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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 Justitie 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, MARCH 18, 1925.

THE BIBLE AND SOME BIOLOGISTS

For a discussion of the problems raised concerning the Bible and Geology and the Bible and Astronomy we refer our readers to the Catholic Encyclopaedia or to an authoritative work on Apologetics. Merely as a sample of the sort of science brought forward by Rationalists and Atheists we will deal briefly with the objections brought against the Biblical account of the origin of life. Our position is this: God, by an act of His will created the world, including animals and plants to which he gave the power of reproduction. Against this, Rationalists are found who allege, without a shadow of proof, that living creatures came not only from pre-existing germs but even solely from the influence of chemical and physical forces inherent in matter. They say that a living being can be brought into life without pre-existing life, by the simple effects of physico-chemical action or reaction. They argue that if this can be done, there is no reason why it was not always done, and that hence the hypothesis of creation of living organisms is at least superfluous.

* * *

The first thing to remark is that the alleged fact of purely spontaneous generation has never been proved. The second is that even as a hypothesis it is rejected by the most competent authorities. Flourens says: "No one since Redi believes any longer in the spontaneous generation of insects; that of intestinal worms finds no defenders since Balbiani, and since the experiments of Pasteur, it has generally been abandoned in regard to every kind of animalculae. Quatrefages says: "We consider the doctrine of spontaneous generation definitely condemned." Virchow says: "Not a single positive fact is known to prove that there

has ever been such a thing as spontaneous generation, or that organic matter has been spontaneously transformed into an organic being." The greatest authority of all, Pasteur, says: "There has never been known a single instance of beings coming into the world without parents. Those who affirm the contrary are victims of illusions or of causes which they could not appreciate or which they did not remove." After Pasteur's experiments, confirmed by those of Schwann, Schultze, Milne-Edwards, and many others, the Academy of Sciences announced this fundamental law of biological science: *All organised beings in the actual state of our globe receive life from bodies already living; large and small are born of ancestry.* Hence, there is no room for doubt that spontaneous generation is a myth and a delusion. Even if it were true, we might still ask whence came the matter, the physical and chemical forces, and the changes that brought the elements into juxtaposition. And we should still have to go back to a First Cause to explain their existence. Science proves that life has not always existed on earth; that it had a beginning; and that no living creature ever yet existed that did not spring from another. Now as they had a beginning and did not spring from matter we are again brought back to the doctrine of creation in order to explain the riddle of the universe: we find, that is to say, that the Biblical account is sustained instead of upset by true science. Hence we have Virchow frankly admitting that we come face to face with the need for a higher causality; and we have even Haeckel saying that if we reject spontaneous generation we must admit miracles. Again, scientists say that as there was a time when there was no living thing on earth, there will come a time when all life shall disappear from earth. The stars have in some cases lost their heat and light; the sun is cooling and will go on cooling until it will not radiate enough heat to enable living things to exist on our planet. Thus, as regards the end of the world, as well as with reference to the beginning, science supports rather than opposes the Bible.

* * *

We might, if time and space allowed, take up in the same way, problems of geology, astronomy, paleontology and find in each examination the same fact verified: that there is no opposition between ascertained scientific truth and the real meaning of the Bible, but that on the contrary as progress is made an science becomes richer, the Mosaic account is wonderfully borne out and supported by research and study in every department of natural science.

CREMATION

A deputation waited upon the Dunedin City Council on last Wednesday evening, the purpose of which was to enlist the assistance of the Council in erecting a crematorium in this city. This deputation is the outcome of a meeting of cremation advocates, which was held last November. At that time we gave the sound

and solid reasons why the Church sets her face against this pagan practice of burning the dead, but we do not propose to recapitulate them here. There is another aspect of the question, however, which we must now touch upon, and that is the cool proposal of the cremationists to make conscientiously objecting ratepayers and rentpayers provide the wherewithal to pay for this precious crematorium. One of the speakers said that the Catholic Bishop of Dunedin had already voiced the feelings of the Church on the matter, and they could not expect any support from Catholics. The point is, however, that they intend forcing financial support from Catholics through the rates and through the rents. It was alleged that a large body of the people desired a crematorium in this city. We take leave to doubt this; and further, we should like to know what means were taken by the deputation to ascertain precisely what percentage of the community are clamoring for this thing? Would it not be much nearer the mark to say that the vast majority of the people have not troubled to think about it at all, and that the public demand is confined chiefly to the little ring of enthusiasts who are not quite enthusiastic enough to pay for their hobby themselves? In any case, if such a large number of people are longing for this innovation the burden of paying for it ought to rest lightly on so many shoulders. Would it be rude to suggest that those who are sighing for the crematorium erect it in the same way in which Catholics build their schools—that is, pay for it themselves. It must have been a slip, however, when one of the deputation said that the cost of erecting the crematorium was too great to be borne by private enterprise. From this the inference is that the enthusiasts are very few. We agree that people living in a community often have to pay for things they do not need; but we must insist that it is contrary to the functions of a public body supposed to represent all classes to give support to something which is an outrage on the conscience of one or more sections in the community. We urge Catholics to oppose strongly any attempt to make this pagan practice a municipal responsibility. There are any number of urgent works requiring the immediate attention and financial support of the City Council; but the erection of a crematorium is certainly not one of them.

CONVERT PRELATES

It may interest our separated brethren (says the *Missionary*, Washington, U.S.A.) to have the names of former Protestants who reached high place in the government of the American Catholic Church. These include the following names:—

Archbishop James Roosevelt Baylay, Archbishop of Baltimore and Papal Delegate.

Archbishop Samuel Eccleston of Baltimore.

Archbishop James Whitfield, of Baltimore.

Archbishop James Hubert Blenk, of New Orleans.

Archbishop Christie of Oregon.

Archbishop James Frederic Wood of Philadelphia.

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