

other combustible matter, with a sharp spike put under their chin to make them hold it upright in their torments, and thus to be burnt alive. Tacitus adds, that Nero gave his own gardens to serve for a theatre to this spectacle. The Roman Martyrology makes a general mention of all these martyrs on the 24th of June, styling them the disciples of the apostles, and the first fruits of the innumerable martyrs with which Rome, so fruitful in that divine seed, peopled heaven. These suffered in the year 64, before the apostles SS. Peter and Paul, who had pointed out the way to them by their holy instructions. After this commencement of the persecution, laws were made, and edicts published throughout the Roman empire, which forbade the profession of the faith under the most cruel torments and death, as is mentioned by Sulpicius Severus, Orosius,(1) and others. No sooner had the imperial laws commanded that there should be no Christians, but the senate, the magistrates, the people of Rome, all the orders of the empire, and every city rose up against them, says Origen.(2) Yet the people of God increased the more in number and strength the more they were oppressed, as the Jews in Egypt had done under Pharaoh.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW

A MONK of the abbey of Dunelm, renowned for his virtue and miracles, is honoured on this day in the English Calendars. See his life by Galfridus, MS. in Bibl. Reg. Lond. 5, t. viii., 8.

JUNE XXV.

ST. PROSPER OF AQUITAIN, C.

From his own and St. Austin's writings. See Ceillier, t. 14; Tillemont, t. 16; Rives, *Hist. Littér.* t. 2, p. 369. Also John Antony Salinas in *Opera SS. Prosper, Aquitani, et Honorati Massiliensis, Notis Illustrata.* Romæ, 1732. And Cacciari, *Exercit. in Op. S. Leonis M. Disert. de Pelagian.* c. 3, p. 290.

A. D. 463.

ST. PROSPER is surnamed of Aquitain, to distinguish him from

(1) L. 7, c. 7.

(2) L. Contra Cels.

a bishop of Orleans, and others of the same name. His birth is usually placed in the year 403. His works show that in his youth he had happily applied himself to the studies of grammar, and all the branches both of polite and sacred learning. On account of the purity and sanctity of his manners, he is called by those of his age, a holy and venerable man.(1) Having left Aquitain, his native country, he was settled in Provence, and probably at Marseilles, when St. Austin's book on Correction and Grace was brought thither. Certain priests and others of that country had been offended at that father's writings against the Pelagians, pretending that the necessity of divine grace, which he established with the Catholic church, destroyed free-will. They granted it to be clear from faith and holy scriptures, that no good action conducive to eternal life can be done without a co-operating supernatural succour of grace; but they thought it a necessary condition to free-will in man, that the beginning or first desire of faith, or any other supernatural virtues and actions, (which being grounded upon faith, lead to eternal life,) should be the work of free-will, without the aid of grace; using the comparison of a sick man, who first desires a cure himself, by which desire he is moved to call in a physician. This error was called Semipelagianism, and in reality gave the glory of virtue to the creature in its first motion or desire, contrary to the doctrine of the Apostle and of Christ himself. St. Austin's book on Correction and Grace, served only to make them louder in their complaints. Hilary, a holy, zealous, and learned layman, an acquaintance of St. Austin, undertook the defence of his works, and of the faith of the church, and engaged St. Prosper in the same cause. Our saint does not appear to have been any more than a layman; but his virtue, extraordinary talents, and learning, rendered him a proper person to oppose the progress of heresy. By the advice of Hilary he wrote to St. Austin, informing him of the errors of these priests of Marseilles; and that holy doctor compiled two books to confute and instruct them; the first, On the Predestination of the Saints; the second, On the Gift of Perseverance. Hilary had also written to him on the same subject. This happened in 428 and 429.

(1) Victor apud Bucher. in Cyclo Pasch. p. 6.

These two books were sufficient to convince the Semipelagians, but did not convert their hearts. They therefore had recourse to calumny, and accused St. Austin and his friends of teaching a necessitating grace which destroys free-will. One Rufinus, a friend of St. Prosper, surprised at these reports, desired to be informed by him of the state of the question. The saint answered him by a letter yet extant, in which he explains the holy faith which they defended, and the errors and slanders of their enemies. The Semipelagians declared that they would stand by the decisions of the pope. Prosper and Hilary, out of a motive of zeal, went as far as Rome; and Pope Celestine, upon their information, wrote a dogmatical letter to the bishop of Marseilles and other neighbouring prelates against those enemies of grace, in which he highly commends the doctrine of St. Austin. This happened after the death of that holy doctor in 431. The troubles were not yet appeased; and our saint saw himself under a necessity of entering the lists with his pen. His poem on the Ungrateful, seems to have appeared about the year 431. By that name he meant the Semipelagians, who were ungrateful to the divine grace, though they were not then cut off from the communion of the church. This work, the masterpiece of our saint, is written in most elegant verse. He says in it, that the see of St. Peter, fixed at Rome, presides over the whole world, possessing by religion what it had never subdued by arms.* He most beautifully demonstrates the necessity of grace, especially for divine love.† He has left us several other lesser works.‡

St. Leo the Great being chosen pope in 440, invited St.

* " Pestem subeuntem prima recidit
Sedis Roma Petri, quæ pastoralis honoris
Facta caput mundo, quicquid non possidet armis,
Religione tenet." *De Ingr.* p. 119.

† " Quo redametur amans, et amor quem conserit ipse
est. *p. 147.*
Nil Deus in nobis præter sua dona coronat." *p. 178.*

‡ To this excellent poem are joined his other verses, namely a poem entitled, The Epitaph of the Nestorian and Pelagian heresies, and two epigrams against the enemies of St. Austin, &c. The Semipelagians published many calumnies against him, and drew false consequences from his doctrine. One Vincent published about sixteen slanderous propositions against the same. The author might perhaps be Vincent, the Gaulish priest, mentioned by Gennadius, who assisted at the council of

Prosper to Rome, made him his secretary, and employed him in the most important affairs of the church. Our saint crushed the Pelagian heresy, which began again to raise its head in that capital. Photius ascribes its final overthrow to the zeal, learning, and unwearied endeavours of St. Prosper. (1) Marcellinus

(1) Photius, Cod. 54.

Riez in 439. St. Prosper refuted this double set of calumnies by two books, the one entitled, *Against the Objections of the Gauls*, the other *Against the Objections of Vincent*. His book to two priests of Genoa, is an explication of certain propositions of St. Austin. Cassian, the famous abbot of Marseilles, author of the book of the *Conferences of the Fathers*, in the thirteenth conference had advanced, that the beginning of faith is from ourselves. St. Prosper would not name so great a man, but wrote a book entitled, *Against the Collator*, in which he takes to pieces twelve erroneous propositions of that author, and shows his principles were already condemned by the church, in its decrees against the Pelagians. He closes this work by an exhortation to bear the enemies of truth with patience and moderation, to revenge their hatred only by a return of sincere love and charity; to avoid disputes with those who are incapable of hearing reason; and to pray without ceasing, that He, who is the origin and source of all things, would vouchsafe to be the beginning of all our thoughts, desires, words, and actions. St. Prosper's Commentary on the Psalms is imperfect in the first part, and only an abridgment of that of St. Austin. His book of Sentences consists of four hundred sentences drawn from St. Austin's works, which give an excellent abstract of his doctrine on Grace. St. Prosper's Chronicle begins from the creation of the world, and ends in 455. The chronicle which bears the name of Tyro Prosper is only the same mangled and adulterated by some Pelagian impostor, who has filled it with calumnies against St. Austin. The elegant poem of a husband to a wife is of that age, though not the work of our saint, any more than the book *On Providence*, which was written by some Pelagian, about the year 416. The two books *On the Vocation of the Gentiles*, written against the Pelagians, are quoted by Pope Gelasius in 492, but as the work of an anonymous Catholic doctor; though by different writers it has been improbably ascribed to St. Prosper, St. Leo, St. Ambrose, and St. Hilary. The famous letter to the virtuous Demetriades, whom Pelagius had endeavoured to seduce into his errors, is an exhortation against his artifices. It was written by the author of the books *On the Vocation of the Gentiles*: consequently seems falsely ascribed to St. Prosper. The book on the *Promises of God*, was compiled by an author of the same age with St. Prosper, whose name has been wrongfully prefixed to it. It contains an exposition of several prophecies relating to Christ, Antichrist, &c. The three books *On the Contemplative Life*, have been by some thought the work of our saint; but by the testimony of St. Isidore of Seville, (*De Script. c. 12.*) &c. are proved to be the production of Julian Pomerius, an African monk, afterwards an abbot, in France, near Marseilles, towards the end of the sixth century. See Ceillier, t. 18, p. 451. Antelmi, *Diss. Critic. de Veris Operibus SS. Leonis, M. et Prosperi*. Rivet, p. 378. Cacciari, &c.

in his chronicle, speaks of him as still living in 463. His name occurs in the Roman Martyrology on this day. A complete edition of his works was procured at Paris by M. Maugeant, in folio, in 1711, with his life translated from the Memoirs of Tillemont. F. John Salinas, a canon regular of the Congregation of St. John of Lateran, has published in Rome in 1732, a new correct edition of the works of St. Prosper and of St. Honoratus of Marseilles, in 8vo. Dr. Peter Francis Foggini having published at Rome in 1754, the treatises of St. Austin on Grace, in two small volumes, (reprinted at Paris in 1757,) to complete this collection in a third volume are added the works of St. Prosper under this title: S. Prosperi Aquitani, S. Leonis M. Notarii de Gratiâ Dei, Opera Omnia. Editionem Variis Lectionibus, Præcipuè e Cod. MSS. Vaticanis, Adornatam Curavit P. F. F. Romæ, 1758, in 8vo. Le Maître de Sacy has given us St. Prosper's Poem on the Ungrateful, in French verse.

Without the succour of divine grace we can do nothing,(1) we cannot so much as form one good thought conducive to eternal life, nor take the least step towards God by supernatural virtue. "As the eye of the body, though perfectly sound, cannot see unless it be assisted by the light, so neither can a man live well but by the eternal light which is derived from God," as St. Austin says.(2) God, who desires that all men be saved, offers this treasure to every one, enlightening every man that cometh into this world.(3) If we neglect to pray assiduously for this divine succour, if we are not solicitous faithfully to preserve and improve this most excellent gift of God, we are Pelagians in conduct, though we condemn their erroneous principles; for we ungratefully despise the divine mercy, destroy in our souls the principle of our spiritual life, and of eternal glory, and trample under our feet the price of Christ's sacred blood. The graces which we reject, are seeds which would fructify to a hundred-fold: they are talents, which if put out to the banker, would be multiplied: faithfully corresponded with, they would make us saints; but the abuse of them will be

(1) John xv. 5.

(2) S. Aug. l. de Nat. et Grat. c. 26, t. 10.

(3) John i.

our greatest crime, and our heaviest condemnation. *Woe to thee, Corosain, &c.*

ST. MAXIMUS, BISHOP OF TURIN, C.

HE was one of the lights of the fifth century, and was indefatigable in preaching the word of God, as Gennadius takes notice; for which function he eminently qualified himself by making the holy scriptures the subject of his continual study and meditation. He assisted at the council of Milan in 451, and at that of Rome under Pope Hilary, in 465, in which latter he subscribed the first after the pope. He died soon after this year. We have a considerable number of his homilies extant on the principal festivals of the year, and on several saints, as St. Stephen, St. Agnes, St. Laurence, St. Cyprian, &c. In his homily on the holy martyrs Octavius, Aventius, and Solutor, whose relics were kept at Turin, where they had received their crowns, he says, "All the martyrs are to be honoured by us, but especially those whose relics we possess. They assist us by their prayers; they preserve us as to our bodies in this life, and receive us when we depart hence." In his two homilies on Thanksgiving, (1) he earnestly inculcates the duty of paying daily the homage of praise to our Creator, for which he recommends the Psalms: he strongly insists that no one ought ever to neglect morning and evening prayer, or his thanksgiving before and after every meal; he exhorts all persons to make the sign of the cross before every action, saying, "that by the sign of Jesus Christ (devoutly used) a blessing is ensured to us in all things." We have several other sermons of St. Maximus in the new edition of St. Ambrose's works; and Mabillon (2) has published twelve others. In the fifth, the saint declaims against the abuses of New Year's Day, reprehends the custom of making presents to the rich at that time without giving alms to the poor, and condemns hypocritical formalities of friendship in which the heart has no share. The tenth is written "Against heretics who sell the pardon of sins," whose pretended priests exacted money for absolving penitents instead of bidding them

(1) P. 43, 44.

(2) *Musæum Italicum*, t. 1, p. 9.