

HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

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(Translated from the French for the NEW ZEALAND TABLET.)

35.—SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION OF THE TWO EVANGELICAL GENEALOGIES.

THUS the existence of the genealogies given by St. Matthew and St. Luke, is sufficient, in itself alone, to establish clearly that their Gospel was composed before the destruction of Jerusalem (70). The discordance apparent in these Gospels is even a further guarantee of their authenticity. The foreign nations, to whom the Apostles bore the good tidings of the Word made flesh, knew nothing of the Jewish customs. If, as rationalism supposes, "popular ideas operating at various points," had been invented, later on, relative to the Saviour's origin, the apocryphal writers, far from taking pleasure in drawing up two contradictory lists, would have come to an agreement, in order to present precisely the same account in the narratives, which they wished to pass off as being the work of St. Matthew and St. Luke. Here again, the Gospel, in its immutable and august simplicity, baffles all the suppositions of rationalism. Of all the Jewish genealogies, that of the family of Jesus Christ ought to be one of the best preserved; since it represented, on the one side, the royal descent of David, and on the other, it was related to the sacerdotal race, by the affinity of Mary with Elizabeth, descendant from Aaron. But Jesus Christ, in his divine person, presented to the Hebrew genealogists a type without precedent in history. Legally, he passed for the son of Joseph of Nazareth; in reality, he was the son of Mary, and had no father, among the children of men. This is why Jesus Christ has two genealogies; the one through Joseph, going back to Solomon and David, as given by St. Matthew; the other, through Mary, daughter of Heli or Joachim, going back to David by Nathan, as described by St. Luke. And it would be well to observe that the name of Mary does not occur at the beginning of the genealogy of St. Luke. An apocryphal writer, unacquainted with the Jewish customs, would not have failed to inscribe it. To avoid this snare, it was a positive necessity that the Evangelist should be perfectly conversant with the Hebrew customs. In effect, the name of a woman never appeared in the Hebrew genealogies, unless it might be, to call to memory a foreign origin, or an alliance, illegal in its source, but set right afterwards, by exceptional circumstances. It is thus the genealogy of St. Matthew mentions Thamar, whose union with Juda, the eldest of the sons of Jacob, recalled a remarkable episode. It records besides, the name of Rahab, the heroine of Jericho, whose devotedness had nationalized her in Israel; that of Ruth, the Moabite, and finally that of Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, becomes the mother of Solomon, under circumstances known to all. With the exception of these unions, so dignified and exceptional, the genealogy of St. Matthew which embraces a period of three thousand years, does not mention another woman. For this reason, that, following the root of the Hebrew word (*Nessim*), (1) women were always passed over in silence. Man alone (*Zkar*), (2) had the privilege of perpetuating memories, as well as races. From the day on which Mary was legally espoused to Joseph under the pen of the genealogists, the name of Joseph was substituted for that of Mary; so that, according to the expression of a recent exegetist, "we find in the genealogy of St. Luke, precisely what ought to be there. Woman is kept out of sight; she is not mentioned, even at the risk of disadvantage to the divinity of Christ. This genealogical line bears the stamp of robust authenticity."

36.—CONCLUSION.

And now, had we not reason to say that all the academies in the world, bringing together their lights, and the historical statements at their disposal, up to the present day, could not succeed in writing over again the two genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke, if these two monuments should happen to be lost? What mean the "popular ideas operating at various points," to which rationalism wishes to give the credit of such a result? The Gospel is a living miracle of exactitude, of reality, of striking authenticity. It would seem as though providence had set itself to the task of multiplying around this divine monument the most inextinguishable guarantees. Jerusalem will be effaced from among the nations, as soon as the genealogy of Christ shall have been registered in the eternal book. The Hebrews will lose the remembrance of their ancestors, as soon as the patriarchal flower of the Old Testament shall have blossomed. It would not be in the power of any human hand to add an iota to the book of the Lamb, sealed up until the consummation of ages. And there are men who aim at wresting from the world its faith in the Gospel! But, let them take the best authenticated historian, and attempt to submit his works to as minute a control, as severe an examination, as exaggerated a criticism. There is not one that could withstand it. A page of Titus Livius, taken at random from one of the fourteen or fifteen volumes of his works, could not, without rude cheeks, sustain such a trial. And yet the Gospel still holds its ground. Origen expounded it to Celsus the philosopher; St. Justin explained it to Trypho the Jew; St. Irenæus, to the Gnostics; St. Augustine, to the disciples of Manes. Kepler, Leibnitz, Newton, Bossuet, the most powerful geniuses that the world has ever known, have fallen on their knees before the marvel of the Gospel. And we, who scarce know how to lisp the first letters of a science, the secrets of which these men possessed to the full, we are to be deprived of the right to adore, in its evangelical manifestation, the radiant divinity of Jesus Christ! A few paltry sophisms, some tattered shreds of contradictory erudition, pillaged through the course of ages, from heresies long since dead—this is all that the decreed rationalism of the day opposes to the grand old Catholic tradition, with its two thousand years of light, glory, and faith! To impose an eternal silence and oblivion on these miserable accents, it suffices that the voice of the priest be heard repeating at the corner of the altar, the first page of the Gospel: *Liber generationis Jesu Christi*. A thrill runs through the whole course of history; all the dead of the Old Testament arise, and come to adore the son of Mary at the crib of Bethlehem. Adam, "who was of God" recog-

nises the promised seed, which will crush the serpent's head. Noe salutes the new ark of the covenant, which the deluge of impiety shall never more submerge. Abraham sees the son, in whom all nations shall be blessed; Isaac, the true victim of Mt. Moriah; Jacob, the lion sprung from Juda, who takes possession of the sceptre; Rahab, the Canaanite, congratulates herself on having transmitted her blood to the divine hero; before whom the walls of the infidel Jericho shall fall; Ruth, the Moabite bows down before the sheaf gathered in the fields of Boaz; Jesse, before the flower blossoming on the summit of the ancient tree; David resumes his *kinnor*, in presence of the immortal King, who inspired his prophetic songs; she who was the spouse of Uriah, has merited by her repentance, the glory of being numbered among the ancestors of the Redeemer; Solomon bows his majestic diadem before the spouse of his Canticle, he salutes the Immaculate Virgin, "beautiful as the evening star, radiant as the sun, terrible as an army in battle-array;" Achaz recognises the sign which he asked of Isaias. "Behold a virgin has brought forth a son whose name is Emmanuel (God with us)." The brethren of the Babylonian captivity take down the harps which hung suspended from the willows of the banks. They understand that henceforth the Canticles of Sion will resound through every shore, because the God of the universe has the entire world for his dwelling place. Zorobabel no longer regrets the sumptuous edifices of Solomon. The divine Victim, who comes to cover with his glory, the majesty of the second Temple, effaces all the shadows, takes the place of all the figures; accomplishes all the prophecies; consummates all the sacrifices, and reconciles man with God. Behold the splendours which the evangelical genealogy causes to shine forth upon the crib of Bethlehem. The humble Christian, brother of Christ, in reading this page, touches with one hand, the first dawn of time, with the other, reaches even to the final period of the world; the two shores of eternity meet each other, in the person of Jesus—beginning and end of all things—and the form under which these ineffable wonders are about to be presented to us, is "a little child, wrapped up in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger!"

(1) *Nessim*, (to forget).(2) *Zkar*, (to remember).

CATHOLIC INTELLIGENCE.

Father Horner, Director of Missions in Zanzibar, has given to the French Missionary Society a very flourishing statement of the progress of Catholicism in that country and on the Western Coast of Africa. He declares that the natives are exceedingly open to conversion, and that, however much the Sultan may disapprove of the abolition of the slave trade, he is by no means inimical to Catholicism and its missions. He has granted vast tracts of land to the Fathers for their schools and farms, on which they have already built novitiate houses, and school-rooms for both sexes.

Lancashire, as of old, has become a refuge for exiled Jesuits. Those who have been driven from Germany by the recent edicts promulgated at the instance of Prince Bismarck, and who have dispersed themselves through France, England, Belgium and the United States, have definitely settled their English novitiate at Dillon Hall, about nine miles from Liverpool, the use of which was granted them some months ago by Mrs Stapleton Bretherton, of Rainhill. Here about 100 priests and students, all Germans, are located, and the course of their studies is being pursued by the Jesuit novices as if in their own country. Others of the exiled German Jesuits are settled at Stonyhurst College and St. Buenos, near Rhyl, North Wales. Daily communication is kept up with Germany.

It is a remarkable fact in connection with the reign of Pope Pius IX. that he never promoted one of his own relatives. Of his two nephews, he told one that he should remain in the very same state where he was, and never come to Rome; and he declared to the other, a young officer in the Pontifical army, that no promotion would be accorded to him but what was due to his rank and his merit. The two greatest religious events which have characterised his reign are first, the definition of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The great event for English Catholics has been the holding of the fourth Provincial Council of Westminster, which took place with circumstances of unusual splendour at St. Edmund's College lately. The work of the Council will be divided among four congregations, of Ecclesiastical Life, Liturgy, Discipline, and Education.

The most Rev. Dr. Vaughan, Catholic Bishop of Salford, England, in a speech lately delivered before the Blackburn Catholic Club, expressed himself as strongly opposed to the disestablishment of the Protestant Church in England, on the ground that the only party that would be benefited by it would be the unbelievers, the secularists, and infidels of the present day. A strong effort is being made to unchristianize the country by making education unchristian. He believes the great contest will be between Christianity and Paganism.

Herr Frölich hits off the Jesuits in a masterly manner:—The Jesuits fight the world with its own cherished weapons. The world is very clever, crafty, and enlightened; and the Jesuits are very clever, prudent and enlightened; only the difference is this—the Jesuits use those qualities for God which the world use chiefly for the devil.

If Prince Bismarck can have his way, the priesthood shall be a department of the police, and religion a branch of German philosophy. But Prince Bismarck will not have his way. To-morrow or the next day they will put him in a grave, and he will be standing alone, with none to help him, before the face of Him who said to the Church, and has kept His promise: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

France and Italy.—It appears that the Governments of France and Austria have addressed "observations" to the Italian Cabinet on certain provisions in the new law relating to religious corporations and ecclesiastical property: but the Italian papers are anxiously endeavoring to prove that these "observations" are not "protests."

Preston, Liverpool.—Procession of Catholic Guilds.—The annual procession of guilds in connection with the Catholic churches of the town was this year revived on a scale quite equal to, if not surpassing, the displays of former years, both in point of number and attractiveness.