

retirement, he passed to the isle of Samos, and there concealed himself in a cave upon Mount Cerces. But he was soon discovered, and many flocking to him, he reestablished three lauras, which had been ruined by the Saracens in that island. The importunate entreaties of the monks of his laura at Latrus prevailed upon him to return to his former cell on the top of that mountain. There he lived in the practice of penance and contemplation, but refused not instructions to those that desired them. The emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetta wrote frequently to him, asked his advice in affairs of importance, and had always reason to repent when he did not follow it. Popes, bishops, and princes often sent messages to him. Such was his tenderness for the poor, that he gave them every part of his own coarse meat and clothes which it was in his power to retrench: and once he would have sold himself for a slave to procure assistance for certain persons in deep distress, had he not been prevented. Towards the end of his life he drew up rules for his laura. On the 6th of December in 956, foreseeing that his death drew near, he came down from his cell to his laura, said mass more early than usual, then took to his bed, being seized with a violent fever. He spent his last moments in prayer, and in repeating tender instructions to his monks till his happy death, which fell out on the 15th of December, on which day he is commemorated in the Greek Synaxarium. Papebroke tells us, he found his name in some Greek calendars on the 21st of December. See his life, which is well written, quoted by Leo Allatius, and Jos. Assemani in *Cal. Univ.* t. 5, p. 467, abridged by Fleury, l. 55, n. 52, t. 12, p. 101, &c.

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## DECEMBER XXI.

### SAINT THOMAS, APOSTLE.

See Tillemont, t. 1, p. 355. *Ant. Pagi, Critica*, vol. 1, p. 421. The false Acts of St. Thomas are rejected by Pope Gelasius, S. Austin, l. contra Adimant. c. 12. *Contra Faust.* l. 22, c. 9, and l. 1, de Serm. D. in Monte. S. Athan. in *Synopsi*, S. Epiph. hæc. 47, and S. Cyril, cap. 6. This last ascribes these Acts to Thomas, a Manichean. Those in *Metaphrastes* are taken from them.

#### FIRST AGE.

It was not unusual for the Jews and other Orientals, when they conversed with other nations, to assume names in the language

of those countries of the same import with those which they bore in their own, that the sound might be less uncouth or harsh to such foreigners. For where languages, though there is always some general analogy, differ too widely, as those of the Orientals on one side, and on the other the Slavonian, do from ours, names in the one appear disagreeable in pronunciation, unless they are softened and brought to some affinity. Thus Tabitha was in Greek called Dorcas, *a doe*; Cephas, *Peter*, Thomas and Didymus, *Thauma*, or *Thama*, in Chaldaic signifying *a twin*. St. Thomas was a Jew, and probably a Galilean of low condition, according to Metaphrastes, a fisherman. He had the happiness to follow Christ, and was made by him an apostle in the year 31.(1) If he appears to have been slow in understanding, and unacquainted with secular learning, he made up for this by the candour and simplicity of his heart, and the ardour of his piety and desires. Of this he gave a proof when Jesus was going up to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem in order to raise Lazarus to life, where the priests and Pharisees were contriving his death. The rest of the disciples endeavoured to dissuade him from that journey, saying: *Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?* But St. Thomas said to his fellow-disciples: *Let us also go, that we may die with him.*(2) So ardent was his love of his divine master, even before the descent of the Holy Ghost. When our Lord at his last supper acquainted his disciples that he was about to leave them, but told them for their comfort that he was going to prepare a place for them in his Father's house, our apostle, who vehemently desired to follow him, said: *Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?*(3) Christ presently rectified his misapprehension by returning this short, but satisfactory answer: *I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.* By which he gave to understand, that by his doctrine and example he had taught men the path of salvation, and that he is the author of the Way that leadeth to life, which he hath both opened and discovered to us; that he is the teacher of that Truth which directs to it; and the giver of that Life of grace

(1) Matt. x. 3.

(2) John xi. 16.

(3) John xiv. 5, 6.

here, and of a glorious eternity hereafter, which is to be obtained by walking in this way, and according to this truth.

After our Lord had suffered, was risen from the dead, and on the same day had appeared to his disciples, to convince them of the truth of his resurrection, Thomas not being with them on that occasion, refused to believe upon their report that he was truly risen, presuming that it was only a phantom, or mere apparition, unless he might see the very prints of the nails, and feel the wounds in his hands and side. On that day seven-night, our merciful Lord, with infinite condescension to this apostle's weakness, presented himself again, when he and his colleagues were assembled together, probably at their devotions; and after the usual salutation of *Peace be unto you*, he turned to Thomas, and bid him look upon his hands, and put his finger into the hole of his side, and into the prints of the nails. St. Austin and many others doubt not but this apostle did so; though this be not mentioned by the evangelist, and some think, that being convinced, he refrained out of modesty and respect. It is observed by St. Austin and others, that he sinned by obstinacy, presumption, and incredulity; for the resurrection of Christ was no more than Moses and the prophets had long before foretold. Nor was it reasonable in him to reject the testimony of such eye-witnesses: and this stubbornness might have betrayed him into infidelity. However, his refractoriness was not a sin of malice, and the mercy of our Redeemer not only brought him to saving repentance, but raised him to the summit of holy charity and perfect virtue. St. Thomas was no sooner convinced of the reality of the mystery, but, penetrated with compunction, awe, and tender love, he cried out, *My Lord and my God.*(1) Prostrating to him all the powers of his soul, he acknowledged him the only and sovereign Lord of his heart, and the sole object of all his affections. Nothing is more easy than to repeat these words; but to pronounce them with a sincere and perfect disposition, is a privilege reserved to those who are crucified to the world, and in whose affections God only reigns by his pure and perfect love. So long as pride, envy, avarice, sensuality, or other passions challenge to them-

(1) John xx. 28.

selves any share in our affections, Christ has not established in them the empire of his grace; and it is only in lying and hypocrisy that we call him our God and our King. Let us at least labour without ceasing, by compunction and holy prayer, to attain to this happiness, that Christ may establish his reign in us, and that we may be able to say with our whole hearts, *My Lord and my God*. These words St. Thomas spoke with an entire faith, believing him truly God, whose humanity only he saw, confessing him omnipotent, in overcoming death and hell, and acknowledging his omniscience, who knew the doubts and scruples of his heart. The apostle also expressed by them the ardour of his love, which the particle *my* God clearly indicates. If we love our God and Redeemer, can we cease sweetly, but with awe and trembling, to call him our Lord and our God, and to beg with torrents of tears that he become more and more perfectly the God and King of our hearts? From this apostle's incredulity Christ mercifully drew the strongest evidence of his resurrection from the confirmation of our faith beyond all cavil or contradiction. Whence St. Gregory the Great says: (1) "By this doubting of Thomas we are more confirmed in our belief, than by the faith of the other apostles." Some other fathers take notice, that our apostle, by this confession, shows himself a perfect theologian, instructed in the very school of truth, declaring in Christ two distinct natures in one and the same person, his humanity by the word *Lord*, and his divinity by the word *God*. Faith in the beginning stood in need of miracles, by which God impressed the stamp of his authority upon his holy revelation. But such are the marks and characteristics of his truth herein, that those who can still stand out against all the light and evidence of the Christian revelation, would bar their heart against all conviction from miracles. There were infidels amidst the dispensation of the most evident miracles as well as now. So true it is, that he who believeth not Moses and the prophets, would not believe the greatest of all miracles, one risen from the dead.

After the descent of the Holy Ghost, St. Thomas commissioned Thaddæus to instruct and baptize Abgar, king or toparch of Edessa. This prince, according to the records kept in the

church of Edessa, transcribed by Eusebius,(1) and mentioned by St. Ephrem,(2) had written to Christ to invite him into his kingdom, and begging to be cured by him of a distemper with which he was afflicted. Christ, in his answer, told him, that he must accomplish the things for which he was sent, and then return to him who sent him; but that immediately after his ascension he would send one of his disciples to the king, to heal him, and give life to him and all his family.\* This promise of our Lord was made good by St. Thomas, who, by a special direction of the Holy Ghost, sent Thaddæus, one of the seventy-two disciples, and, according to some, his own brother, to Edessa, who restored the king to his health, baptized him and many others, and planted Christianity in that country. This disciple Thaddæus is distinct from St. Judas the apostle, and is honoured by the Greeks, who tell us that he died at Berytus in Phenicia, on the 21st of August. As for St. Thomas, Origen(3) informs us, that in the distribution made by the twelve, Parthia was particularly assigned to him for his apostolic province, when this nation held the place of the Persian empire, and disputed the sovereignty with the Romans. After preaching with good success in the particular province of Parthia, he did the same in other nations subject to that empire, and over all the East. Sophronius(4) mentions, that by his apostolic labours he established the faith among the Medes, Persians, Carmanians, Hyrcanians, Bactrians, and other nations in those parts. Modern Greeks mention also the Indians and Ethiopians;(5) but these appellations were sometimes

(1) Hist. l. 1, c. 13, p. 36. ed. Contabr.

(2) S. Ephr. in Testam. t. 2, p. 235, ed. Vatic. anno 1743.

(3) Orig. ap. Eus. Hist. l. 3, c. 1, p. 87.

(4) Sophron. ap. S. Hier. in Cat. de St. Thomâ. Theodoret de Leg. Serm. 9.

(5) Niceph. His. l. 2, c. 40.

\* This letter of Abgar to Christ, and our Lord's answer, are rejected as counterfeit by Erasmus, Coster, Melchior, Cano, Bellarmine, Dupin, Rich, Simon, and Natalis Alex. sæc. 1, diss. 3. Among the Protestants, by Rivet, Hornbeck, the younger Spanheim, &c.: but are stiffly maintained to be genuine by Tillemont, t. 1. Reading, (not in Eus. p. 36,) &c.—See Grabe, Spicilegium Patrum, t. 1. p. 1, et 6. James Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, t. 1, c. 18, p. 500. Theop. Sigf. Bayer, Hist. Edessena et Osroena, l. 3, p. 104. Jos. Simon Assemani, Bibl. Orient. t. 1, pp. 318, 420, 554. Joan. Albert. Fabricius, Codex Apocryphus, N. Test. t. 1. p. 317. Le Quien, Orien. Christ. t. 2, p. 624. Mamachi, Orig. Eccles. l. 2, t. 1, p. 301.

given by the ancients to all the eastern nations. The modern Indians and Portuguese tell us, that St. Thomas preached to the Bracmans, and to the Indians beyond the great island Taprobana, which some take to be Ceylon, others Sumatra. They add, that he suffered martyrdom at Meliapor, or St. Thomas's, in the peninsula on this side the Ganges, on the coast of Coromandel, where his body was discovered, with certain marks that he was slain with lances; and that such was the manner of his death is the tradition of all the eastern countries. Eusebius affirms(1) in general, that the apostles died by martyrdom. Theodoret,(2) and St. Asterius of Amasea,(3) mention St. Thomas among the principal martyrs of the church. St. Nilus says, that he received the crown of martyrdom after SS. Peter and Paul.(4) St. Gaudentius mentions,(5) that he was slain by the infidels, and that the miracles which were performed through him, show that he still lives with God. The same father and Sophronius testify, that he died at Calamina, in India. This city the modern Indians suppose to be Meliapor; but Tillemont and many others think it was not far from Edessa, and that it is not clear that he ever preached beyond the isle of Taprobana. Beausobre(6) thinks he never preached far beyond Parthia and Persia: for the name of King Gundaphore, mentioned by Leucius, in his false Acts, and his copier, Pseudo Abdias, seems corruptly written for the king of Gundachavur, or Gandisapor, which city was rebuilt by Artaxerxes, who founded the second Persian monarchy, and called from his son Schavar, whom the Greeks name Sapor I., who made it his residence. The author of these false Acts gave to the city the name which it bore when he wrote. All the false Acts, and the Greek Menæ agree, that the infidel king was incensed against the apostle for having baptized some persons of his court (some say his wife and son), that he delivered him over to his soldiers, in order to be put to death, and that he was conveyed by them to a neighbouring mountain, and there stabbed

(1) Eus. in Ps. lxxi. in *Collectione Patr. Græc.* See Montfaucon, *Proleg. ib.* c. 9, p. 36.

(2) Theodoret, de Curand. Græc. Affect. c. 8.

(3) S. Aster. Sermon. 10.

(4) S. Nilus ap. Phot. cod. 276.

(5) S. Gauld. Sermon. 17.

(6) Hist. de Maniché, l. 2, c. 3. pp. 401, 406.

with a lance. It is certain that his body was carried to the city of Edessa, where it was honoured in the great church with singular veneration, when St. Chrysostom, Rufin, Socrates, Sozomen, and St. Gregory of Tours(1) wrote. St. Chrysostom says,(2) that the sepulchres only of SS. Peter and Paul, John and Thomas, among all the apostles were then known; and it is mentioned to have been at Edessa in the oration on this apostle compiled in the year 402, published among the works of St. Chrysostom. The church of Edessa was certainly most numerous and flourishing in the second, third, and fourth ages.(3)

Many distant churches in the East ascribe their first foundation to St. Thomas,\* especially that of Meliapor; but many of them probably received the faith only from his disciples. The use of the Chaldean language in the churches, and the dependence on the patriarch of Mosul, which the church of Meliapor, and all the Christians of St. Thomas in the East profess, seem to show, that their first teachers came from the churches

(1) S. Greg. Tour. l. de Glor. Mart. c. 32.

(2) S. Chrys. Hom. 26, in Hebr. t. 12, p. 237; Rufin, Hist. Eccl. 1. 2, c. 5.

(3) See Eus. l. 5, c. 23. Chron. Edessenum ap. Jos. Assem. t. 1, Bibl. Orient. p. 422. Le Quien, Orien. Christ. t. 2, p. 655.

\* The Moguls, and some other nations of Great Tartary, are said to have received the seeds of our holy faith by the preaching of St. Thomas. That it was formerly planted both about Tibet, and in some eastern parts of Great Tartary, towards the borders of China, is unquestionable. The great princes called Prester-John (the last of whom that reigned with great power was conquered and slain by Gingiscan) certainly reigned in Eastern Tartary, in Asia, as Otto Frisingensis, (l. 7, c. 38,) Martinus Polonus, Albericus, Vincent of Beauvais, Sanutus, James of Vitri, Paulus, Venetus, &c. assure us: consequently not in Africa, as Renaudot would make us believe, (Hist. Patr. Alex. pp. 233 et 337,) an author in accuracy and judgment much inferior to Herbelot, though the collection of the latter is not digested, nor did the compiler compare the parts together. Catrou (Hist. Général de l'Emp. du Mogol, t. 1, p. 7,) is willing to believe, that even Tamerlane leaned to Christianity; but Herbelot, (p. 888,) with more reason, thinks, that he favoured chiefly Mahometanism. Some of these Tartars were Catholics; but many were Nestorians, and obeyed the patriarch of Mosul. Nestorianism was distinguished by several privileges under the Mahometans. (See Renaudot, Not. in Vet. Latin. Itiner. in Indian. n. 319. Assemani, Bibl. Orient. t. 3, pp. 108, 215, et vol. 4, p. 94.) The Eutychians were not less encouraged by the same masters. (See Renaud. Hist. Patr. Alex. p. 168. Jos. Assemani, t. 3, &c. and among the Protestants, Mosheim, Hist. Eccl. Tartar, &c.) From the Tartars it seems, that the Chinese had formerly some acquaintance with our holy religion, of which the late missionaries found certain monuments. See Manachi, t. 2, p. 373.

of Assyria; in which the patriarchs of Mosul (a city built upon the ruins of Seleucia, erroneously called Babylon) exercise a jurisdiction, and have been for many ages the propagators of the Nestorian heresy, with which they are tinctured. The Portuguese, when they came into the East-Indies, found there the St. Thomas-Christians, it is said, to the number of fifteen thousand families, on the coast of Malabar. For a detail of the Nestorian phrases, and other errors, abuses, and superstitions which prevail among them, see the synod held at Diamper, in the kingdom of Cochin, in 1599, by Alexius de Menezes, archbishop of Goa; in the preface it is shown, that these Christians were drawn into Nestorianism only in the ninth century, by means of certain Nestorian priests who came thither from Armenia and Persia. On two festivals which they keep in honour of St. Thomas, they resort in great crowds to the place of his burial; on Low-Sunday, in honour of his confession of Christ, which gospel is then read, and chiefly on the 1st of July, his principal feast in the churches of the Indies. John III., king of Portugal, ordered the body of St. Thomas to be sought for in an old ruinous chapel which stood over his tomb without the walls of Meliapor. By digging there, in 1523, a very deep vault in form of a chapel was discovered, in which were found the bones of the saint, with a part of the lance with which he was slain, and a vial tinged with his blood. The body of the apostle was put in a chest of porcelain, varnished and adorned with silver. The bones of the prince whom he had baptized, and some others of his disciples, which were discovered in the same vault, were laid in another less precious chest.(1) The Portuguese built a new town about this church, which is called St. Thomas's, inhabited by Christians of several denominations, and situated near Meliapor, which is inhabited by the Indians. Many of the Christians of St Thomas have been brought over to the Catholic faith and communion; but many continue in the Nestorian errors, and in obedience to the Nestorian patriarch of Mosul. Since the Dutch have taken or ruined most of the Portuguese settlements

(1) See Maffei, *Indic.* l. 2, p. 85. and Laftau, *Hist. des Conquêtes des Portugais dans le Nouveau Monde*, l. 11, t. 1, p. 327, *Univ. History*, vol. 20, c. 31, p. 106.



on that coast, the Indian king of Golcond has taken possession of the town of St. Thomas; but the Portuguese missionaries continue to attend the Catholics there. The Latins keep the feast of St. Thomas on the 21st of December, the Greeks on the 6th of October, and the Indians on the 1st of July.

The apostles were mean and contemptible in the eyes of the world, neither recommended by birth, riches, friends, learning, nor abilities. Yet totally destitute as they were of all those advantages on which men here set so high a price, they were chosen by Christ, made his friends, replenished with his graces and holy charity, and exalted to the dignity of spiritual princes of his kingdom, and judges of the world. Blind and foolish are all men who over-rate and eagerly pursue the goods of this life; or who so enjoy them as to suffer their hearts to be wedded to them. Worldly pleasures, riches, or honours, if they become the object of our affections, are, as it were, fetters which fasten us to the earth, and clog our souls; and it is so hard to enjoy them with perfect indifference, to consider them barely as a dangerous stewardship, and to employ them only for the advancement of virtue in ourselves and others, that many saints thought it safer utterly to renounce them, and others rejoiced to see themselves removed from what it is difficult to possess, and not be entangled by. Are not the maxims of the gospel, and the example of Christ, our king and leader, and of all his saints, sufficient to inspire those who enjoy the advantages of this world with a saving fear, and to make them study the various obligations of their stewardship, and by watchfulness, voluntary humiliations, mortification, compunction, assiduous prayer, and conversing on heavenly things by holy meditation or reading, to stand infinitely upon their guard, lest the love of the world, or the infection of its pride, vanity, or pleasures seize their hearts. Faith must be extremely weak and inactive in us, if we look upon the things of this world in any other light than that in which the gospel places them; if we regard any other goods as truly valuable but those of divine grace and charity, or if we set not ourselves with our whole strength to pursue them by the road of humility, patience, meekness, and piety, in imitation of the saints. The apostles are herein the objects of our veneration, and our guides and

models. We honour them as the doctors of the law of Christ, after Him the foundation-stones of his church, the twelve gates and the twelve precious stones of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as the leaders and princes of the saints. They also challenge our gratitude, inasmuch as it is by their ardent charity for our souls, and by their labours and sufferings, that we enjoy the happiness of holy faith, and are ourselves Christians: through them we have received the gospel.

### ST. EDBURGE, V.

KING ALFRED projected the foundation of the New-Minster at Winchester, and his Queen Alswide began there a monastery of nuns, over which she appointed Etheldreda abbess. Neither living to finish these houses, their son, Edward the Elder, completed them both. This king's daughter Edburge (which name signifies happy city) from her cradle despised all things beneath God and eternity as unworthy all regard. She was yet a child when her father, King Edward, laid before her on one hand precious royal ornaments, on the other a penitential religious habit, bidding her take her choice. The royal virgin with great joy took up the latter: whereupon her parents put her in the nunnery of St. Mary, to be educated under the care of the Abbess Etheldreda, where she afterwards became a nun, and having served God with great fervour, died of a fever. Bishop Ethelwold took up her sacred remains, and put them in a rich shrine, which the Abbess Elfreda covered with gold and silver. Algiva, daughter of Count Ethelwold, was abbess of this house, when Egilwald or Alward-Wada, earl of Dorsetshire, desired of her a portion of the relics of this holy person for the monastery of Pershore, in Worcestershire, which had been destroyed by the Danes, and he had just rebuilt. The abbess gave him part of her skull, some of her ribs and other bones, which were inclosed in a rich case, and were kept at Pershore as its most precious treasure; though the principal part of her body was venerated at St. Mary's, in Winchester. See *Leland*, Collect. t. 1. p. 51, 278, t. 2, p. 264; *William of Malmesbury*, &c.