

the Supreme See of Peter, for the guardianship of the Catholic Faith, and for the maintenance of the Unity of the Universal Church, according to the custom and example of Our predecessors and their holy decrees, by the power given to us from on high, not only declare the election of the said Joseph Hubert Reinkens to be contrary to the holy canons, unlawful and altogether null and void, and denounce and condemn his consecration as sacrilegious, but by the authority of Almighty God We declare the said Joseph Hubert,—together with those who have taken part in his election and sacrilegious consecration, and whoever adhere to and follow the same, giving aid, favour, or consent—excommunicated, under anathema, separated from the communion of the Church, and to be reckoned among those whose fellowship has been forbidden to the faithful by the Apostle, so that that they are not so much as to say to them God speed you. (15)

From these facts, to which we have referred in grief rather than at large, you are well assured, Venerable Brethren, how grave and full of danger is the condition of Catholics in those countries of Europe which we have mentioned.

Neither are matters more favourable, or the times more peaceful in America, where some countries are so hostile to Catholics that their governments seem rather to deny in deeds than to profess the Catholic Faith. There for some years bitter war has been stirred up against the Church and its institutions, and against the rights of this Apostolic See. Matter would not be wanting, were We to enlarge upon this subject; but since, on account of its grave nature, it cannot be lightly touched upon, We shall take another occasion to treat at length of it.

Some of you may perhaps be surprised, Venerable Brethren, that the war which is carried on at this time against the Catholic Church extends so far and wide. But whoever is acquainted with the character, the aims, and purposes of the sects—be they Freemasons or by whatever name they are known—and compares them with the character and extent of the strife, which throughout nearly the whole world is waged against the Church, cannot hesitate to assign the cause of our present calamities to the craft and conspiracy of the same sects. From them is made up the Synagogue of Satan, which is marshalling its forces and preparing to engage hand to hand against the Church of Christ. From their first beginnings they have been denounced to the kings and to the nations by Our predecessors who have watched over Israel; again and again have they condemned them, nor have We ourselves failed in this Our duty. Would that the Supreme Pastors of the Church had been more firmly believed by those who could have warded off so terrible a plague! But the Sect, winding along by crooked ways, never ceasing its task, beguiling many with its cunning craft, is now bursting forth from its hiding-places, and boasting itself to be all powerful. These evil associations, having greatly increased the number of their adherents, fancy that they have now attained their ends and all but reached the goal set before them. Succeeding in this object, after which they have so long hankered—the possession of the chief power in many places—they are now boldly using the strength and power they have acquired that the Church of God may be reduced to the most grinding slavery, that it may be uprooted from its foundations and defaced in the divine marks with which it shines conspicuous; in a word, that shaken, shattered, and overthrown by many blows, it may if possible be utterly blotted out from the world.

Since these things are so, do you, Venerable Brothers, do your best to strengthen the faithful committed to your care against the snares and canker of these sects, and to save from destruction those who have unfortunately joined them. Do you especially disprove and show up the errors of those, who from bad faith or through deceit do not shrink from asserting that these secret assemblies have for their only object social progress and advantage, and the practice of mutual benevolence. Explain to them and fix deeply in their minds the Pontifical decrees on this matter, and show that they refer not only to the Masonic societies in Europe, but to those that exist in America and throughout the countries of the world.

To conclude, Venerable Brethren, since We have fallen on times not only of suffering, but of meriting much, let Us take especial care, as good soldiers of Christ, not to despair, as in the midst of the storm, We have a sure hope of future calm, and a glorious peace for the Church, and, trusting in the assistance of God, let Us cheer ourselves, Our toiling clergy, and Our people with the noble words of Chrysostom: "Many waves and storms threaten us, but we are not afraid of being overwhelmed, for we stand upon the rock. Though the sea rage, it cannot melt the rock; though the waves arise, yet they cannot sink the bark of Jesus. There is nothing mightier than the Church. The Church is stronger than heaven itself. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.* What words are these? *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* If you do not believe in words, believe in deeds. How many tyrants have tried to oppress the Church? How many gridirons, how many furnaces, how many wild beasts, how many swords have been prepared against her? How much have they accomplished? Nothing! Where are her foes? They are forgotten. Where is the Church? She shines more brightly than the sun. Her foes have perished; her children are immortal. If when there were few Christians they were not overcome; how, when the whole world is full of holy religion, will you be able to overcome them? *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*"

Disturbed, therefore, by no danger and no fear, let us continue steadfast in prayer, and with one mind let us endeavour to appease the anger of Heaven, provoked by the sins of men, so that at last in His mercy the Almighty may arise and command the winds that they be still.

Meanwhile, in witness of Our especial affection, We lovingly impart to you all, Venerable Brothers, to the clergy, and all the people committed to your care, Our Apostolic blessing.

Given at Rome, from St. Peter's, on the twenty-first day of November, in the year of Our Lord, 1873, in the twenty-eighth year of Our Pontificate

PIUS PP. IX.

(15) 2 St. John, 10.

## HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

By the Abbé J. E. DARRAS.

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

### § II. CIRCUMCISION. PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

#### 8.—THE HEBREW RITE OF CIRCUMCISION.

"AND after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised," says St. Luke, "his name was called Jesus, which was called by the Angel before he was conceived in the womb." (1) The time at which the sons of the Hebrews were to receive the dolorous impression of the Sacrament of the Ancient Alliance, was not left to the discretion of the parents. Jehovah, himself, had fixed it, when he said to Abraham: "When the infant shall be eight days, he shall be circumcised." (2) The Mosaic law had renewed the precept. "And on the eighth day the infant shall be circumcised." (3) The evangelical text is here in perfect conformity with the Jewish legislation. The Son of God, who was come, in his own person, to fulfil the law, commences in the Crib His mission of bloody victim, which will only terminate on Calvary. In effect, it was in the "Præsepium" of Bethlehem that the Christ "who was before Abraham," and of whom the father of the faithful had "desired to see the day," received by the Circumcision, the mark of the children of Abraham. The rites in use for the legal ceremony have been transmitted to us by the Talmud, and their observance continues the same to the present day among the Jews. (4) On the eighth day, ten persons, at least, were to assemble around the newborn child. The operation, as we have said, was not a sacerdotal function. Modern iconography, in fixing the temple as the ordinary place for the ceremony of circumcision, and in naming the High Priest as its minister, commits an error against historical truth. The minister, or *Mohel*, was, and is still in our days, chosen indiscriminately from among all classes of the Jewish population; his skill being the only title which recommends him to families. The father pronounced the following words: "Blessed be the Lord our God, who has imprinted the law in our flesh, and who marks his children with the sign of his holy alliance, to render them participants in the blessings of Abraham, our father!" Two seats of honour were prepared; the one for the sponsor, the other remained vacant. This latter was presented to the child, to whom these words were at the same time addressed: "Behold the seat of the Prophet Elias." (5) On every spot of the universe where the sons of Israel are now dispersed, this symbolical custom is observed; by it they attest their faith in the expectation of a precursor, who is to open the way for the Messiah. But, for them, the seat of Elias always remains vacant. John the Baptist sat in it, and Jesus Christ, the divine Infant of Bethlehem, has taught the world from a more august pulpit than that of Moses.

#### 9.—THE NAME.

The bloody rite being accomplished, the *Mohel* repeated this blessing: "Adonai, God of our ancestors, fortify and preserve this child for his father and mother. Grant that his name may be honoured among the sons of Israel. Let him be called . . . . (here was pronounced the name chosen for the child), may he be the joy of the father who has begotten him and of the mother who has given him birth!" (6) It was under circumstances like to these (7) that the name of Jesus, being proclaimed in the stable of Bethlehem, resounded in presence of the latest descendants of the family of David, gathered together in their native village, in virtue of an order from Augustus. Did the witnesses of the legal ceremony understand at the time the sense of the divine name before which "every knee bends, in Heaven, on earth, and in Hell?" We can easily conceive that the Shepherds, instructed by the Angels, and the crowd, in the midst of which the report of the marvels of the Crib had circulated, must have hailed, as a happy presage, the name of Jesus (Saviour), given to the scion of the royal race, so long fallen to decay. The first time the name had appeared in the annals of the Hebrews, it recalled the conquest of the Promised Land, and the victories of Josue. Later on, with Zorobabel, the name of Jesus, borne by a High Priest, had marked the end of the captivity of Babylon, and the inauguration of the second temple. In fine, at a recent epoch, the name of Jesus, the author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus, had become as the synonym of wisdom, descended from Heaven to instruct men. The name of Jesus was not then, as rationalism affects to believe it, "a very common name." The historical tradition of the Hebrews assigned to it a very remarkable rôle. When it was given to the divine Son of Mary, doubtless, the assistants were persuaded that the descendant of David, around whose cradle they were assembled, would be, one day, a warrior, powerful as Josue; restorer of the Mosaic worship, like the High Priest Jesus, Son of Joedech; wise, like Jesus, Son of Sirach. The hopes of the Jews soared no higher. The yoke of the fourth empire—the empire of iron, foretold by David—weighed heavily upon them. Rome was crushing them to the earth, under the hand of Herod. But the time marked by the prophecy of Jacob had arrived, the final period of the seventy weeks of years was come. All the Jews awaited the conqueror, sprung from David, who would establish, at Jerusalem, an everlasting throne. Two persons, alone, did not take part in these national illusions: Mary, who preserved in her heart the divine mysteries, and Joseph, to whom the Angel had said: "You shall call the child by the name of Jesus, for it is he who will save the people from their sins." The Hebrew prejudice with regard to the materialistic character of the empire of Christ, will discover itself to us at every page of the Gospel. So inveterate was it to be in its duration, that up to this very time, the Jews still expect a Messiah—a Son of the Star—whose power taking its rise from Jerusalem, will establish Judea as the centre of the universal dominion of the world.

1 Luc, 1, 21. 2 Genes., xvii, 12. 3 Levitic, xii, 3. 4 Ceremonies and customs observed among the Jews. Léon de Modène, 5 Sept, vie de Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ, tom. I, pag. 226, 237. 6 Rational, tom. III, note 7, pag. 434.

7 The essentially traditional character of the Jewish people, leaves no doubt as to the antiquity of the rites, the observance of which is still in use, for Circumcision. Although the Evangelist does not enter into any particular details on this subject, he indicates in a positive manner that all the ceremonies prescribed by the law were fulfilled. *Perfecerunt omnia secundum legem Domini* (Luc, II, 39.) It is then highly probable that the Circumcision of Jesus Christ was carried on with the accustomed formalities, and that the circumstances were like to those above related, according to the ritualistic custom of the Hebrews.