

ST. BECAN, ABBOT.

Son of Murchade and Cula, of the regal family of Munster, contemporary with King Dermitius and St. Columb-Kille. In building his church, he worked frequently on his knees, and whilst his hands were employed at his work, he ceased not praying with his lips, his eyes at the same time streaming with tears of devotion. In the life of St. Molossus he is named among the twelve apostles of Ireland : and in the Festilogium of Ængus, on the 21st of March, he is said to be with St. Endeus and St. Mochua, one of the three greatest champions of virtue, and leaders of saints in that fruitful age of holy men. See Colgan, MSS. ad 5 Apr.

APRIL VI.

ST. SIXTUS, OR XISTUS I., POPE, M.

See Eus. b. 4. c. 4, 5. Tillemont, t. 2. p. 262.

SECOND AGE.

THIS holy pope succeeded St. Alexander about the end of the reign of Trajan, and governed the church ten years, at a time when that dignity was the common step to martyrdom ; and in all martyrologies he is honoured with the title of martyr. But it seems to be Sixtus II. who is mentioned in the canon of the mass, whose martyrdom was more famous in the church. A portion of the relics of St. Sixtus I. given by Pope Clement X. to Cardinal de Retz, was by him placed with great solemnity in the abbey of St. Michael in Lorrain.(1)

Those primitive pastors, who were chosen by God to be his great instruments in propagating his holy faith, were men eminently endued with the spirit of the most heroic Christian charity, so that we wonder not so much that their words and example were so powerful in converting the world, as that any could be so obstinate as to resist the spirit with which they delivered the divine oracles, and the miracles and sanctity of their lives,

(1) Baron. ad an. 154.

with which they confirmed their mission. What veneration must not the morality of the gospel command, when set off with all its lustre in the lives and spirit of those who profess it, seeing its bare precepts are allowed by Deists and Infidels themselves to be most admirable, and evidently divine! Only the maxims of the gospel teach true and pure virtue, and are such as extort applause from its enemies. The religion of a God crucified is the triumph over self-love: it commands us to tame our rebellious flesh, and subject it to the spirit; to divest ourselves of the old man, and to clothe ourselves with the new; to forget injuries and to pardon enemies. In these virtues, in this sublime disposition of soul, consist true greatness; not in vain titles and empty names. Religion, barely for the maxims which it lays down, and in which it is founded, claims the highest respect. The morality of the wisest Pagan philosophers was mingled with several shocking errors and extravagances, and their virtues were generally defective in their motives. Worldly heroism is founded in vice or human weaknesses. It is at the bottom no better than a base ambition, avarice, or revenge, which makes many despise death, though they gild over their courage with the glorious name of zeal for their prince or country. Worldly actions spring not from those noble motives which appear, but from some base disorder of the soul or secret passion. Among the heathen philosophers, the Stoic led an austere life; but for the sake of a vain reputation. Thus he only sacrificed one passion to another; and whilst he insulted the Epicurean for his voluptuousness, was himself the dupe of his own illusion.

A HUNDRED AND TWENTY MARTYRS OF HADIAB, OR HADIABENA, IN PERSIA.

From their genuine acts in Syriac, published by Assemani, t. 1. p. 105.

A. D. 345.

IN the fifth year of our persecution, say the acts, Sapor being at Seleucia, caused to be apprehended in the neighbouring places one hundred and twenty Christians, of which nine were virgins consecrated to God; the others were priests, deacons, or of the inferior clergy. They lay six months in filthy stinking dun-