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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiæ causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.
Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.

TRANSLATION.—Fortified by the Apostolic Blessing, let the Directors and Writers of the New Zealand Tablet continue to promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.
April 4, 1900.

LEO XIII., Pope.

Current Topics

Bible-in-Schools

The Catholic Hierarchy of New Zealand have reason to be gratified with the deep and widespread impression that was created by their two pronouncements on the scheme for converting our State schools into conventicles for the propaganda of a spineless Unitarianism. One current evidence of the weight of logical metal put by their Lordships into those two convincing documents is furnished by the number of candidates for Parliamentary honors all over the country that have declared themselves hostile to the sectarian scheme evolved by the Bible-in-schools party. One or two of those who are now wooing the coy electors seem to think that 'the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments' would be a sufficient 'pinch' of spiritual salt to give a proper religious flavor to our present Secularist system of public instruction. The good men mean, presumably, the usual Protestant division of the Ten Commandments, and the incorrect version of the Lord's Prayer that has become bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of Protestant public and private devotion.

Some theorists across the Pacific have tested this idea and found, to their astonishment, that it gets the settlement of the education difficulty 'no forrader' Four years ago (in 1901) the Cleveland (Ohio) School Board kicked the law aside and tintured the endowed Secularism of their system with the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. They were as confident as are some of our well-meaning candidates that this irreducible minimum of religion would settle the difficulty once and for ever. But their hopes were suddenly blighted as by the withering wind that once on a time came up from the sea, chilling and killing the beautiful Annabel Lee. 'Catholics,' said the 'Pilot' at the time, 'will not agree to the Protestant addition to the Lord's Prayer nor the Protestant division of the Ten Commandments, and the Jews have held a meeting to protest against the whole affair.' It is just as well that candidates should once for all understand that Catholics will ever protest against the introduction of any Protestant version of the Bible, or any lesson book or religious exercises drawn therefrom, into the working hours of our public schools. And in a most especial way will Catholics oppose the introduction of so erroneous a version as the Bible of King James, which is packed with false translations, a great

many of which (discarded in the Revised Version) were inserted in order to justify sundry Protestant teachings and to oppose the tenets of the Ancient Faith. Long ago the Protestant theologian Werenfels wrote his famous distich:—

*'Hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque;
Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua.'*

Which has been well translated as follows:—

*'Within one Book each seeks to read
The tenets of his private creed.
And, strange to tell, each reads so well,
The selfsame words all doctrines spell.'*

The Bible is the Book in which every sect 'seeks to read the tenets of its private creed.' No explanation of its contents—even as literature—is possible without entering upon the domain of religion. Nor can it be 'taught' to children by any instructor, however well-meaning, without the conscious or unconscious bias.

Questions for Candidates

The Bible-in-schools party are just now busy prodding Parliamentary candidates with sundry sharp-pointed questions. This is one of the little games in which two parties can take a hand. In reply to many queries from various parts of New Zealand, we venture to suggest the following questions to candidates whose attitude towards the sectarianising of the public schools has not yet been declared, or, if declared, is not as clear or as satisfactory as might be desired:—

1. Do you approve of the broad lines of the scheme adopted by the Bible-in-schools Referendum League—namely, to introduce into the State schools of New Zealand, as part of the school curriculum, a course of lessons drawn up by a Protestant Committee from the Protestant Authorised Version of the Bible?

2. Do you, specifically, approve of the following further plans in the scheme of the Bible-in-schools Referendum League—namely:—

(a) The proposal to compel Catholics and other conscientious objectors—with the alternative of distraint of goods, imprisonment, or other legal penalty—to pay taxes for the teaching, by State officials, of the aforesaid lessons from the Protestant Authorised Version of the Bible?

(b) The proposal to legalise the introduction, into the State schools, of a religious test—namely a conscience clause—for pupils and teachers?