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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.

The New Zealand Tablet

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 1925.

RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN RELIGIONS

ENEMIES of Christianity exhaust their ingenuity in order to discover new means of discrediting Christianity, and there is no superstition they will not embrace before they will receive the pure and ennobling morality of the Gospel. In lectures and in books treating of the history of religion, they go to great pains to show how far Brahminism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, and so forth resemble Christianity, endeavoring to show from these similarities that Christianity is only an evolution from other forms of superstition. Now besides the fact that there are positive and clear proofs for the Divine origin of our religion, it would be strange if, human nature being the same essentially everywhere, there were not resemblances among the ways which human reason follows in its efforts to worship a Creator. The Christian religion embraces true natural religion, and therefore ought to have many points of similarity to phases of natural religion however barbarous and undeveloped; but it also adds to the natural the supernatural, and has distinctive notes of its own which no other religion possesses. Thus, in no other do we find the numerous and exact prophecies which foretold for centuries the coming of Christ; no other is supported by the miracles He wrought in favor of His doctrine; no other presents such a complete and perfect teaching concerning the relations between God and man, and between man and his fellow-men.

Holding, as we do, that the human race is essentially one, it is only natural that the revelations made by God in early ages should be perpetuated among the races which separated from time to time, as it is natural that errors should creep in among those who fell away from the true religion and did not take such jealous care as the Jews did for the preservation of their doctrine pure and undefiled. Hence, all springing from the same source, resemblances are natural; all not being equally careful of their deposit, differences are to be expected. Apart from this original unity, there is another reason why all religions should in some way resemble one another. As we said before, human nature

is the same everywhere. Now religion is so natural to mankind that man has been defined as a religious animal. Man, in whatever savage state he is found, has some knowledge of God, and with that goes invariably some form of religion, however rudimentary. In all cases it is an attempt to honor God, an expression of man's inferiority to God, of God's power and greatness. Hence, the fundamental note of religion being in all cases the same, it is only natural that human nature, being everywhere the same essentially, should express itself along lines between which similarity is found to exist. Pagans as well as Christians adore God, offer sacrifices to God, pray to God, honor God, fear God; and it is not strange that humanity, which is one, should in its efforts to worship God, preserve unity of some sort. It would be, on the other hand, strange if it did not. It would be strange if a Divine religion, which is based on God's relations with mankind, did not exhibit resemblances to natural religions founded on the same relations, less clearly understood owing to the absence of revelation, or only to a vestige of the traditions of ancient revelation. Hence, among the more cultured pagans we find doctrines discovered by the light of reason which come close to the truths revealed to Christians; and in the moral order we find philosophers groping towards laws which the teaching of Christ has made clear and unmistakable for us. With regard to exterior worship, which is the outward expression of the inner sentiments of the soul, analogy is also to be expected, as man's object is to testify his respect, adoration, submission, and gratitude to God, from Whom he hopes for pardon and protection. Sacrifice was ordained by God in the early ages, and in their main lines the pagans followed the ancient ritual, making the destruction of the victims symbolical of their recognition of God's power and glory. Now in the beginning God chose ways of sacrifice which were in harmony with human nature's tendencies and needs, and it was to be expected that even when the races divided and wandered apart, they would retain, as long as they retained religion in any form, resemblances to the sacrifices of their forefathers. Christianity itself, heir to the Old Law and its fulfilment, borrowed freely from ancient usages instead of setting them aside. The Church preserved and sanctified old customs, old festivals, old manners, supernaturalising them and elevating them to the higher order of the New Law. Hence, again, resemblances must be found between Christianity and other religions, and it would be very extraordinary and inexplicable if such were not found.

The objection drawn from such resemblances has therefore no force. It is not the similarities but the differences that matter most, for the latter mark the Christian religion as Divine in its origin, Divine in its end, Divine in its doctrines. The miracles performed by Christ in testimony of His teaching, His Resurrection from the tomb, the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies concerning Him, the miracles of the Apostles, the fulfilment of the prophecies made by Christ Himself, the miraculous establishment of the Church and its indefectibility throughout all ages, the witness of the martyrs, the

sublimity and purity of the doctrinal and moral teaching of Christ, and the Holiness of Him and of many of His followers are the evidence upon which our conviction of the Divinity of Christianity rests. Examination of all these motives in detail would prove that each of them is proof in itself, and that in each of them Christianity differs from every other form of religion. Thus, while all religions are in some respects similar, and while such resemblance is only to be expected, only one is Divine, and because of its Divinity it has characters which lift it as far above all the others as the supernatural is above the natural. In conclusion, let us quote a passage from Cauchy, the illustrious mathematician: "I am a Christian, that is, I believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, with Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, Descartes, Newton, Fermat, Leibnitz, Pascal, Grimaldi, Euler, Gudlin, Boscovich, Gerdt; with all the great astronomers, physicians, geometers of past ages. I am a Catholic with the majority of them, and I am ready to give a reason for my faith. . . I share the profound convictions expressed in the words, actions, and the writings of our greatest scholars, Ruffini, Haüy, Laennec, Ampere, Pelletier, Freycinet, Coriolis; and if I refrain from mentioning others, I can say at least that it gives me great pleasure to find all the nobility and generosity of the Christian faith in my illustrious friends, in the inventor of crystallography, in the celebrated navigator of the Uranie, and in the immortal author of electro-dynamics." On the whole, it would seem that while most of the first-class scientists and scholars were believers, a great number of the sciolists and pretenders were atheists. Once more Bacon is right: "A little knowledge leads man from God, and a great deal of it brings man back to God."

**THE LATE POPE PIUS X
PETITION FOR BEATIFICATION FROM
THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND
HIERARCHY.**

His Grace Archbishop Dubig, Secretary to the Conferences of the Australian Hierarchy, has received from his Eminence Cardinal Merry del Val the following letter acknowledging receipt of a petition for the Beatification of the late Pope Pius X, forwarded to Rome some time ago on behalf of the archbishops and bishops of Australia and New Zealand.

Rome,

June 5th, 1925.

My dear Lord Archbishop,

I am in receipt of the petition you have sent me on behalf of the Australasian Hierarchy for the Beatification of the great and saintly Pontiff-Pope Pius X, and it is very welcome.

I will see to it being placed in the proper quarter together with similar petitions from the bishops of all parts of the world. This universal tribute rendered to that holy Pontiff is most remarkable, and his Holiness Pope Pius XI, in a letter which he has been pleased to address to me some days ago, has taken note of it with great satisfaction.

With respectful regards,

I am, my Lord Archbishop,
Your Grace's humble servant in Christ
R. CARDINAL MERRY DEL VAL.

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