

FEATURES OF THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

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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.

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.



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1921.

AUTHORITY AND PRIVATE JUDGMENT



CATHOLICS differ from Protestants not only as to what they believe but also as to why they believe. Catholics believe in the authority of the Church, which they recognise as the "Pillar and the Ground of Truth"; Protestants have at best vague notions about the authority of their Churches and only condescend to accept certain doctrines, which vary according to the sect to which they belong.

(a) High-Church people believe in doctrines taught in different parts and at certain epochs of what they term "Catholic Christendom."

(b) Low Churchmen hold doctrines which they think are found in the Bible.

(c) Broad Churchmen reject doctrines which they cannot reconcile with what they imagine to be right reason.

The Catholic position is that Christ came to teach the Truth, that His revelation is a definite body of doctrines, a deposit, given to His Church to maintain, proclaim, and teach. Christ made belief of the truth essential for salvation. The deposit of doctrines in which all must believe is the Faith which can never be changed, and can never be lost. He left the Holy Spirit with His Church to safeguard the purity and integrity of the deposit of His teaching; and the Church can no more err than He Himself. In the sense that it is a theological virtue faith is the assent of the mind, illumined by God's grace, to what God has revealed. We assent, not because of anything we imagine, or because our reason makes certain truths plain to us, but because we know that Christ is with His Church and that He speaks to us by its authority. In a word that is the essential difference between the Catholic and the Protestant attitude towards religion.

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The Anglican, or High Church, position is essentially Protestant. The Church of England claims no infallibility for its formularies, and has no fixed interpretation for them. For an interpretation it must go to the State Courts, which many Anglicans refuse to recognise. The ultimate authority on which its formularies are based is Parliament, and we doubt if there is even one Anglican who would claim for David Lloyd George that he is an instrument of the Divine teaching. There is no union in the Anglican Church.

Bishops cannot agree: what one holds as essential another looks on as heresy. The Church denounces the Mass and calls the doctrines of Purgatory and Invocation of Saints abuses, but many of the best of her ministers cling steadfastly to what the Church condemns. So it is obvious that nothing more than individual judgment determines what a man may hold as an orthodox member of the Anglican body. In a word Anglicans are Protestants, just as much as the members of the low or broad Churches; and not what Christ actually did teach but what they think He taught or ought to have taught is their creed. All the confusion and evasiveness of Anglicanism is due to this. Without authority and without faith they are like ships without helms, manned by uncertain and unskilled mariners from whom the sun is hidden. Confusion in faith leads to confusion in other matters. Private judgment gave to the State the right to set asunder those whom God had joined. Divorce, so prolific in unhappiness and domestic disorder, has become a scandal wherever Protestantism prevails. The rejection of the Sacrament of Matrimony has led to the undermining of the sanctity of home-life. The open contradiction between teachers has convinced the people that they have no guides and left them to follow their own judgment, wholly uninfluenced by the salutary teachings of Christ. The people are more logical than their preachers and divines; and if the logic of the people had led them into sin and laxity of morals is the blame not the teachers'? If religion is an uncertain thing surely it cannot be divine; and if Christ left it vague and changeable did He expect men to bother about it? Private judgment can find but one logical answer; that answer is the one found to-day in most Protestant communities, where the grass grows on the pathway, and the people—at least in large numbers—have as little regard for the sanction of the moral law as a horse or a dog.

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Protestantism means private judgment. Private judgment means setting individual reason above the authority of Christ who said "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." In the Catholic Church alone is there respect for authority; and for that reason, in the Catholic Church alone is there true religion to-day. Founded on the rock, the Church has been true to her mission of teaching all men everything that Christ commanded. She guards the Law of God; she reminds her children, from the cradle to the grave, that observance of the Ten Commandments leads to eternal life, and that violation of them leads to everlasting death. She has been faithful and she has kept the purifying flame of religion burning in the midst of a perverse world. The Protestant Churches have set themselves to pull down where she has built. They have tried to undermine the authority of Christ, and in the case of their own people they have succeeded only too well. They have taken away authority and they have made an idol of free-thinking. And their free-thinkers have followed their masters and spread the spirit of revolt against human authority as well as divine, against human law as well as against God's.

LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

A modern Government is confronted with two imperative demands if the country is progressive (says the London *Catholic Times* editorially). The one is for retrenchment in expenditure. The other is for increased expenditure on genuine public services. There is but one way of meeting them, and that is to lift the burden of armaments off the shoulders of the workers. It is necessary that every friend of peace should help to mobilise public opinion so that the utmost pressure may be put on the representatives of the various countries attending the Washington Conference to influence them to achieve this result. It is a small achievement that is sought, but it is worth something to gain a material lightening of a burden that has become intolerable. We have won but recently a great war. What have we to show for all the sacrifices? A few miserable profiteers on the one hand, and, on the other, an impoverished nation not a whit more secure than it was in 1914 before the outbreak of the war. Perhaps the world will yet hearken to the words of our Holy Father.

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