



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. VIII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1857.

No. 15.

SYNODICAL LETTER OF THE FATHERS ASSEMBLED IN PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AT HALIFAX.

We have much pleasure in laying before our readers, the following "Synodical Letter from the Fathers of the First Provincial Council of the Province of Halifax. We are indebted to our esteemed cotemporary, the Halifax Catholic, for our copy of this most valuable document:

WE, THE ARCHBISHOP AND BISHOPS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE OF HALIFAX, IN PROVINCIAL SYNOD ASSEMBLED,

To our Dearly Beloved Brethren in Christ, the Faithful under our jurisdiction.

Dearly Beloved Brethren—You are already aware that the first Synod of the new Ecclesiastical Province of Halifax, for whose success your united prayers have been offered up for several months, has been solemnly convened in the Metropolitan Church within the past week, and under the blessing of God brought to an auspicious termination, for the welfare of religion in this portion of our Lord's vineyard. By those acquainted with the history of the Catholic Church, the blessings and advantages to be derived from so important an event are easily understood. It was the Apostles who, in the first instance, adopted the expedient of meeting in Solemn Council, in order that by their joint authority, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost which had been assured to them, they might the more effectually explain and vindicate the faith, confound the enemies of religion, correct abuses, and regulate the discipline of the infant Church. It was from their example as well as from a sense of the numerous and ever varying necessities of the faithful, that this Catholic and immemorial usage has been followed from age to age.

To teach all nations, to preserve inviolate the sacred deposit of the faith, to preach and exhort in sound doctrine and reprove the gainsayers, to feed the flock over whom the Holy Ghost appointed them to rule the Church of God, have been in an especial manner the privilege and the duty of Bishops as Chief Pastors of the Church, and successors of the Apostles. It is with a deep consciousness of our position, and of our weighty responsibilities in this respect, and in conformity with the Canons and sacred usages of the Church, that we have met for a first time, in Provincial Synod, in order that we too may form a link in that glorious chain which reaches down from the Apostles, and which we trust will have the happy effect of uniting still more closely ourselves and the people entrusted to our charge in the bond of one common faith and one holy brotherhood, under the visible headship of one divinely appointed Shepherd.

Wherefore, with feelings of joy and of thankfulness to God for this new triumph of His Church, and with the sincerest devotion to your spiritual welfare, we avail ourselves of this occasion to announce to you the tidings of the good which has been so happily accomplished for Catholicity within the last few days. Although the many important Decrees which have been made for the preservation and extension of our Holy Faith, and the maintenance of Ecclesiastical discipline, can have no effect until ratified by the Supreme authority of our venerable Head and Most Holy Father, Pope Pius the Ninth, who is to us what St. Peter was to the Church of his day, nevertheless in our solicitude for your spiritual welfare, we feel that there are some topics to which we can profitably direct your attention.

Among the many grave subjects which should engage our minds at a moment like the present, the fundamental virtue of Divine Faith is first in importance. For this is the keystone of the spiritual edifice, "the substance of things to be hoped for," the first germ of every supernatural blessing. Without it there can be no building up, no increase, no possible means of pleasing God or attaining to that life of grace and of glory for which we are destined. "He that believeth not shall be condemned." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "With the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It is by faith divinely infused, as well as by baptism, that we throw off the curse of our inheritance and "put on the new man in Christ Jesus." By faith we see Him, by faith we know Him, and approach Him in confidence as our Father, our Saviour, and our God. Faith is the first gift from above, the first virtue in the creature that tends to everlasting life. Vocation to faith is the first grace of God and the infallible mark of His preferential love. It is the heirloom as it is the distinguishing characteristic of God's children throughout all time and space. As Bishops, therefore, having to render to God an account of your souls, it is proper that on this occasion we should lay peculiar emphasis on a subject which is the foundation of all Religion, and the best guarantee of all your hopes and desires. It was to establish and proclaim this one Faith and

to scatter it broadcast, as the seed of every other blessing, that our Lord preached, and labored incessantly, during the years of His evangelical life. It was to disseminate this Faith that the Apostles and their successors, as laborers in the same vineyard, went forth among the nations of the earth. It is for this, that we too, as their successors (however unworthy) in the Episcopal office, deem it our first duty to proclaim to you the indispensable necessity, and the heavenly advantages which must accrue from Divine Faith, if you but live in accordance with its holy dictates.

Instead therefore of trusting to the vague sense of Religion and the fallacious morality which are unsustained by Divine Faith, we must begin by securing an infallible foundation. We must not build on ourselves, nor upon the ever shifting sands of human views and human opinions, which can be no criterion nor support of Divine Faith. But if we wish not to be borne about by every wind of doctrine, we must build on "the rock which is Christ." We must be as so many living stones in that spiritual edifice "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone." In order that we might succeed in this, our Lord, adapting Himself to our condition, neither required genius nor extensive erudition, nor a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, which of themselves and without a heavenly inspired interpreter, would be unavailing; but to the learned and the unlearned He proposed alike the common sense and only practical expedient of hearing the Church. "And if he will not hear them tell it to the Church, but if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the Heathen and the publican." "Go teach all nations," said He to the Apostles; "he that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me."

In determining the true meaning of the Scripture, or any other point of Religious controversy, the antagonism is not (as is falsely assumed) between the Bible and the Church, but it is between unassisted human reason interpreting the Divine Word after its own fashion on the one side, and the living, teaching, infallible Church of God authoritatively expounding it on the other. Between these two extremes there is no rational medium. If we wish to merit the grace of Divine Faith we must not depend on ourselves, but rather on Christ, the unchangeable Rock, "for other foundation no man can lay but that which is already laid" by Him. As "faith is from hearing" and not from reading, we must first "hear the Church," we must hear those who were chosen and appointed by Christ Himself to go forth to teach all nations and to preach the Gospel of Truth. If we wish not the winds and the rain to sweep away our frail edifice, we must commence by building on that outward rock, Peter, for whose stability in faith Christ effectually prayed to His Heavenly Father, and upon whom He built His visible teaching Church "against which the gates of hell were never to prevail." In seeking that hidden gem of Divine truth, "the faith once delivered to the Saints," we must not hope to find it by our own researches, but if we try it will be easily and infallibly discovered by the aid of that "light of the world," which, as the Saviour tells us was to "shine upon all men." We must not look for it in the letter of the Scriptures which "killeth," and which the "unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction," but rather we must seek it in the decisions of that infallible oracle "the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth." Standing on this ground we may build up in all security, for we shall be saved forevermore from the anxious hours, the endless trouble, the ever recurring doubts of those who spend their lives "in vain disputations," "always learning and never attaining the knowledge of the truth."

Whether ignorant or learned, the Catholic commences, in earliest youth, with the knowledge of Divine Faith, which millions of those without have never attained after a whole life's study.—In order to attest our gratitude for so unmerited a favor it becomes our primary duty to bless and give glory to God, and to pray that the precious deposit of the faith within us "may never fail," but rather that it may increase and become more vivid and more effectual. We should endeavor not only to persevere and strengthen our own faith by the means which Religion points out, but in the true spirit and zeal of the Catholic Church we should co-operate with our Heavenly Father in extending those blessings to others.

As "fellow-citizens with the Saints and the domestics of God," we are bound to use every honorable and legitimate means to extend the empire of the true Religion, and the knowledge of the "one faith," to all within the range of our influence, but more especially to those for whose souls we are responsible to God. For parents and those who are entrusted with the care and education of youth this is a first and a paramount obligation. If nature proclaims the

law and the necessity of providing for the bodily wants of those who cannot supply themselves, how much more sacred is the duty of attending to the more imperious necessities and the more noble concerns of their immortal souls! The care and the education of those little ones must be of the utmost consequence, and in an especial manner dear to God, when an Angel has been deputed by Him for the guardianship of each, for "I say to you that their Angels in Heaven always behold the face of my Father." Parents are, as well as Priests, the divinely appointed caretakers and shepherds of their souls. They must not only feed them, therefore, on the pasture of sound doctrine and give them an early Christian training, but whilst they are yet young and uninformed they must be cautioned against the rugged ways and precipices of the world; they must be preserved from the thief and the robber, and the ravening wolves of heresy and immorality, which threaten them on every side. Besides their religious and moral training at home, which should never be forgotten, and which is the first duty of every parent, no effort should be spared to secure for them, if possible, the blessings of a thorough Catholic education in the schools of the district in which they live.

Without a practical security, in such schools, against all interference with the faith of Catholic children, no education however brilliant can compensate for the risk, because the prize that is at stake is too sacred, too precious to be imperilled for any worldly consideration. This is the spirit of the Gospel itself and the teaching of the Catholic Church from the beginning; this is the inviolable principle for which our brethren in the Ministry, both Bishops and Priests, have suffered and struggled all over the world, and for which they are this day contending in every country where danger is to be seriously apprehended from the abuses so often and so unhappily prevailing in mixed schools, through the insidious artifices and the odious intolerance of the enemies of truth, who, not satisfied with entire freedom for themselves, are constantly engaged in making assaults upon our Religious rights. In these Provinces there is no dominant Creed, no established Church as in the Mother country, invested with tyrannical powers to force the consciences of the Queen's subjects, to lay enormous exactions on those who honestly repudiate her doctrines, and to carry on, under the mask of law, an odious crusade of bigotry against the dearest rights of conscience. All stand equal before the law, and no man has any legal right here to punish his fellow-citizens, directly or indirectly, for their Religious opinions. When, therefore, schools are established out of the public Revenues to which all parties indiscriminately contribute, it is an unwarrantable assumption of tyranny for the professors of any one creed, so to frame the regulations of such schools as to exclude from their benefit any class of her Majesty's subjects. All should stand on the same level; all should be equally protected from the open efforts or the secret snares of Proselytism. And here, we must once for all repudiate an unfounded charge that has been brought against us in many different forms. It has been alleged that the Catholic Bishops and Clergy were determined to deprive Protestant children of the use of their Bible their Catechism or their Formularies of Faith.—The charge is untrue; no such attempt has been made; no such desire is entertained by us. But we feel it our duty to publish to the world on this occasion that those who make this absurd and groundless charge against the Catholic Clergy are themselves notoriously guilty of what they falsely allege against us, and that they are continually employed in tampering with the faith of Catholic children, and forcing upon them versions of the Bible which we believe to be corrupt, and Catechisms and Religious Tracts which we know to be filled with the poison of infidelity and error. Against such unhallowed attempts we lift up our warning voice to Catholic parents, and we tell them they should never submit to the injustice by which the public funds would be expended in a hateful proselytism, or to the tyranny which would force on their children, under pretence of secular education, any books which are condemned by the Catholic Church. As they never attempt to force the Catholic Bible, or Catechism or Prayer Book on the children of Protestant parents, so they must expect to be treated in a similar manner. As they have no desire to prevent Protestant children from using any works that their parents approve of, so Catholic parents have a right to entire religious freedom with regard to their children. In one word, we neither wish to deprive Protestants, young or old, of the use of their religious books, nor do we desire to force ours upon them, but we expect that they will treat us in the same manner, and every good Catholic must be prepared at any sacrifice to resist the impious attempt to force upon his children books that are dangerous to their faith or morals. Not to speak of many other objectionable books which have been purchased out of the public funds for distribution amongst Catholic children, we do not consider

the English Bible, whose innumerable errors have been admitted by the most learned Protestants themselves, to be the word of God. We do not regard the English Protestant version as a true, or entire copy of the Bible, for not only is there a studied corruption of texts, but many of the Sacred Books are pronounced apocryphal, or omitted altogether. We do not consider it a proper book for Catholic youth, stamped as it is by the reprobation of the Church. Whether we are right or wrong in this belief, does not affect the present question. Our religious convictions should be respected, as we respect those of others, and the funds which we contribute should not be employed in carrying on an insidious crusade against all that we hold sacred.

The positions here laid down are so just and incontrovertible, that no honest man of any creed will venture to gainsay them. With our united voice and authority we not only give you this solemn warning as regards the danger of mixed schools, but we also enjoin upon you the duty of guarding both yourselves and your little ones against the poisonous drug of infidel and immoral books and newspapers, which are in daily circulation even in the remote parts of the country. If not checked in time and discontinued by all those in authority, silently, but certainly, it will eat its way in, and do its deadly work in the heart of the population, until here, as elsewhere, it will leave nought but corruption and desolation behind.

In guarding, however, against the many dangers to faith and morals, and the unnumbered and insidious attempts which are every day being made to despoil us of our heavenly inheritance, care should be taken in imitation of our Redeemer, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again," that we should not "return evil for evil, but rather overcome evil by good." Instead of requiring "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," we should by our patience and peaceful demeanor and "clarity unfeigned" heap coals of fire on the heads of those whose aim through life, and the summary of whose creed seem to be to persecute, to calumniate, and to assail us.—Retaliation, violence and abuse, were not amongst the weapons wherewith Christ and His apostles propagated and defended the Christian religion, nor can the cause of truth be permanently served in any country by the use of such instruments.—They may have their effect for the moment on the fears and the passions of men; they may intimidate the weak, and ensnare and dazzle the undiscerning and incautious; their success may be rapid, as it is brilliant to the eye of the thoughtless and the worldly, but the experience of all history teaches us that in enlightened and civilized communities, the triumph of falsehood, in whatever guise it may appear, cannot be of long duration. Appeals to the passions and angry declamations are naturally employed by him who has no confidence in the truth and justice of his cause. As members of a Church which has successfully withstood the combined opposition of all worldly power and worldly wisdom, of Kings and Governments, of all earthly and infernal malice for eighteen hundred years, with due precaution, and well directed energy we can easily afford to be quiet and re-assured, in the face of the comparatively harmless opposition of our malignant or misguided enemies.

For your own welfare as well for the success of the religion you love, we hereby exhort you to show forth and to defend that faith which is within you, more by works and holiness of life, than by words and professions. Be honest and industrious, sober and moderate; be gentle, kind and charitable to men of all religious persuasions. Perform every duty of a Christian, a good neighbor and a law-abiding and devoted citizen. Allow no man to outstrip you in the discharge of what you conceive to be a duty, and your progress in the race of honor and of virtue will be the proudest and most effectual proof of the superiority of your religion.

"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, not from fear but from conscience."—As citizens loyally respect the ruling power, for "not in vain does it carry the sword," observe and maintain the laws of the land which are the only guarantee of public order. And, whilst you do so, and discharge the duties of faithful subjects, be not deterred by the malice of the selfish, or the unreasoning clamor of the intolerant, from the manly assertion, and lawful defence of your rights, as subjects of our gracious Sovereign. Whether you hold a place of trust, a post of honor, an office of emolument, or be in the simple condition of private citizens, your rights and privileges are the same as those of others in similar circumstances. Do not swerve, therefore, from the obligations imposed upon you. Do not fear to exercise your prerogatives, and use all your influence for the public weal, in an honorable and conscientious manner.

You are, unhappily, often provoked by fierce and bitter language, by unjust imputations, by the most unworthy attempts to deprive you of your rights, or to terrify you from the exercise of your privileges. But we earnestly beseech

you to "possess your souls in patience," and on such occasions, to let no amount of provocation tempt you to any violation of the heavenly precepts of charity, or any transgression against the law of the land.

And now, to ascend, from earthly things to those of the supernatural order, after having performed all your duties to God and your neighbor, you should as faithful Catholics cherish feelings of love and the deepest veneration for him who is the visible representative of God in this world, the successor of Peter, whom Christ selected among the Apostles to "feed His lambs and feed His sheep," and who was therefore constituted in himself, and in his successor in office, to be the father of all the faithful, the source of all power and unity in the Church, and the ever living guardian of that imperishable faith and priceless religion which are dearer to us than life itself.

You will also obey your Bishops and Pastors who are in communion with Pius, that is with Peter, with Christ, for they also are "appointed to rule the Church of God," and to take a portion of the universal solicitude. In the words of the Apocalypse, they are the visible "Angels" of each church and diocese, who have been appointed and sent by God to take charge of you, to guard and guide you, and finally to render an account of your souls.

To fulfil the end of all religion, you must keep the Commandments of God, and hear the Church which is our common mother; you must listen to her admonitions and abide by her precepts, and with these views and feelings to guide you, as zealous and earnest Catholics and devoted children you will hearken to our voice as your Bishops and Fathers, "remember you Prelates who have spoken to you the Word of God," and obey the decrees that have been made, exclusively for your welfare, in our first Provincial Council, as soon as they shall have been approved of by the Supreme authority of the Apostolic See.

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, that you esteem them more abundantly in charity for their work. . . . Rebuke the unjust; comfort the feeble-minded; support the weak; be patient towards all men. . . . See that none render evil for evil to any one; but always follow that which is good, towards each other, and towards all men. Always rejoice; pray without ceasing; in all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all. . . . From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves. And may the God of Peace Himself sanctify you in all things, that your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. —I Thessal., v. 12. . . . 25.

WILLIAM, Archbishop of Halifax.  
DONALD BERNARD, Bishop of Charlottetown.  
COLIN FRANCIS, Bishop of Arichat.  
THOMAS LOUIS, Bishop of St. John.  
Halifax, 15th September, 1857.

REV. DR. CAHILL ON THE INCONSISTENCIES AND ANOMALIES OF THE BRITISH LEGISLATURE AND GOVERNMENT.

Nothing surprises a foreigner coming to this country more than the inconsistency which appears to him in our statute legislation, as opposed to our practical government: and this feeling of surprise is again, perhaps, surpassed by one of disappointment when he compares the endless boasting of English superiority in our institutions, with the now proverbial blundering in all our civil and military departments. In England statute law and its practical administration are sometimes diametrically opposed: it is liberty and toleration on parchment, but often tyranny and religious persecution in practice. The senate house, in framing the laws, publishes universal equality before Europe, while the executive of these laws practices at home a notorious partiality. Nothing more liberal, more bland, than the juridical voice of St. Stephen's, directed to the universal subjects of the Queen, yet, in the very hearing of these kind declarations, nothing more exclusive, more wounding, than that same voice when addressed in practical decision to the Catholic section of the population. In fact, English Parliamentary law in several grave cases of paramount importance is a national flourish to gain a good name abroad, while its administrative application to the disfavored creed at home is the very definition of penal enactment and religious persecution. Repealed old grinding statutes, new enlarged concessions, executed amidst overwhelming British majorities used heretofore to throw dust in eyes of the Catholic world, and prevent mankind from seeing in its naked deformity the crushing deceit of this external show of legislative liberality: but recent events have led to the disco-