

the ancient Assyria, and was in a manner peopled by Christians. Helena, queen of the Hadiabenians, seems to have embraced Christianity in the second century.(1) Her son Izates, and his successors, much promoted the faith ; so that Sozomen says,(2) the country was almost entirely Christian. These one hundred and twenty martyrs suffered at Seleucia, in the year of Christ 345, of King Sapor the thirty-sixth, and the sixth of his great persecution, on the 6th day of the moon of April, which was the 21st of that month. They are mentioned in the Roman Martyrology on the 6th.

ST. CELESTINE, POPE, C.

He was a native of Rome, and held a distinguished place among the clergy of that city, when, upon the demise of Pope Boniface, he was chosen to succeed him, in September, 422, by the wonderful consent of the whole city, as St. Austin writes. That father congratulated him upon his exaltation, and conjured him, by the memory of St. Peter, who abhorred all violence and tyranny, not to patronize Antony, bishop of Fussala, who had been convicted of those crimes, and on that account condemned in a council of Numidia, to make satisfaction to those whom he had oppressed by rapine and extortion. This Antony was a young man, and was formerly a disciple of St. Austin, by whom he had been recommended to the episcopal dignity. This promotion made him soon forget himself, and lay aside his virtuous dispositions : and falling, first by pride, he abandoned himself to covetousness and other passions. St. Austin, fearing lest by the share he had in his promotion his crimes would be laid to his own charge, was of all others the most zealous and active to see them checked. Antony had gained his primate, the metropolitan of Numidia, who presided in the council by which he was condemned. Hoping also to surprise the pope by his artful pretences, he appealed to Rome. Boniface seeing the recommendation of his primate, wrote to the bishops of Numidia, requiring them to reinstate him in his see, provided he had represented matters as they truly were. Antony returning to Fussala, threatened the inhabitants that, unless they consented to receive him as their lawful bishop, in compliance with the orders of the

(1) See Baronius ad an. 44. n. 66.

(2) Sozom. b. 2. c. 12.

apostolic see, he would call in the imperial troops and commissaries to compel them. Pope Boniface dying, St. Austin informed St. Celestine of these proceedings, who finding Antony fully convicted of the crimes with which he was charged, confirmed the sentence of the council of Numidia, and deposed him. "From these letters, that were written by the Africans on this occasion," says Mr. Bower,(1) "it appears, that the bishops of Rome used in those days to send some of their ecclesiastics into Africa, to see the sentences which they had given executed there; and that those ecclesiastics came with orders from the court for the civil magistrates to assist them, where assistance should be required." St. Celestine wrote to the bishops of Illyricum, confirming the archbishop of Thessalonica, vicar of the apostolic see in those parts. To the bishops of the provinces of Vienne and Narbonne in Gaul, he wrote, to correct several abuses, and ordered, among other things, that absolution or reconciliation should never be refused to any dying sinner, who sincerely asked it; for repentance depends not so much on time, as on the heart. In the beginning of this letter he says: "By no limits of place, is my pastoral vigilance confined: it extendeth itself to all places where Christ is adored." He received two letters from Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, in which his heresy was artfully couched; also an information from St. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, concerning his errors. Wherefore he assembled a synod at Rome, in 430, in which the writings of that heresiarch were examined, and his blasphemies in maintaining in Christ a divine and a human person were condemned. The pope denounced an excommunication against him, if he did not repent of his errors within ten days after the sentence should be notified to him, and wrote to St. Cyril, commissioning him, in his name, and by the authority of his see, to execute the same.* Nestorius remaining obstinate, a general council was convened at Ephesus, to which St. Celestine sent three legates from Rome, Arcadius and Proiectus, bishops, and Phillip, priest, with instructions to join themselves to St. Cyril.

(1) *Lives of the Popes*, t. 1. p. 369. Lond. edit.

* *Auctoritate tecum nostræ sedis adscitâ, nostrâ vice usus hanc exequæris sententiam.*

He also sent a letter to the council, in which he said that he had commissioned his legates to see executed what had been already decreed by him in his council at Rome. He exhorts the fathers to charity, so much recommended by the apostle St. John, "whose relics," as he writes, "were there the object of their veneration."* This letter was read in the council with great acclamations. The synod was held in the great church of the Blessed Virgin, on the 22nd of June, 431: in the first session one hundred and ninety-eight bishops were present. St. Cyril sat first as president,(1) in the name of St. Celestine.(2) Nestorius refused to appear, though in the city; and showing an excess of madness and obstinacy, was excommunicated and deposed. It cost the zeal of the good pope much more pains to reconcile the Oriental bishops with St. Cyril; which, however, was at length effected. Certain priests in Gaul continued still to cavil at the doctrine of St. Austin, concerning the necessity of divine grace. St. Celestine therefore wrote to the bishops of Gaul, ordering such scandalous novelties to be repressed; highly extolling the piety and learning of St. Austin, whom his predecessors had honoured among the most deserving and eminent doctors of the church, and whose character rumour could never asperse nor suspicion tarnish.(3) Being informed that one Agricola, the son of a British bishop called Severianus, who had been married before he was raised to the priesthood, had spread the seeds of the Pelagian heresy in Britain, he sent thither, in quality of his vicar, St. Germanus of Auxerre, whose zeal and conduct happily prevented the threatening danger.† He also sent St. Palladius, a Roman, to preach the faith to the Scots, both in North-Britain and in Ireland. Many authors of the life of St. Patrick say, that apostle likewise received his commission to preach to the Irish from St. Celestine, in 431. This holy pope died on the 1st of August, in 432, having sat almost ten years. He was buried in the cemetery of Priscilla, which, to testify his respect for the council of Ephesus, he had ornamented with paintings, in which that synod was re-

(1) Conc. t. 3. p. 656. and 980. St. Leo, ep. 72. can. 3.

(2) Ib. t. 4. p. 562. in Conc. Chalced. (3) Ep. 21. ad Gallos.

* Cujus reliquias præsentēs veneramini, ep. ad Conc. 1159.

† Vice suā, S. Prosp. in Chron.

presented. His remains were afterward translated into the church of St. Praxedes. His ancient original epitaph testifies that he was an excellent bishop, honoured and beloved of every one, who for the sanctity of his life now enjoys the sight of Jesus Christ, and the eternal honours of the saints. The same is the testimony of the Roman Martyrology on this day. See Tillemont, t. 14. p. 148. Ceillier, t. 13. p. 1.

ST. WILLIAM, ABBOT OF ESKILLE, CONFESSOR.

HE was born of an illustrious family in Paris, about the year 1105, and received his education in the abbey of St. Germain-des-Prez, under his uncle Hugh, the abbot. By the regularity of his conduct, and the sanctity of his manners, he was the admiration of the whole community. Having finished his studies, he was ordained sub-deacon, and installed canon in the church of St. Genevieve-du-Mont. His assiduity in prayer, love of retirement and mortification, and exemplary life, seemed a troublesome censure of the slothful and worldly life of his colleagues; and what ought to have gained him their esteem and affection, served to provoke their envy and malice against him. Having in vain endeavoured to prevail on this reformer of their chapter, as they called him, to resign his canonry, in order to remove him at a distance, they presented him to the curacy of Epinay, a church five leagues from Paris, depending on their chapter. But not long after, Pope Eugenius III., coming to Paris, in 1147, and being informed of the irregular conduct of these canons, he commissioned the celebrated Suger, abbot of St. Denys, and prime minister to King Lewis the Young, to expel them, and introduce in their room regular canons from the abbey of St. Victor: which was happily carried into execution. Eudo of St. Victor's being made the first abbot. St. William with joy embraced this institute, and was by his fervour and devotion a pattern to the most perfect. He was in a short time chosen sub-prior. The perfect spirit of religion and regularity which he established in that community, was an illustrious proof of the incredible influence which the example of a prudent superior has over docile religious minds. His zeal for regular discipline he tempered with so much sweetness and modesty in his injunctions, that made all to love the precept itself, and to