

“ persuaded (for the time) that a race of men, strangers to our soil, to our language, to our laws, to our worship, could ever be willing to render to Canada an equivalent for what it lost by changing its masters. Generous nation! which has made us aware by so many evidences how ill-founded were our prepossessions; industrious nation! which has developed the earth’s fecundity, and explored its hidden riches; exemplary nation! that in critical times taught the attentive world wherein consists that liberty which all men aspire to obtain, but so few know how to keep within proper bounds; pitying nation! which has just welcomed with so much humanity the most faithful yet worst used subjects of that realm to which ourselves once belonged; beneficent nation! which daily gives us men of Canada fresh proofs of its liberality. No, no! your people are not enemies of our people, nor are ye the despoilers of our property, which rather do your laws protect; nor are ye foes of our religion to which ye pay all due respect. Pardon us, then, for that, our first (and now past) distrustfulness of a foreign race, whose virtues, being as yet unexperienced by us, we had not the happiness to know; and if, after being apprised of the overthrow of the monarchy and the abolition of the only right worship (*le vrai culte*) in France, and after experiencing for 35 years the gentleness of your domination, there remains still among us some natures purblind enough, or of such an evil disposition as to revive past antipathies or to awaken in the popular mind disloyal wishes (*désires criminels*) to revert to French supremacy—let Britons be assured that such beings are rare among us; and we beg that what may be true of the malcontent few, will not be imputed to the well-disposed many. . . . Mr. Briand’s maxim ever was, that true Christians and sincere Catholics are (and must be) all obedient subjects of their legitimate sovereign. He had learned from Jesus Christ that we must render to Cæsar what belongs (or right) to Cæsar; Saint Paul has taught him that every soul should be (voluntarily) submissive to established authority; that he who resists it is in opposition to God himself, and thereby merits damnation; he had learned from the chiefest of the Apostles that the magistrate (*roi*) bears not the sword in vain; inculcating that we are to accredit him by our obedience as God’s representative (*propter Deum*); and to honour him not only in his own person, but in the person of his lawful deputies (*sive ducibus tanquam ab eo missis*). Such are, my fellow Christians, the principles of our holy religion in that regard; principles which we cannot too often impress upon your minds, or over frequently bring under your view; for they form an integral part of evangelical morality, upon which our eternal salvation depends.”

Those words were spoken in 1791. After Confederation the Bishops of the Province of Quebec, Mgr. Baillargeon, Mgr. Langevin and the others sent pastoral letters to their flocks with regard to the change of the system of Government. I will quote especially from the pastoral of Mgr. Baillargeon, dated 12th June 1867, and you will see from those remarks that the same sentiments which animated Mgr. Plessis in 1791 animated the Bishops of the Province in 1867. Mgr. Baillargeon says:—

“ CHARLES FRANÇOIS BAILLARGEON, Bishop of Tloa, &c., &c. To the Clergy, Secular and Regular, and to all the faithful in the Archdiocese, greeting and blessing in our Lord.

“ Her Majesty, our Gracious Sovereign has just issued a Proclamation by which it is ordered by virtue of an Act of the Imperial Parliament, that, dating from the 1st of July next the provinces of Canada, of Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick shall form a federal union under the name of the ‘Dominion of Canada’ The State thus formed shall possess a common legislature which shall concern itself with the greater interests of the whole confederated territory; but this State shall be divided into four provinces distinct, each possessing a local legislature occupied with the particular interests of the province. In this way Lower Canada, henceforth separated from Upper Canada, shall form under the new régime a separate Province which shall be styled ‘The Province of Quebec.’

“ This order of things having been established by competent authority, at the request also of our representatives in the Canadian Legislature, there remains nothing for us, my very dear brethren, but to submit to it with a good grace; to do so is for us all a duty imposed by conscience. If, during the century and more since our country was ceded to Great Britain, the form of our government has changed several times, let us remember that the essence of authority does not vary, but remains ever the same. Authority is requisite for the maintenance of all human society, and experience has shown us into what misfortunes those peoples fall who venture to throw it aside.

“ Do not let us forget, my very dear brethren, the wholly Divine origin of this authority which fact has been so often disregarded in our so-called era of enlightenment.