conduct and principles, and theirs. While all the clergy in close column were united together, as one man, by submission to their superior, (what a spectacle in the midst of the general disorganization,) opposed themselves like a wall of brass, to the political torrent, which dragged along with it myself and my people, and the whole country in one common ruin! What was my position? Alone, in my insulated state, with my mistaken patriotism! What a situation for a priest to be in, when come at last to reflect upon it coolly! What was I to do? I was silent, though my duty as a pastor should have made me raise my voice, and cry aloud with all my might, louder than all the clamours of my people, to stop them in their blind and headlong course, even had I been certain that they would not have listened to me. I held my tongue; I even applauded myself for my senseless daring, which made me brave the dangers into which I saw my people about to plunge themselves. Into what blindness then may not one fall who throws off the yoke of obedience, and chooses himself for his only guide! Poor human reason! who will not fear thine insufficiency to direct man through the stormy flood of the passions? Alas! so many scattered ruins on all sides, which the history of our own times point out to us, should have been to me a sufficient warning. I must therefore now acknowledge that the clergy have shewn themselves more than I, the friends of the people in opposing their seditious movements at the risk of their popularity; still, I owe it to myself to say, and I hope I will be pardoned for doing so, that it was not the fear of losing my

popularity, that led me astray from my duty. I could have braved that inducement then, as I do at present. But I was blinded. I acknowledge that the clergy have exhibited in the midst of the hurricane, the calm of religion; the resignation of virtue, and a truly pastoral firmness, which I wish above all things I had imitated; and which ought to win for them the esteem of all prudent and moderate citizens, the wild enthusiast alone excepted, who set at naught both conscience and experience.

To conclude, I disavow fully and sincerely the past; I retract, without restriction, all that I may have said or done in support of the movements of 1837; and my chief desire, my most ardent wish is, that all who may have been influenced by my former conduct, may be re-united in heart and mind with their clergy; may replace in them their entire confidence, of which they continue to shew themselves so deserving; after the example of, my Lord, your Lordship, in whom the love of your people is literally your life and soul; and that they may walk with accelerated steps in the way of moral reform and religious renovation, just now so happily progressing in Canada; and which have come to comfort us after all the horrors of the unhappy days that are past.

I trust, my Lord, that this letter will sufficiently prove to your Lordship the disposition of the humble submission, and the sentiments of respectful attachment, of your obedient servant,

ET. CHARTIER, Priest.

Mgr. IGN. BOURGET, Bishop of Montreal.

P. S.—I wish to give the greatest publicity possible to my present letter; begging the Editors of all the French papers in the Province to insert it; and I pray your Lordship to allow the editor of the "*Mélanges Religieux*," to reproduce it in the ecclesiastical journal of your diocese, in which I conceive it ought also naturally to find its place.

E. C.

We have received from Quebec an anonymous communication, not very distinctly written, proposing certain difficulties to be answered; and although we generally decline noticing anonymous letters sent us, we think ourselves in charity bound to endeavour at least to dissipate the clouds of doubt that hang so heavy on the mind of this nameless inquiring writer.

1. As to his first difficulty, the merit or demerit of men and angels obeying or disobeying the will of God, we might refer him to what we have written on the subject in our second number, p. 10, part of which we shall here repeat:—"These, the rational creatures, to be perfectly happy, which all must be who are once admitted to the clear vision and enjoyment of God, must be constituted free agents; otherwise, their operations being all the effect, not of choice, but of necessity, they could have nothing in them of personal worth—nothing of merit to endear them to their Maker, and, at the same time to enhance and complete their bliss, from the sense of having, as far as in them lay, deserved it. It is their freedom of agency,