

the patronage and example which that holy state receives from this mystery. In certain particular churches the espousals of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph are honoured with an office on the 23rd of January.

### ST. COLUMBAN, ABBOT, C.

HE was a native of Leinster, one of the four principal provinces of Ireland, and was born about the middle of the sixth century. The monastic institute received at that time the greatest lustre in that country, from the eminent sanctity and great learning of those who professed it, who rendered it an *Island of Saints*, and the mart of sacred literature. It abounded in monasteries, which were so many great schools of sacred learning, and in which many fervent persons, by a special call of God, led an abstracted life, devoted to retirement, contemplation, and the practice of penance, sequestered not only from the distraction of secular business, but also from ordinary conversation with the world, that they might more freely converse with God and his heavenly spirits. The most numerous and most celebrated of these monasteries was that of Bencchor, in the county of Down, founded by St. Comgal, about the year 550; and under his direction a great number of fervent servants of God, seemed to lead an angelical life in mortal flesh. They tilled the ground with their own hands, and followed other manual labour which did not interrupt their prayer and heavenly contemplation. They also applied themselves to sacred studies, in which St. Comgal was himself an excellent master.<sup>1</sup> Their rule was originally borrowed from those of St. Basil, and other orientals.

St. Columban. after having learned the first

<sup>1</sup> See his life on the 10th of May

elements of the sciences under St. Sinellus at Cluain-Inys, took the religious habit at Benchor, and lived there several years, inuring himself to the most austere practices of mortification. Such was the progress he made in the sacred sciences as to be esteemed a kind of oracle in them; and, when very young, he composed a commentary on the Psalms, to be a help to devotion to himself and others in reciting those divine prayers: but this work is long since lost. To disengage himself more perfectly from the world and all earthly ties, he desired, like Abraham, to travel into some foreign country; and, having communicated his design to St. Comgal, obtained his leave and blessing, though with some difficulty. For the holy abbot was sorry to be deprived of such an assistant, and only consented because he was satisfied that the desire of Columban was an inspiration of God for the advancement of his honour. Our saint departed from Benchor with twelve other monks, being about thirty years of age. He passed into Britain, and thence into Gaul, where he arrived about the year 585. Ecclesiastical discipline was there much neglected, partly by the incursions of the barbarians, and partly through the remissness of some of the prelates. There were few places where penance was observed, or mortification practised. Columban preached in all places through which he passed, and the sanctity of his life added great weight to his instructions. He was so humble that he always contended with his twelve companions for the lowest place. They were all of one mind; their modesty, sobriety, gentleness, patience, and charity made them universally admired. If any one was guilty of the least fault, they all joined in reforming his error. Every thing was in common; nor was ever any contradiction or harsh word heard among them. In

whatever place they abode, their example inspired a universal piety.

Columban's reputation reached the court of the king of Burgundy. This was Gontran, (not Sigebert, as some have mistaken,) who entreated him to stay in his kingdom, and offered him whatever spot of ground he should choose in all his dominions for building a monastery. Columban pitched upon the ruinous old castle of Anegrai, situate in the desert of Voge, in the mountainous part of what is now called Lorrain. Here he erected his first monastery, which is long ago extinct. This house became soon too small to contain the great numbers that desired to live under the discipline of the saint. He therefore built a second monastery called Luxeu, eight miles from the former. This became the chief house of his Order, and still subsists. A third monastery was built by St. Columban, about three miles from Luxeu, which, on account of the abundance of springs in that place was called Fountains. It is now no more than a priory dependent of Luxeu. St. Columban appointed superiors, who were persons of approved piety, over each of these monasteries, and resided himself in each by turns. Sixteen discourses or instructions which he made to his monks, out of many others which he appears by some of these to have written, are published in the Library of the Fathers.<sup>1</sup> In them we discern the author's great penetration and light in spiritual things, and admire his affective piety and unction, and a doctrine above what is human, to use the expression of a contemporary writer.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the contempt of the world, the saint cries out: "O transitory life, how many hast thou deceived, seduced, and blinded! If I consider the rapidity of thy flight, thou seemest a nothing: thy existence is little more than a

<sup>1</sup> Bibl. Patrum, t. 12. p. 9. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ap. Mabil. Act. Ben. t. 2. p. 80. n. 11.

shadow. 'They who set their hearts on thee, know thee not; they only understand thee who despise thy enjoyments. When thou showest thyself, thou art again withdrawn as if thou wert no more than a phantom. What art thou but a swift course on a road, passing as a bird on the wing, uncertain as a cloud, frail as a vapour, vanishing as a shadow.'

The short poems of St. Columban on moral and pious subjects, show him to have been a good poet for the age in which he lived, and to have been acquainted with profane history and mythology.<sup>1</sup> Among the works of St. Columban, nothing was so much admired as his *Rule*, which St. Benedict Anian has inserted in his collection of monastic rules, and which is full of wisdom and spiritual instruction. The author lays down for the foundation of his rule, the love of God and of our neighbour, as a general precept, upon which the superstructure of all the rest is to be raised. He inculcates obedience, poverty, disinterestedness, humility, chastity, mortification both external, (or of the senses) and internal, or of the will, in doing nothing according to self-will; silence and prudence to discern between good and evil: each of these he enforces and grounds upon some text of scripture or principle of morality. He appoints, that monks shall eat only toward the evening, and only the meanest food, herbs, pulse, or meal moistened in water, with a little bread: the food to be proportioned to their labour. He will have them to eat every day that they may be able to perform all duties; and he prescribes every day to be spent in fasting, prayer, reading, and, except on festivals, manual labour. In prescribing the office which was called *The Course*, he mentions the number of psalms and verses to

<sup>1</sup> See these poems in Goldast's *Paræneticorum veterum*; in Patrick Fleming's *Collectanea Sacra*; and in the *Library of the Fathers*, printed at Lyons.

be recited at every hour. St. Columban adds, that he received these rules from his fathers, that is, the monks of Ireland. He says, that it was customary to kneel down at the end of each psalm, and mentions the obligation of every one's praying also privately in his own chamber; and adds, that the essential parts are prayer of the heart, and the continual application of the mind to God.<sup>1</sup> After the rule follows the saint's penitential, containing prescriptions of penances to be imposed upon monks for every fault, how light soever. He that shall not answer *Amen* at grace, before and after meals, shall have six lashes; he that shall talk in the refectory, as many; he that shall not forbear coughing at the beginning of a psalm, shall be treated after the same manner; likewise he that shall touch the chalice with his teeth, or shall smile in the time of divine service. They that have spoken roughly or frowardly, shall receive fifty lashes, as well as they that shall have answered again to their superior. Six lashes were the chastisement of small faults: for greater, especially relating to neglects in the holy mass, sometimes two hundred, but never more than twenty-five at a time. Penance was enjoined a monk, who, after finishing his task of work, did not ask for more; or did any thing without orders. Other penances were prescribed besides the discipline, as extraordinary fasts, silence, separation from the table, and humiliations. St. Columban distinguishes two sorts of sins: mortal sins, which were to be confessed to the priest; and lesser sins, which might often be confessed to the abbot, or others who were not priests, before they sat down to table, or went to bed.<sup>2</sup> Confession preceded the penance. Fleury<sup>3</sup> and Ceillier<sup>4</sup> observe from this peniten-

<sup>1</sup> Penit. c. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Prolog. in Penit.

<sup>3</sup> Fleury, l. 35. n. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ceillier t. 17.

tial, that the monks, at going out or coming into the house, asked the blessings of the superior, and presented themselves before the cross; and that they made the sign of the cross upon a spoon, lamp or whatever else they used, before they touched it: an omission of which was chastised with six lashes. There is another penitential of St. Columban, which contains canonical punishments for all kinds of sins, and all sorts of persons. The rule of St. Columban was highly esteemed, was observed in many great monasteries, and is still followed in some jointly with that of St. Bennet. The monks of St. Columban in the beginning lived on herbs and the bark of trees: and were sometimes reduced to extreme necessity, and relieved by God in a miraculous manner. It was the saint's custom to pass some time before all great festivals in a closer solitude; for which purpose he retired to a secret cavern some miles from his monastery.

St. Columban kept the feast of Easter on the 14th day of the first moon after the spring equinox, though it fell on a Sunday, according to the custom he had learnt in Ireland. Being reproved on this account by the French bishops, he consulted the holy pope St. Gregory, insisting upon the authority of Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea, in 280, and the practice of the Western, that is, the Irish Church.<sup>1</sup> Though he wrote twice to St. Gregory he received no answer, and probably his letters were never delivered. He wrote about the same time, twelve years after his arrival in France, to certain French bishops assembled in a council. He presses their own duties upon them, and gives them lessons of humility and charitableness, begging, that as to the time of celebrating Easter, every one might keep his own custom. After the death of St. Gregory, in 604, Sabinian held the apostolic see

<sup>1</sup> S. Columban, ep. 1, Bibl. Patr. Lugd. t. 12.



five months and nineteen days, and Boniface III. eight months and twenty-three days. To this pope or to his successor, Boniface IV. St. Columban again applied himself for leave to observe the tradition of his own country in the celebration of Easter.<sup>1</sup> But a storm was raised against him which drove him out of the kingdom of Burgundy. Childebert dying in 536, left two sons, Theodebert the elder, king of Austrasia, and Theodoric, king of Burgundy, both under the care of their grandmother, Brunehault. Theodoric had a great respect for St. Columban, who lived in his dominions; and he often visited him. The abbot reproved him for keeping concubines instead of marrying a queen, and the king promised to reform his manners according to his advice. Brunehault, fearing lest a queen should ruin her credit with her grandson, was much provoked against the holy man. Her resentment was much increased by his refusing to bless, at her desire, the king's four natural children, saying: "They shall not inherit the kingdom; they are the fruit of debauchery." St. Columban also denied her entrance into his monastery, when she came to visit him: for this he did to all women, and even to all seculars. At this, however, her wrath against him was rekindled.<sup>2</sup> The abbot, seeing the king did not keep his word with him about dismissing his concubines, wrote him a severe letter, with threats of excommunication if he altered not his course of life. Brunehault took that opportunity to stir up the king against him, who banished him, first to Besançon, and afterward ordered two noblemen to conduct him to Nantes, and there see him shipped off for Ireland, in 610, after he had sanctified the desert of Voge for twenty-five years. It seems to have been at Nantes that

1 Mabill. Act. Bened. t. 2. p. 21.

2 See Mabil. Act. Bened. t. 2. p. 18, 20. Fredeg. Chron. n. 36.

he wrote a letter to his monks at Luxeu, full of discretion and charity, exhorting them to patience and union. He put to sea, but the vessel being driven back by contrary winds, he went to Clotaire II. who then reigned in Neustria. To him he foretold that the whole French monarchy would come into his power in less than three years: the same he had confidently affirmed on two other occasions on his road. He returned through Paris and Meaux, and repaired to the court of Theodebert, by whom he was well received. Under his protection he went with some of his disciples who had joined him, to preach to the infidels near the lake of Zurich. He took up his dwelling in a solitude there, near Zug. The inhabitants were cruel, and impious worshippers of idols.<sup>1</sup> St. Columban, having begun to preach the true God to them, found them one day making ready a sacrifice, and a large tub filled with beer being placed in the midst of the people, he asked them what they intended to do with it. They answered, it was to offer to their god Wodan.<sup>2</sup> St. Columban blowed upon it, and immediately the vessel burst into splinters with a great noise, and all the beer was spilt. The barbarians were surprised, and said he had a strong breath. He exhorted them to forsake their superstitions, and retire home. Many were converted and baptized: others, who had been formerly baptised, and had apostatized, returned to the obedience of the gospel. St. Gall,<sup>3</sup> who accompanied

<sup>1</sup> The learned professor Mallet, *Introduction à l'Histoire Danoise* (Copenhagen, p. 30, 54, &c.) shows that Odin or Wodan was a Scythian who came from the Palus Mæotis into Scandinavia about seventy years before Christ, and was a great conqueror. Frigga or Freia was his wife; and Thor the most valiant of his sons. On these three chief deities of the Norwegians, Germans, and Celts, see Mallet, *On the Edda, or Book of the Mythology of the Islanders*, wrote in the eleventh century. Also *Verstegane, Sammes, &c.*

<sup>2</sup> See Mallet *Mythologie des Celtes, ou Remarques sur l'Edda des Islandois*, p. 47. 81.

<sup>3</sup> See the life of St. Gall, on the 16th of October,



the saint from Ireland, prompted by zeal set fire to the pagan temples, and threw all the offerings which he found there into the lake; which he could only do upon the presumptive approbation of the people. But some that remained obstinate in their idolatry, were enraged at this action, and resolved to murder him, and to scourge St. Columban, and banish him from their country. The holy men, having notice of their design, retired to Arbone, upon the lake of Constance, where a virtuous priest, named Villemar, received them courteously, and showed them a fruitful pleasant valley amidst the mountains, where stood the ruins of a little city called Brigantium, now Bregentz. In this place St. Columban and his companions found an oratory dedicated in honour of St. Aurelia, near which they built themselves cells. The people had been formerly instructed slightly in the faith, and had again relapsed into idolatry, and set up in this very oratory three brass images gilt, which they called the tutelar gods of the country. St. Columban ordered St. Gall, who understood the language of the country, to preach to the people. He did so, and afterward broke the idols in pieces with stones, and threw the metal into the lake. St. Columban blessed the church, sprinkled it with holy water, and, together with his disciples, went round it singing psalms. After having thus solemnized the dedication, he anointed the altar, deposited the relics of St. Aurelia under it, and said mass upon it. The people showed great satisfaction; and returned to the worship of the true God. St. Columban continued at Bregentz near three years, and built there a small monastery. Some of his disciples worked in the kitchen-garden, others cultivated fruit-trees, others were fishermen, and he himself made nets. In the mean time, Theodoric and Theodebert were at variance, and

Theodebert, being defeated, was treacherously delivered up by his own men, and sent by his brother to their grandmother Brunehault, who, having sided with Theodoric, obliged the vanquished prince to receive holy orders, and not many days after put him to death.

St. Columban, seeing Theodoric, his enemy, was become master of the country where he lived, and perceiving that he could no longer remain there with safety, went with many of his disciples into Italy. St. Gall, hindered by a fever, staid behind, and afterward built, not far from thence, the monastery which bears his name. St. Columban met with a kind reception from Agilulph, king of the Lombards, and under his protection erected the famous monastery of Bobio, in a desert amidst the Appennine mountains, near the river Trebia. He also built an oratory in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, near which he lived himself in a cave, in strict fasting and retirement all Lent, and at several other seasons of the year: at which time he visited his monastery only on Sundays and festivals. The affair of The Three Chapters, or writings which were condemned in the East by the fifth council at Constantinople, and by pope Vigilius, as favouring Nestorianism, made at that time a great noise in Italy. The bishops of Istria, and some in Africa, defended these writings with such warmth as to break off communion with the pope and the whole Catholic Church, and to set up an open schism. Several among the Lombards harboured mistaken prejudices in favour of the three chapters grounded upon misinformations, imagining that by their condemnation the council of Chalcedon was condemned, with many other mistakes about the remote transactions of the Orientals in that controversy; which mistakes were very easy, the greatest part of the West being, for want of commerce, and through their

ignorance of the Greek tongue strangers to the affairs of the East, except as to what they learned by vague and often false and imperfect relations. Pope Gregory the Great tolerated the conduct of those in the West, chiefly in Lombardy, who, upon mistakes concerning facts which passed in the East, defended the three chapters, but did not on that account break off communion, till they could be better informed, as their faith was in all respects orthodox. Hence he constantly communicated with them, and honoured the warmest sticklers among them with frequent kind letters and presents. Of this number were king Agilulph and his queen Theodelinda, who were persons of singular zeal and piety, had converted their subjects from the Arian heresy, and founded many monasteries and churches. St. Columban, coming into Lombardy, received his informations concerning this debate from these mistaken informations, and declared himself in favour of the three chapters. At the solicitation of king Agilulph and queen Theodelinda, his patrons, and the founders of his monastery, he wrote to pope Boniface IV. a strong letter in defence of the three chapters, and against pope Vigilius, imagining he had condemned in the East the council of Chalcedon, as Liberius had signed a confession of faith favourable to the Arians. Dr. Cave takes notice that, "It is evident from this very epistle of Columban, that he was not rightly informed in the affair of the three chapters."<sup>1</sup> In the same letter the author expresses great zeal for the honour of the Roman see, and professes himself inviolably attached to it.<sup>2</sup> He continued to his

<sup>1</sup> Cave, Hist. Liter. t. 1. p. 543.

<sup>2</sup> From this letter Bower pretends to infer that the Irish were not disabused of their mistake in defending the three chapters by the letter which St. Gregory the Great wrote to them on that subject in 592. But this letter of St. Columban was wrote in 613, the year before the death of Boniface IV. and he had left Ireland about the year 585. See Mabillon, Annal. Bened. t. 2. Rivet shows from this very letter,

dying day in its communion, and never joined the schismatics in Istria.

In France king Theodoric died some months after the murder of his brother Theodebert, in 613, and was succeeded by his son Sigebert, an infant, under the government of his great-grandmother, Brunehault. King Clotaire made war upon them, took Sigebert and two of his brothers prisoners, and put Brunehault to a cruel death. Thus he remained sole king of the Franks in the same manner as his grandfather Clotaire had been, in the year 511, the thirty-first of his reign. Seeing the prophecy of St. Columban so fully accomplished, he sent Eustasius, whom the holy man had left abbot of Luxeu, to invite him back into France. The saint alleged he could not then abandon Italy, but he wrote to the king, earnestly exhorting him to reform his present course of life. Clotaire, for his sake, powerfully protected his monastery of Luxeu, enriched it with considerable revenues, and enlarged its limits. Luxeu is still in a flourishing condition, and the chief monastery of those which the reformed congregation of St. Vanne possesses in the Frenche-compté.<sup>1</sup> The abbot Jonas, in the life of St. Columban, informs us, that he had confuted the Arians among the Lombards with great strength and success, particularly at Milan, and that he composed a very learned work against that heresy, though it is long since lost. St. Columban lived to govern his new monastery of Bobio only about a year, and died on the 21st of November, in 615. In his poem on Fedolius,

and from the silence of all parties, that St. Columban then conformed to the Nicene decree concerning the celebration of Easter, and that the monks of Luxeu did the same. This is clear from the silence of the seditious monks in Italy, who made the most trifling objections to his rule and tonsure, in the council of Maçon, and would never have passed over the keeping Easter at an undue time, had he then done it. See Helyot, t. 5. p. 70.

<sup>1</sup> See Martenne and Durand, Voyage, Liter. p. 170.

which he seems to have wrote a little before his death, he says he was then arrived at his eighteenth Olympiad; he was, consequently, at that time at least seventy-two years old. The breviary of the French Benedictins styles him one of the chief patriarchs of the monastic institute, especially in France, where many of the principal monasteries followed his rule, till, in the reign of Charlemagne, for the sake of uniformity, they all received that of St. Bennet. St. Columban is honoured in many churches of France, Italy, and other countries, and is named in the Roman Martyrology. See his life by Jonas, abbot of Luxeu, in 650.<sup>1</sup> Rivet, *Hist. Lit. de la France*, t. 3. p. 505.

### ST. GELASIUS, POPE, C.

POPE Felix II, or, as he is often styled, III. died on the 25th of February, in 492, and soon after Gelasius, of an African family, but a native of Rome, was ordained bishop of that city. He governed the Church four years, eight months, and eighteen days. This pope was a very learned man, and very skilful and knowing in the customs and usages of the Church; and is extolled for the purity of his manners, his extraordinary humility, temperance, austerity of life, and liberality to the poor, for whose sake he kept himself always poor, as Dionysius Exiguus, who died before the year 556, tells us.<sup>2</sup> Facundus of Hermione, who wrote within a few years after his death, says, "He was famous over the whole world

<sup>1</sup> That this Jonas was a native of Ireland, is asserted by Trithemius, Surius, Coccius Sabellius, Arnold Wion, Molanus, and others; and they ground their assertion upon what Jonas himself has written in his preface to the life of St. Columban. He is not to be confounded with Jonas, a Frenchman and monk of Fontenelle, who, in 731, wrote the life of St. Wulfran, archbishop of Sens. See Ware's *Irish Writers*, p. 29. ed. Har.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. Nuncupat, ad Julian,