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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

The Coming Coronation.

In his learned work entitled *The English Coronation Oath*, the late Father Bridgett, C.S.S.R., gives the following particulars regarding the appointment of kings in England which will be of interest to our readers in view of the approaching coronation of his Majesty King Edward VII. in Westminster Abbey: 'In the history of the anointings of Jewish kings,' says he, 'we have no mention of a coronation oath. Their powers, however, were strictly regulated and limited by the Divine law. The earliest record of royal unction among Christian kings certainly belongs to our island [England]. It is a sad one. Gildas, writing of the British kings who ruled in various parts after the retirement of the Roman legions, says: "*Ungebantur reges, et paulo post ab unctoribus trucidabantur*"—"Kings were anointed, and soon after slain by their anointers." The most ancient order for the benediction of a king is found in an English pontifical, that of Archbishop Egbert, who died in 766.'

The Catholic Rite.

'But,' he continues, 'perhaps I had better first give the outline of the "Benediction and Coronation of a King," as it is in the present Roman pontifical. The king is to fast three days in the week preceding his coronation, which will take place on a Sunday. The ceremony is to be performed, if possible by the metropolitan, and (as usual with such ceremonies) is a kind of interlude in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The pontiff addresses a beautiful exhortation to the king, who makes the following profession.—

I, who, by the providence of God, am about to be king, profess and promise before God and His angels that henceforth, according to my knowledge and power I will do and keep justice and peace to the Church of God and to the people subject to me, with due regard to the mercy of God, according as I shall be able to ascertain by the counsel of my faithful [advisers]. Also to pay due and canonical honor to the bishops of God's churches, and observe inviolably whatever has been granted to the churches by emperors and kings. Also to pay due honor to my abbots, counts, vassals, according to faithful counsel.

'The king then kneels,' says Father Bridgett, 'and places both hands on the Gospels held open by the bishop, saying: "So help me God and His holy Gospels," and kisses the bishop's hand. Then follow prayers and litanies, and the bishop, with the oil called that of the catechumens (the same which is used in Baptism), anoints in the sign of the cross the forearm and the neck between the shoulders. The Mass begins, and the king, having been clothed with royal vestments, kneels at the faldstool. Before the Gospel he receives the sword, with appropriate exhortations and prayers, and the crown and sceptre, and is placed upon his throne. The *Te Deum* is sung and the Gospel, and the Mass proceeds, the king makes his offering, and is expected to receive Holy Communion after the celebrant.

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The Roman pontifical was never used in England before the Reformation, but the ceremonies and prayers of our old

English pontificals are substantially the same. I have no intention of dwelling in detail on the various parts of the ceremonial. I will merely observe regarding the unctions, that formerly chrism was used as well as oil of catechumens. The king was first anointed with the oil on the palms of the hands, the breast, between the shoulders, on the forearm, and on the crown of the head; and then with chrism on the forehead.'

After the Reformation.

Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth were all crowned in accordance with the old Catholic rite described above by the learned Redemptorist. 'Since the Reformation,' he continues, 'the coronation has lost none of its splendor, though some consider it a mere religious pageant, imparting no sacredness. Many of the old rites have been retained, as the anointing, girding with the sword, crowning and enthroning. As regards the oil, it seems that a change has been made. There are animal, vegetable, and mineral oils of many kinds; but the Catholic Church knows only one for sacred purposes, that which was in use in Palestine in the time of Our Lord—the oil of olives, which He sanctified (I may add) by His agony and sweat of blood in the olive-grove. The oil of catechumens and the oil for the sick are both the same in substance, but consecrated by the bishop with different prayers. Chrism is also olive-oil, but mixed with balsam. The Anglican bishops who prepared the oil for the coronation of Charles I. made a signal innovation. He was anointed with the oil of ben, made from the ben nut and mixed with many choice perfumes. This nut-oil was also used in the unction of the Catholic king, James II., and he is said to have made a largess of £200 to the perfumer.'

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'I may say,' adds Father Bridgett, 'that, though English Catholics attached sacredness to the person of an anointed king, they did not consider that the coronation oath and anointing were necessary to his authority, or conferred on him an absolute immunity. The king had all his rights and duties from the moment of his accession or acceptance, and he thereupon entered into a tacit contract with his people. . . . Of course the Church does not admit a royal character, like the character of Baptism, Confirmation, and Order; nor is royal unction a sacrament.'

Proposed Bible-in-Schools Referendum.

Some time ago we referred at some length in our leading columns to the new programme and plan of campaign on the subject of Bible-teaching in the State schools which had been formally adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly of New Zealand. That programme, it will be remembered, included the following points:—(1) That Government schools be opened daily with the Lord's Prayer; (2) that on certain days of the week lessons on selected portions of the Bible be given by the teachers during school hours, these lessons and explanations to be wholly contained in a book to be supplied by a committee of the churches combining to secure this reform; (3) that these lessons shall be of a strictly undenominational character; (4) that teachers who conscientiously object to give these lessons shall not be compelled to give them, and scholars whose parents have conscientious objections shall not be com-