

HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

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

23. IDENTICAL TESTIMONY OF TERTULLIAN.

The point is proved; we might be dispensed from insisting further on this question. Nevertheless, the time is come to elucidate more clearly each of the points that sophistry has tried to obscure. We have cited the testimonies—Roman, Greek, and Jewish—of Augustus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Dion Cassius, Josephus; “they mean, in very truth, what they have been made to say; they do not borrow their statement from the Gospel of Luke;” and yet they speak as he did. But, supposing they never existed—that they are null and void—there would still remain a host of witnesses whose word would carry conviction with it, and whose inconvenient testimony rationalism in vain tries to rid itself of, by ranking them in the suspected category of “Christian authors.” Every day we hear of the tribunals accepting the evidence of the “Christians.” What right has rationalism to show more severity here than the magistrates? Let us judge of it by a single example. Towards the year 204 of our era, a famous lawyer, whose decisions figure in the Digest, beside those of Papinian, Treponius, and Ulpian, went from Carthage to Rome. He was born, and had lived a long time in Paganism. The courage of the martyrs, whose intrepidity in death he witnessed daily, made him a Christian. His name of Tertullian—already illustrious, at a time when the science of law was the highway to honour—became still more notorious by the fact of his conversion. The Roman world was curious to learn what there could be in the despised doctrine of Christ to seduce an eminent juris-consult. In this peculiar situation we may feel assured that the questions of fact will be put by Tertullian with the accuracy familiar to Barristers. Now, here is what Tertullian wrote at Rome in the year 204: “The original documents of the census of Augustus are preserved in the archives of Rome. Their evidence relative to the birth of Christ forms an authentic testimony.”* Thus speaks a Roman lawyer to a whole society on the watch, ready to lay hold of and criticise the smallest inadvertence in his language. It is thus he expresses himself only a hundred and fifty years after the death of Augustus, when the remembrance of that glorious reign was still as living in Rome as that of Louis XIV. can be in France; when the subject of debate was a fact, such as an universal census—basis of all taxation, deeds of property, hereditary prerogatives attached to the title of citizen—of all the conditions of birth, family, or rank in the empire. And our sophists pretend to believe that Tertullian evokes here a “statement” wholly new to the Romans, “borrowed from Luke!” When the jurisconsult appeals to the public archives of Rome, to the original documents of the census of Augustus, do our *litterati* take that to mean that Rome has no other archives, no other original writings than “the Gospel of Luke?” In truth, this would be to make too great a sport of human reason on behalf of rationalism. The testimony of Tertullian of itself would suffice to overturn the famous syllogism of Strauss, developed as it is by the paraphrasing of his new disciples.

24. UNEXPECTED AND INVOLUNTARY TESTIMONY OF MODERN RATIONALISM.

But rationalism has prepared a fresh surprise for us. We have just heard it affirm that “the texts by which it is sought to prove that some of the operations for statistics and tribute commanded by Augustus must have extended to the dominion of the Herods, either do not mean what they have been made to say, or are from Christian authors, who have borrowed this statement from the Gospel of Luke.” Now, here, in the same paragraph, without any transition whatever, we are told that the census of Judea was made in the 37th year from the era of Actium, by Quirinus, the Roman governor of Syria. Is it possible that rationalism should be ignorant that Augustus was still reigning in the 37th year from the era of Actium? It is a well-authenticated fact, however, that the first Roman emperor died, a septuagenarian, in the year 44 from the era of Actium: consequently, in the year 37, the census of Judea, made by Quirinus, was effected in the name of Augustus. But listen to the very words of the critic: such a contradiction is rather too unlikely. “The census effected,” he says, “by Quirinus, to which legend attributes the journey from Bethlehem, is at least ten years later than the year in which, according to Luke and Matthew, Jesus was born. The two evangelists, in effect, place the birth of Jesus under the reign of Herod—(Matth. ii, 1, 19, 22; Luke i, 5). Now, the census of Quirinus did not take place until after the deposition of Archelaus, i. e., ten years after the death of Herod, the 37th year from the era of Actium—(Josephus, Ant., xvii, xiii, 5, xviii, i, 1, ii, 1). The inscription formerly brought forward to prove that Quirinus had levied two censuses is recognised as false—(see Orelli, Inscript. Lat., No. 623, and the supplement of Henzen in this number; Borghesi, *Fastes Consulaires* [yet unpublished], in the year 742).” Impossible to be mistaken here. The critic says positively that “in the 37th year from the era of Actium, after the deposition of Archelaus, not a partial enrolment, but a regular census, of Judea was made by Quirinus.” Now, Archelaus was deposed by Augustus. Archelaus was son of Herod: “his territory” was violated by Augustus. Quirinus was sent into Judea by Augustus. Augustus survived for seven years the 37th year from the era of Actium. Then, modern rationalism, which one would not suspect of borrowing “its statement from the Gospel of Luke,” and whose word “implies,” in very truth, a contradiction, teaches with Tertullian and St. Luke that there was a census of Judea made under Augustus! What does it matter that ordinary readers should not be informed what emperor reigned in the 37th year from the era of Actium? What does it matter that they should not even suspect Archelaus of having anything in common with “the Herods?” They may be permitted to ignore the name of the prince who deposed Archelaus. No one is obliged to know, as Josephus did, that the Roman procurator,

Quirinus, was sent into Judea by Augustus; and as Tacitus, that he held the rank of consul, that he was the friend of the emperor, and the preceptor of his grandsons. These details, it is true, prove the contradiction of the critic. But the silence with which the critic surrounds them, attests, at the same time, the scrupulous delicacy with which he seeks to veil the spectacle of this contradiction from the sight of his readers.

THE ENGLISH WORKING MEN AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The article on “The Church of Rome,” which recently appeared in the London ‘Daily Telegraph,’ stated that for the past forty years the poorer portion of the English people have been in the habit of attending Catholic places of worship, and judging for themselves of the character of the Catholic religion. With reference to this, I remember reading a book published some 30 years ago or more, on the condition of the working classes of England and some other European States. The author of the book was a Mr Kay, brother of the Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, who took a leading part in the Government scheme of education in those days. Mr Kay mentioned, among other things, that great numbers of the poorer classes were even at that time “going over to Rome,” that the priests in the various large manufacturing towns were acquiring great influence over them. He had been told as much by an English clergyman, of the Established Church, who, he said, was neither a bigot in his own religion, nor yet indifferent to it. He added, if the Anglican clergy did not exert themselves the entire English poor, he believed, would ere long become Catholics. Mr Kay endeavoured to account for so strange a fact. He said the English poor saw that the English Church was not the poor man’s church; and, moreover, the ritual or external form of worship in the Catholic Church was far more attractive to them, as it struck the senses more, and was not so intellectual as the English Church service. He mentioned, moreover, that one of the noblest buildings, in a mere architectural point of view, in Manchester, the commercial capital of England, was a Roman Catholic Church, erected almost entirely by the pence of the poor. The English working man is naturally a wise and understanding man, and, when emancipated from prejudice, almost certain to form a sound judgment on what he hears and sees. The only hope of keeping him from becoming a Catholic is to keep him in ignorance of what the Catholic religion really is, and what are the real motives or springs of action which influence those who profess it. But it is not easy, or rather impossible, to keep him in ignorance of these things now with so many Catholic Churches open throughout the country, in many of which sermons are being preached by priests who at one time were well known as zealous ministers of the Established Church, and even in some cases Nonconformists. Not merely the schoolmaster, but the Catholic priest is “abroad” in England now-a-days, and they are playing into each other’s hands. It is simply impossible to keep any Protestants from becoming Catholics if they be well educated, and at the same time be sincerely religious, if they have piety, and charity, and humility, such as befit true Christians. The English working man marks the conduct of the Catholic priest; he contrasts his self-denial and zeal with the love of ease, money, and pleasure of the bulk of the Protestant clergy of all denominations, and he naturally infers that the creed of the Catholic must be the true one, even without any learned and critical examination into its grounds. He feels as it were by a sort of religious instinct that a religion which produces such fruits must be from God, and that, therefore, he ought to embrace it. See an illustration. A simple minded but most amiable Catholic priest, an Italian and chaplain of an English military station in India, where I was once quartered, related to me the following anecdote. A Protestant soldier one day came to him and asked to be admitted into the Catholic Church. The priest said—“But do you know the tenets of the religion you propose to embrace?” He replied—“No, sir, I do not. I am no scholar, but a poor soldier. My wife is a Catholic. When I see her conduct, and observe her punctuality, and the fidelity with which she performs her religious duties, and all the duties of her state of life as a wife, a mother, and a neighbour, I cannot doubt but that the religion she professes is the true one, and that it is my duty to embrace it.” Now, here is an unlettered man, who knew the “grammar of assent” by instinct, and even a great deal better than Dr Newman could teach it to him. It is by such a process of reasoning as that, I verily believe, that thousands of humble souls among the working men of England and America, and some possibly in New Zealand too, are being conducted—humanly speaking—into the Catholic Church, but ultimately, of course, by the grace of God. If we lay Catholics generally were to exhibit to others such an edifying example as the poor but honest soldier’s pious wife above referred to did, we should soon have the Catholic Church filled to overflowing. We wonder how Protestants can resist the proofs in favour of the Catholic religion. Our wonder ought rather to be how so many of them do embrace it, seeing there is often so much in the conduct of lay Catholics to repel them, and even to justify their worst prejudices against it. By far the worst enemies of the Catholic religion are to be found not among Protestants, but among the Catholic laity themselves. Perhaps it is wrong in me to say so, but such is my opinion, founded on much observation and experience in this and other countries, as well as on what I read.

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THE PILGRIMAGES TO PARAY-LE-MONIAL.

The population of Paray-le-Monial does not exceed four thousand souls. This fact will convey some idea of the wonderful appearance the town and its sanctuaries presented on the 20th of June, when twenty-five thousand pilgrims, principally men, received Holy Communion. On the Feast of S.S. Peter and Paul, the pilgrims numbered over fifteen thousand, including nearly a hundred members of the National Assembly, and the greater part of these also received the Blessed Sacrament.

* De censu denique Augusti, quem testem fidelissimum Dominice patriavitatis Romana archiepi custodiunt. (Tertull., lib. iv, contra Marcion., cap. vii; Patrol. lat., tom. ii, col. 370.)