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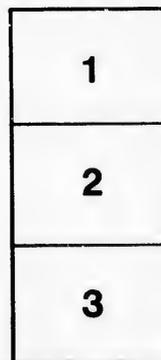
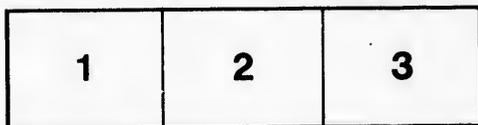
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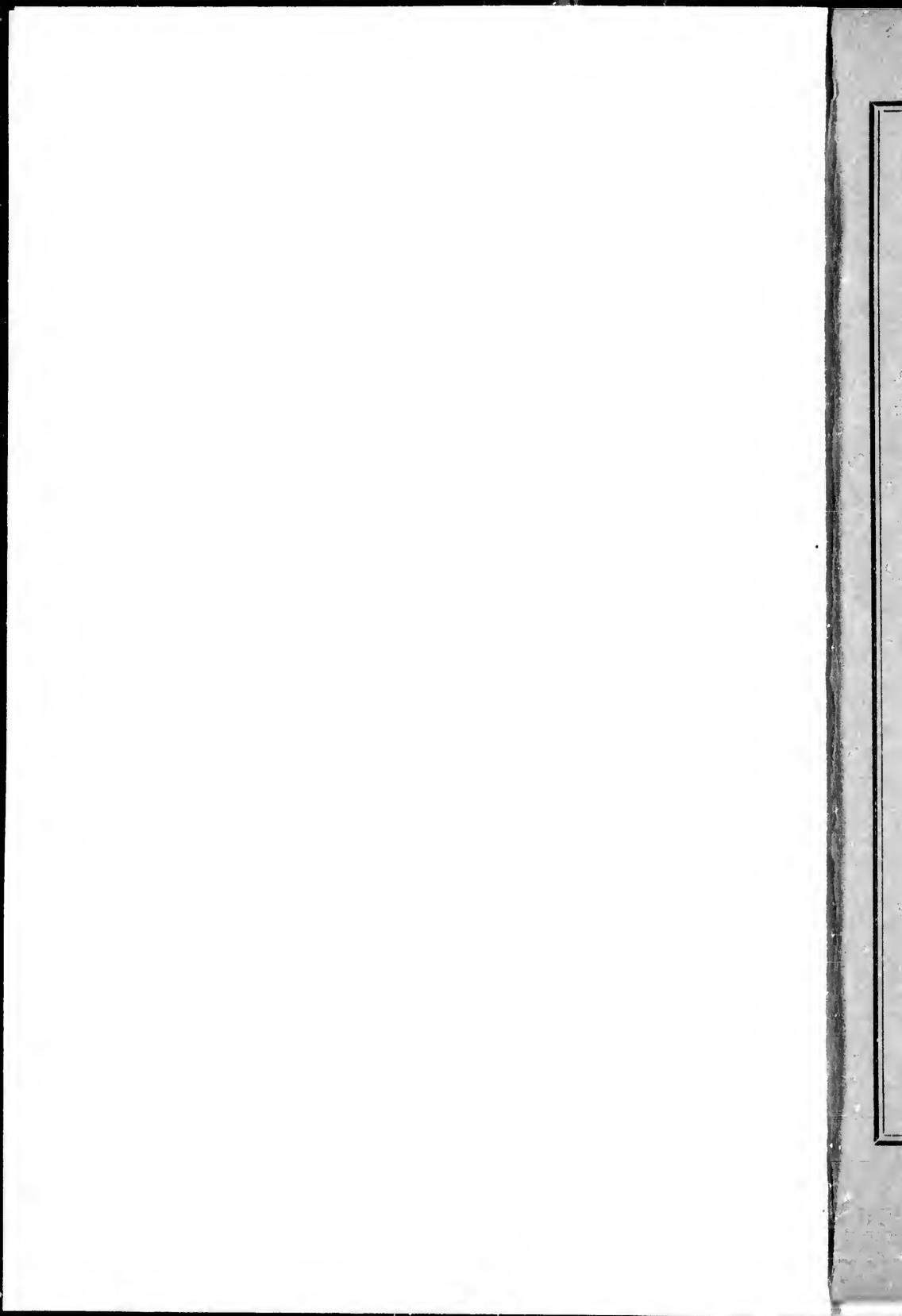
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REMARKS

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ON THE

RECENT PASTORAL LETTERS

OF

MONSEIGNEUR BOURGET.

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By A ROMAN CATHOLIC.

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Montreal:

1876.

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REMARKS  
ON THE RECENT  
PASTORAL LETTERS  
OF  
MONSEIGNEUR BOURGET.

—o—  
BY A ROMAN CATHOLIC.  
—o—

It is with the greatest reluctance that I approach the consideration and the discussion of a subject which at the present moment seems to be the most important of all those which occupy the minds of the reading portion of the community. Several letters upon the same subject have already appeared, but so far; no Catholic has deemed it opportune to publish his views and opinions upon the attitude assumed by His Lordship the Bishop of Montreal.

I know there are some Catholics who consider it better, when their ecclesiastical superiors wander from the right path of duty, and overstep the bounds of their legitimate control, to remain silent, lest any opposition on their part might evidence a spirit of insubordination, or might tend to weaken the claim of our Church to unity of faith and to infallibility. I am not one of these. I think it preferable in such a case to let outsiders know that I am not prepared to follow my spiritual advisers when they trespass upon the domain of the temporal power, and seek to trample on those privileges and immunities which the Constitution guarantees to all alike, Catholics and Protestants. And in resisting, in a lawful manner, the unwarranted intrusion of our clergy, I think I am serving the creed in which I am and ever hope to be a believer, for I do not wish it to go abroad that we Catholics are in every or any respect blind unthinking slaves, or that the Church is responsible for all the utterances of its officers. And I am the

more inclined to think I am right, when I find the Archbishop of Toronto in direct contradiction with the Bishop of Montreal, when I see the latter one day anathemizing those who voted for one Free-mason, and, the next day, execrating those who refused their support to another Free-mason, when I see a Roman Catholic priest appear on the hustings as the duly authorized agent and scrutineer of an Orange candidate, who opposed a Catholic, and tell his parishoners, with foul language, that the confessional will enable him to tell how they vote in spite of the Ballot laws.

Two recent pastoral letters of His Lordship the Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal, the one published in June, on the eve of the general elections for Members of the Legislative Assembly of this Province, the other in the month of February, have greatly alarmed the Protestant minority of this Province, and have struck blind terror into the hearts of some of those Catholics who were wont to support the so-called Liberal or Reform party at the polls. The letter published in June warned the faithful that they should not countenance the party which had refused justice to the Catholics of New Brunswick, and which had ostracized the principal figure in the quasi-rebellion in Manitoba.

The letter of February denounces Liberal Catholics in no measured terms, and by a process of reasoning which it is impossible to grasp and difficult to qualify, concludes that those Catholics who are members of the Reform party are not only Liberals in the worst sense of the word; but are in a way responsible for the famous or rather infamous desecration which a zealot in our midst had committed a few weeks before at Russell Hall.

It shall be my object to show that the Roman Catholic Bishop has overstepped the bounds of his jurisdiction,—that his conduct in so doing is reprehended by the doctors of the Church, and by the laws of the land,—that the members of the Reform party are not such Liberals as are condemned by the Church, and; finally, that His Lordship has intentionally or unwittingly made use of events and discussions purely civil or political in their character, in order to influence the minds of his diocesans against one political party, and in favor of another.

The Constitution under which we live declares that British subjects in this Province have the full enjoyment of civil and political rights. Aliens are accorded civil rights only. They have no political status in the country. Political rights are the characteristic of the British subject. They are forfeited only by civil death and in virtue of certain laws of the empire. Unless they are so lost, the subject is entitled to a free and perfect enjoyment of them here as elsewhere throughout the realm. There is no power

other than the civil authority which can deprive him of them. No authorization was ever given to the Roman Catholic Clergy, by a mere *ipse dixit*, to disfranchise any portion of the community : and what is forbidden directly cannot be done indirectly.

If I am of opinion, that of two political parties, one is wholly so unworthy of my confidence and support that I cannot conscientiously sustain or uphold it, and if my spiritual advisers forbid me to countenance the other party, the result is, that between conscience and clergy, I am deprived of my chartered rights as a citizen, my claim to have a voice in the administration of public affairs is destroyed, and I am in the position of an alien towards my own country.

But it may be said that I should obey my clergy, and either stifle the voice of my conscience, or make it to conform to the dictates of my spiritual advisers.

This is neither a sound principle of faith nor of morals. The voice of conscience is not to be stifled. It is beyond our control. It is stronger than our will. Suppress the voice of conscience and you deprive man of the advantage of that *sensus intimus* which elevates him above the brute, and likens him to his Creator. The Church never allows that voice to be hushed, but commands us to follow its inspirations.

"Conscience," says St. Thomas, "is the practical judgment or dictate of reason, by which we decide what *hic et nunc* is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil."

Dr. Newman remarks : "I observe that Conscience being a practical dictate, a collision is possible between it and the Pope's authority, only when the Pope legislates or gives particular orders or the like. But a Pope is not infallible in his laws, nor in his commands, nor in his acts of state, nor in his administration, nor in his public policy. Let it be observed that the Vatican Council has left him as it found him here.....What have excommunication and interdict to do with Infallibility? Was St. Peter infallible on that occasion at Antioch, when St. Paul withstood him? Was St. Victor infallible when he separated from his Communion the Asiatic Churches?.....No Catholic ever pretends that these Popes were infallible in these acts. Since, then, Infallibility alone could block the exercise of Conscience, and the Pope is not infallible in that subject matter in which *Conscience is of supreme authority*, no dead-lock, such as is implied in the objection which I am answering, can take place between Conscience and the Pope."

Cardinal Gousset has adduced from the Fourth Council of Lateran, that "He who acts against his conscience loses his soul." St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure and others lay down the

broad proposition that Conscience is ever to be obeyed, whether it tells truly or erroneously.

Corduba, *de Conscientia*, p. 138. "In no manner is it lawful to act against conscience, even though a law or a superior (the Pope) commands it."

Cardinal Jacobatius: "If it were doubtful whether a precept of the Pope be a sin or not, we must determine thus:—That if he to whom the precept is addressed has a conscientious sense that it is a sin and injustice, first it is his duty to put off that sense; but if he cannot, nor conform himself to the judgment of the Pope, in that case it is his duty to follow his own private conscience, and patiently bear it if the Pope punishes him.

Fenelon says no one can force the impenetrable intrenchments of the heart.

But, should an Act providing for compulsory voting by all citizens be passed by the Legislature, then the position which I assume would be made still stronger, for, in the conflict which would then arise between the law ordering me to vote and the Bishop indirectly compelling me to abstain from voting, I think I would be yet more justified in disobeying my spiritual superior.

"Were I actually a soldier or sailor in Her Majesty's service, and sent to take part in a war which I could not in my conscience see to be unjust, and should the Pope suddenly bid all Catholic soldiers and sailors to retire from the service, taking the advice of others as best I could, I should not obey him.—*Dr. Newman.*

Again I find an Act of this country referring to Clergy Reserves, emphatically declares the severance of Church from State. But if State and Church matters are to be so separated, then it is a transgression of the laws of the land for His Lordship to seek to invade the domain of politics, and to declare that the privilege of voting which is given to the subject by the Constitution, shall not be enjoyed, or shall be enjoyed only in a particular manner.

Here another objection will be raised, that the supporting of a party is the supporting of principles, that principles are to be gauged by the moral law as being metaphysical, and that, therefore, the Clergy, as being the expounders of our moral obligations, are alone entitled to teach us what principles we should advocate.

To this I answer that principles do not necessarily relate to morality. As there are many principles upon which steam-engines are constructed which have no reference to the moral law, so also there are many principles upon which political parties are based which are of a temporal, a material and not of a metaphysical nature. Free-trade and Protection have nothing to do with ethics; of course if a microscope be used there will be found in the political questions of the day something germane to religion, but if

the same instrument be turned upon anything on earth, a scintilla of spirituality will be found attached everywhere. For instance, it is laid down by many theologians that where a woman in child-birth sinks so low that there is little hope left of her recovery, it is the duty of the doctor to sacrifice the life of the mother in favor of the *possibility* of bringing forth the child in a state sufficiently viable to allow of its being baptized.

If such a practice were attempted, I fancy the laws of the state would soon be applied with severity to the Medical practitioner so acting, and the latter would be justified in refusing to become a murderer in the eyes of the law for the sake of obeying his Bishop.

There is nothing in the political principles of either Liberal-Conservative or of the so-called Liberal or Reform party sufficiently antagonistic to religion to justify the interference of the Clergy in the behalf of either. The issues between them refer to trade, navigation, agriculture, statistics, political economy in a word, and so far at least as the Federal Parliament is concerned, the Constitution has taken away from it the consideration of such questions as are in the least akin to religion.

If I am told that the New Brunswick School Bill gave rise to questions affecting our Faith, I answer that the only point at issue between those in favor of abrogating that Act and those who resisted such abrogation, was whether the Bill in question was constitutional or not, and whether the Confederation Act of 1867 allowed the Dominion Parliament to interfere; and I think it is advantageous to us Catholics that the Constitution was respected by the large-minded men of both parties; for, if our Charter is once tampered with, what may we, a slim minority, expect from the great Protestant majority, especially if they should comport themselves towards us as some of our faith would wish us to act towards them, and should elect to sweep away those immunities which are guaranteed to us by the Act of 1867.

Again, why condemn the Reform party for their action in the matter of the New Brunswick School Bill, when they did neither more nor less than the Liberal Conservative party had done?

As to the Amnesty question, it had nothing to do with religion, and moreover was not a party question. You will search in vain in the principles of the Reform party for a doctrine commanding the exile of Riel or of any one else. You will there find the principle that crime should not go unpunished, and the question of the Amnesty was one of fact merely. Was Riel a criminal? Was an amnesty promised?

But, says the *Nouveau Monde*, the Reform party refused to believe the assertion of His Grace Archbishop Taché that an

amnesty had been promised. Yes, they refused to believe his statement, but the leader of the Liberal Conservative party not only refused to give it credence, but denied its truth in a positive manner. The testimony of an Archbishop may be doubted without insult to the Church. No dogma declares that an archbishop is infallible as an expounder of natural facts. He is subject to defects of memory as well as other people, and if the burthen of proof is against him, there is nothing heretical in refusing to accept his evidence as conclusive. The remarks of Dr. Newman already quoted are equally applicable here.

"Rome cannot interfere with the civil duties of Catholics so as to give the civil power trouble or alarm," says Dr. Newman.

Cardinal Manning adds: "The Pope cannot make any claim upon those who adhere to his communion of such a nature as can impair the integrity of their Civil Allegiance."

But if in order to follow the instructions and to obey the commands of His Lordship the Bishop of Montreal, it be necessary to tear down our Constitution, to trample on the vested rights which are accorded by it to the several Provinces to make laws upon certain subjects, to allow judgments of our courts to be despised and treated with contempt, I think it follows necessarily that the civil power should be troubled and alarmed; and our civil allegiance would be impaired by interfering with the acts of the Legislature of New Brunswick, and by turning into ridicule the judgment of Chief Justice Wood which declared Riel an outlaw.

There are some who think that these questions to which I have referred were introduced into the pastoral letter of His Lordship with the same object that led to the ushering in of the *hors d'œuvre* remarks about Chiniquy, namely to excite the national and religious prejudices of some of our citizens against the Reform party, and I must confess that there is not wanting a certain plausibility in this.

That the pastoral letters in question were written for a political end, and not with any idea of safeguarding the immunities of the Church, seems almost unquestionable.

But the very name of *Liberal* is sufficient to damn you in the eyes of the Church. If it is, why should it not be sufficient to draw down the anathemata of the clergy upon the Conservative party who have added the epithet *Liberal* to their usual designation? What's in a name? A person may be a Liberal in politics without adopting those liberal ideas which alone are condemned by the Church.

It is evident that His Lordship the Bishop has in some manner been imposed upon by designing parties from whom he has received very false impressions of the issues between the political parties of this Province.

Here is the text which condemns the *Liberals*, and from it any

one can judge whether His Lordship is justified in condemning the Reform party because of its members being Liberals :

“ From which totally false idea of social government they do not fear to foster that erroneous opinion fatal in its effects on the Catholic Church and the salvation of souls, called by our predecessor Gregory XVI. an *insanity*—viz., that ‘ liberty of conscience and worship is each man’s personal right, which ought to be legally proclaimed and asserted in every rightly constituted society ; and that a right resides in the citizens of *an absolute liberty which should be restrained by no authority*, whether ecclesiastical or civil, whereby they may be able openly and publicly to manifest and *declare any of their ideas whatever* (either by word of mouth, by the press or in any other way.’ ”

Surely no one will find fault with His Holiness the Pope for condemning such doctrines. They are revolting. But no one in his senses can for a moment pretend that the present government at Ottawa uphold any such principle. If their idea of liberty is so false, why do they make laws to repress crime, to punish slander, to prevent libel ?

His Lordship and the *Nouveau Monde*, and the *Minerve* continually refer to the Syllabus as being an unquestionable authority upon what is error and what is truth.

The contents of the Syllabus are not matters of dogma. The Syllabus is a mere index, having the same authority as any other Table of Contents and no more. And the fact is that the Syllabus would soon lead a person into error if no reference were had to the original documents.

“ It is plain that there are those near or with access to the Holy Father who would if they could go much further in the way of assertion and command than the divine *assistentia*, which overshadows him, wills or permits, so that his acts and his words on doctrinal subjects must be carefully scrutinized and weighed before we can be sure what really he has said. Utterances which must be received as coming from an infallible voice are not made every day, indeed they are very rare ; and those which are by some persons affirmed or assumed to be such, do not always turn out what they are said to be. But to return : the *syllabus*, then, has no dogmatic force. It addresses us not in its separate portions, but as a whole, and it is to be received from the Pope by an act of obedience, *not of faith*, that obedience being shown by having recourse to the original and authoritative documents (allocutions and the like,) to which the syllabus pointedly refers. Moreover when we turn to those documents which *are* authoritative we find the *syllabus* cannot even be called an echo of the Apostolic voice ; for, in matters in which wording is so important, it is not

an exact transcript of the words of the Pope, in its account of the errors condemned,—just as would be natural in what is an index for reference.”—*Dr. Newman.*

The original text condemning Liberals, is given above, and the *syllabus* cannot alter it in any manner.

I cannot bring these pages to a close without again quoting from Dr. Newman :

“There are those among us, (Catholics,) as it must be confessed, who for years past, have conducted themselves as if no responsibility attached to wild words and overbearing deeds; who have stated truths in the most paradoxical form, and stretched principles till they were close upon snapping, and who, at length, having done their best to set the house on fire, leave to others the task of putting out the flame. The English people are sufficiently sensitive of the claims of the Pope without having them, as if in defiance, flourished in their faces. . . . . The Rock of St. Peter on its summit enjoys a pure and serene atmosphere, but there is a great deal of Roman *malaria* at the foot of it. . . . . What I feel deeply and ever shall feel, while life lasts, is the violence and cruelty of journals and other publications which taking, as they profess to do the Catholic side, employed themselves by their rash language, (though of course they did not mean it so,) in unsettling the weak in faith, throwing back inquirers and shocking the Protestant mind. Nor do I speak of publications only: a feeling was too prevalent in many high places that no one could be true to God and His Church who had any pity on troubled soul or any scruple of ‘scandalizing those little ones who believe in’ Christ, and of ‘despising and destroying him for whom He died.’”

Finally I quote from the Pastoral of the Swiss Bishops, which received the approbation of His Holiness :

“It in no way depends upon the caprice of the Pope, or upon his good pleasure to make such and such a doctrine the object of a dogmatic definition; he is tied up and limited to the divine revelation and to the truth, which that revelation contains; he is tied up and limited by the creeds already in existence and by the preceding definitions of the church; he is tied up and limited by the divine law and by the constitution of the church; *lastly he is tied up and limited by that doctrine, divinely revealed, which affirms that alongside religious society there is civil society, that alongside the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy there is the power of temporal magistrates, invested in their own domain with a full sovereignty, and to whom we owe obedience in conscience, and respect in all things, morally permitted and belonging to the domain of Civil Society.*”

Montreal, March, 1876.

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