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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 Justitiae causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

LEO XIII, P.M.

Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

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.

The New Zealand Tablet

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 1925.

MYSTERIES OF RELIGION

IF the average Rationalist were asked why he considers Christians enslaved and down-trodden by priestcraft, he would probably explain that we are not recognised as members of the Church unless we believe mysteries which human reason could never discover and never understand. Now we certainly do believe in divine mysteries which we could never know anything of unless God had revealed them to us, and even after accepting knowledge of their existence we are still unable to comprehend them. We understand enough about them to talk of them intelligently, to distinguish them from one another, to draw useful moral and doctrinal conclusions from them, but we freely admit that we do not comprehend them in their essence and that they remain mysteries to us always while we are living on this earth. Moreover, we may add that knowing that the mysteries are true, they serve as beacons to us and we can at least refute any difficulties brought by human reason against them. Our position is the direct contradictory of that of the Rationalists. We hold firmly that it is not contrary to reason to believe the mysteries of religion once we are certain that God has revealed them.

Pascal described science as "learning conscious of its ignorance." Newton, in the fulness of his years, said he had only been as a child picking up shells on the shores of the ocean of knowledge. In the order of nature we are surrounded by mysteries. What endless discussions there are among learned men concerning the nature of heat, of light, of electricity, of life, of time, of space; who will tell us exactly why a brown bulb will put forth a beautiful flower; what do doctors know about disease? What do astronomers know about the stars? We know

that all these natural mysteries exist, and we know that we do not comprehend them. On the testimony of our senses, or on the testimony of men whose veracity we can only trust until they are found out, we believe all these mysteries of the natural order. Rationalists believe them as we do, nay their credulity is often greater than ours, and they are far more rash in accepting as truth theories which we receive with caution. Where then can there be any mental servitude or any unreasonableness in believing on the infallible authority, not of our senses which are fallible or of other men who often deceive, but of God Himself, in mysteries which we are not able to comprehend? Once our reason, confirmed by our faith, certifies us that there is a God, and once we are certain that we have His word for the existence of mysteries, the unreasonable thing would be not to believe. We are reasonable and the so-called Rationalists are unreasonable. Again, taking mankind as we find it, a vast number of people are rude and uneducated and they depend for their information on the word of scholars and scientists. They thus believe things which they do not understand, which to them are mysteries. Rationalists do this as well as others, but in doing so they are doing with less reason what we do with greater reason: they believe on man's word, and we believe on God's. Is it unreasonable for the child to believe the father who tells him what he saw in foreign lands? Is it unreasonable for the man-in-the-street to believe what the astronomer tells him he sees through his telescope? If it is not how can it be unreasonable to believe on the authority of the God of all truth whatever He reveals to us? Consider again that man's intelligence is limited, that there are more things in heaven and on earth than our philosophy dreams of. We have only what God gave us and we understand only what He wishes us to understand. Yet the Rationalists, who cannot tell you what life is or what electricity is, pretend to measure God's Power and Knowledge by the farthing rushlight of their own intelligence. That is not only pride: it is also stupidity and madness. Another consideration is this. The Rationalists reason about things that do not exist: they often do not know what they are talking about, and they imagine that we believe things which no one believes at all. It is exactly with them as with the bigots who are choked with lies about our religion and go round the country attacking us for teachings which are never taught anywhere. Take for example the Mystery of the Trinity. We do not believe that one person is also three persons, or that one nature is also three natures: we do not believe that one of anything is three of the same thing. We believe that the unity is in the nature of God and the trinity in the persons, which to us is a mystery but not a contradiction. Ignorance of logic as well as of theology often explains the rash assertions and the hopeless language of our Rationalist opponents.

Mysteries are no difficulty to a man of sound reason and strong faith. The man who is accustomed to find mysteries all round him every day of his life, in the fields, in the sky, in the air, in the sea, will naturally

be prepared for them in such a lofty thing as religion. The man whose reason leads him to God and who receives from God the gift of faith knows that as God is greater than His creatures there must be many things in God's relations with creatures—above all in the supernatural relations which a mere man cannot understand. Our mind is limited and finite, God's Power and Intelligence are infinite. Therefore, it is only the man who knows nothing, who does not know his own littleness, who is blind to the narrow scope of his views even on things around his feet, who tries to measure God's Mind by his own. There is no end to the irrationality of the Rationalist. If we take the case of the miracles at Lourdes we shall find that Rationalists who scoffed at the miracles and asked to be confronted with cures under conditions laid down by themselves still refused to believe when they actually saw and could not deny the evidence. Prejudice is hard to call, and Rationalists who start out determined not to believe will abandon reason itself rather than be reasonable.

THE VATICAN AND ENGLAND

The United Protestant Council recently suggested to the British Government to withdraw the Legation from the Vatican. The only satisfaction we derive from that suggestion is limited to the inference that there is a body of Protestants united on anything. They appear to be unanimous only in their opposition to Rome. If they were agreed upon any subject that tends to the benefit of their country, it would be a pleasure to us to know it. But their suggestion, if carried out, would be injurious to Britain and not complimentary to the Holy See.

"Eaten bread is soon forgotten," says the proverb. The U.P.C. evidently forgets how important a part Benedict XV played in improving the condition of our wounded and prisoners during the war period. Lord Robert Cecil, speaking in Parliament on February 14, 1918, said: ". . . there are many occasions on which the Pope has interfered in connection with the war and interfered most benevolently, and in a way which has earned the gratitude of every person in this country. There are other cases to which I could refer, cases in which his Holiness obtained better terms for prisoners, the repatriation of prisoners, where he has rendered service in regard to hospitals, and in regard to the graves of our soldiers in Italy. He has taken action with regard to matters of civilian relief, and so on, as to which we have had many diplomatic conversations in this country, and as to which we have always treated all his representations with the utmost respect, and we are grateful for the many things he has done to alleviate the condition of our prisoners and others who have suffered during the war."

If Benedict's usefulness had been given free scope, it would have shown itself after the armistice was signed quite as signally as before. Even in spite of the efforts made by the great Powers to belittle his influence, the young countries rushed to him for guidance. Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, and Jugoslavia begged him to receive their representatives at the Vatican and to send his Nuncios to dwell