

[A CARD.]

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*To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways
of Truth and Peace.*

LEO XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET.

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METHODS OF CONTROVERSY

It was of the Second Charles that the Earl of Rochester said:

'He never says a foolish thing,
Nor ever does a wise one.'

One of the wise and witty sayings attributed to the merry monarch was this: that Anglicans fling Nonconformist arguments at Catholics, and Catholic arguments at Nonconformists. The truth of this statement is verified in practically every controversy in which our Anglican friends are engaged. The common sentiment of our better human nature avoids the clang and jangle of controversial wrangling in the house of mourning and over the bier of the dead. But when the Anglican Bishop of Dunedin so far forgot what was due to the late-venerated Pontiff, to his Catholic fellow-citizens, to his own position, and the better feelings of his flock, as to make Leo's death the occasion for an unprovoked and uncalled-for controversy, he went a step in advance of the Caroline saying: he urged against Catholics the illusory arguments and contentions which French and German infidels, like Renan and Baur, urge against Christianity itself and all supernatural and revealed religion. It would generally interest us to know what line of proof his Lordship would follow, for instance to establish the canon and inspiration of the New Testament, the substitution of the Christian Sunday for the Jewish Sabbath, and the leading facts in the career of the Divine Saviour while He walked upon this earth. It is no far cry back to the days of 'Essays and Reviews.' But it is, none the less strange to see a Christian Bishop in a Christian land, pursue the very line of argument which, pushed to its logical conclusion, would leave the world without a Bible and turn Christianity into a fraud, a 'figment,' or a myth.

The controversy that was aroused in so unseemly a way over the lifeless body of the good old Pope began in a way which has been made over-familiar to us by some of our High Church friends. There was the customary lack of constructive theology, the usual coy unwillingness to get to the root of the question and reason about it in a clear-cut speech. It was, so far as it went, a good Protestant protest. Only that and nothing more. In unromantic everyday life you must first catch your hare. It is only in Looking-Glass Land that you skin the creature first and catch it afterwards. And in the world of realities, the idea of a Church comes logically before that of its form of Government. Before discussing the authority or proper government of the Church, or inquiring which is the true Church of Christ, you must

first come to a clear agreement as to what you mean by a 'Church.' The Anglican Bishop of Dunedin has pomelled to the best of his ability the 'Roman system' of Church government. It is based on a 'figment,' says his Lordship. But he avoided getting to the root of the discussion—he did not favor his people or the public with his idea of the Church, what he believes concerning the Church, why he believes it, and what answers he has in readiness for the very obvious difficulties which his own system presents. It is easy to advance minor objections against the Catholic Church, especially if one's knowledge of it is limited and inaccurate. Such objections foster, no doubt, a false sense of strength and security in the system in whose interests they are advanced. But they are highly calculated—perhaps not infrequently intended—to cloud the real issues that lie deeper, and to keep the public eye off the root-points in debate. The very conception of the Christian Church is a point on which Anglicans and Catholics differ pretty nearly all along the line. That it is a vital subject no Christian can dream of denying. The Sacred Scriptures and the Catholic Church present a sharp, clear, unmistakable doctrine upon the subject. The Anglican Church has little or no fixed testimony or teaching thereon: nothing beyond vague and fuzzy denials and an attempt at a compromise between the two mutually repellent principles of authority and private judgment. Surely a ray of light upon this subject might be reasonably deemed of great practical interest to the souls of our Anglican fellow-citizens than premeditated onslaughts on the Papacy at a time when the voice of controversy ought to have been still over the remains of the dead Pope?

No Anglican will deny that the Pope has admittedly been the ruler of the Christian Church for at least a thousand years. His authority is still acknowledged by the vastly greater part of those who bear the Christian name. St. Peter's primacy, his Roman episcopate, and the apostolic succession from him in the Roman See are so luminously proven—partly by the Sacred Scriptures, partly by the records of history—that they are frankly admitted by Protestant writers of such eminence as Grotius, Leibnitz, Nevin, Hall, and others. And a far less cogent—though, of course, convincing—line of evidence than that which establishes all this, is accepted without hesitation by Anglican divines in proving the canon and inspiration of the New Testament. Moreover: not even our bitterest enemies have ever yet attempted to show when the present Roman Church began, at any period later than the days of the Apostles. Lightfoot, Salmon, Schaff, and other foremost Protestant historians admit that the active exercise of the papal primacy had its beginnings at least as far back as the days of Pope St. Clement, the third successor of St. Peter, in the lifetime of the Apostle St. John. Yet there are Anglican writers and others who profess to believe that the burden of proof rests upon us—that we have a case to make out, that we must show that we have not been introducing new doctrines into the Church of God! The proofs we have a-plenty and are ever ready to bring them forward. But in this discussion the burden of proof falls rightly upon our Anglican assailants, and not upon us. It is for them to show that the Church of the Living God has been blundering and misleading the world during all those long centuries.

The title-deeds of the Catholic Church are ever on view. The late uncalled-for and ill-timed controversy that has been forced upon us doubly entitles us to ask, in turn, for the title-deeds of Anglican Christianity. The true Church of God must be a witness to the world; it must be a teacher of His people; it must, moreover, be a ruler and guide—one having authority to enforce teaching and to carry out discipline (Mark, i., 22; John, xx., 21; 2 Tim. iv., 2; Titus, i., 13). But what Anglican will pretend that the contradictory witnessing, the yes-no teaching, the complete inability for rule and discipline