

We owe to God, in a special manner, the first fruits of our lives, and of all our actions, in acknowledgment that he is our beginning and last end. Of this tribute he is extremely jealous, as he expressed in the old law by his rigorous precept of the sacrifice of first fruits. A Christian, to acquit himself of this duty, ought to begin every day, and every undertaking, by fervently renewing the consecration of himself and of all his actions to God, with an humble sacrifice of thanksgiving for his benefits, and an earnest petition of the divine blessing and grace to make a good use of the gifts of heaven.

THE SEVEN MACHABEES, BROTHERS, WITH THEIR MOTHER, MM.

THE seven brothers, called Machabees, are holy Jewish martyrs who suffered death in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, the impious king of Syria. The Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity in the first year of the reign of Cyrus,* and were allowed to form themselves into a republic, to

* The ten tribes among the Jews, commonly called the kingdom of Israel, in punishment of their repeated infidelities and obstinate abuse of divine grace, deserved at length to be cast off by Almighty God. In the reign of Phacee, Theglathphalassar, king of Assyria, led away captives the tribes of Nephthali, Ruben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasses that bordered on Syria,* and placed them in the country about Habor, La-hela, and the river Gozan, in Media.† Seventeen years after this expedition of Theglathphalassar against Phacee, his successor Salmanassar, in the year of the world 3283, before the Christian era 721, took the city of Samaria under Osee, the last king of Israel, and transplanted the residue of those ten tribes into the same country with the former.‡ This Calmet shows most probably to have been Colchis and its borders,§ and that some part afterwards were dispersed into Great Tartary, others into Mesopotamia, and some returned into Judæa after the Jews had rebuilt Jerusalem: for some remains of them are mentioned in all these places. But they no where formed a body politic, nor retained the distinction of their tribes, as some moderns have pretended.

The tribes of Juda and Benjamin, of which the kingdom of Juda consisted, were subdued by Nabuchodonosor, in the reign of Joakim, in the year of the world 3398, before the Christian era 606, the first of Nabuchodonosor, when he began to reign with his father Nabopolassar, who dying two years after, in the year of the world 3400, left to him the entire empire of Babylon. Upon the revolt of Joakim, Nabuchodonosor's general besieged Jerusalem a second time, in 3409, and Joakim being slain, his son Joachin or Jechonias succeeded in the throne; but Nabu-

* 4 Kings xv. 29.

† 1 Par. v. 26.

‡ 4 Kings xvii. 6; xviii. 10. 11.

§ Dissert. sur le Pays où les 10 Tribus furent transportées.

govern themselves by their own laws, and live according to their own religion. Their privileges were much extended by Artaxerxes Longimanus; but their liberty was limited and dependant, and they lived in a certain degree of subjection to

chodonosor, coming in person to the siege, took the city, and led away captives to Babylon the new king, and his chief princes, having appointed Sedecias king. This prince also rebelled against the Chaldeans, and sought the alliance of their enemy the king of Egypt. Nabuchodonosor returning into Judæa laid siege to Jerusalem, in 3414, defeated the king of Egypt, who was marching to relieve it, and took that city in 3416 burned the temple, caused the eyes of Sedecias to be put out, carried him to Babylon, and soon after the whole nation of the Jews, except the poorer sort, over whom his general Nabuzardan placed Godolias governor.

Nabuchodonosor, having taken Tyre and conquered Egypt, died in 3442. His son and successor Evilmerodach, after a reign of two years, was slain by Neriglissor, who reigned four years. Cyaxares II. son of Astyages, king of the Medes, assisted by Cyrus, son of Cambyzes (a Persian of low birth) and of Mandana, daughter of the late King Astyages, at the head of the Persians, defeated and slew Neriglissor in 3448. Laborsorarchod, the son of Neriglissor, after a reign of nine months, was killed by Nabonidea, called in scripture Baltassar, son of Evilmerodach, in 3449.

Cyrus took Babylon in 3466, and Baltassar being slain, added Chaldeæ to the empire of his uncle Cyaxares, called by Daniel Darius the Mede, then sixty-two years old. (Beros. Herodot. Xenophon, Jeremy, Daniel, Usher.) He dying in 3468, Cyrus united in one empire the great kingdoms of the Chaldeans, Medes, and Persians, under the name of the Persian empire. The same year, which was the seventieth from the first taking of Jerusalem by Nabuchodonosor, he gave the Jews leave to return into Palestine, and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Zorobabel, a prince of the royal house of David, led back a colony of Jews, and laid the foundations of the city; but the Samaritans opposing the undertaking, it was interrupted during the reigns of Cambyzes or Assuerus, (Esd. iv. 6,) and of Smerdis Magus or Artaxerxes. (Esd. iv. 7.) But in the second year of Darius Hystaspis, of the world 3483, on the prophets Aggeus and Zachary encouraging the Jews, and with the leave of that prince, the foundations of the temple were laid. (Agge, i. 12.) It was completed and dedicated in the eighth year of his reign, and of the world 3488. He filled the throne thirty-six years, and his son Xerxes twenty-one.

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, after he was associated by his father Xerxes, and the first after the death of Xerxes, Eadras, a holy priest and prophet, obtained leave to lead back from Babylon to Judæa the remainder of his people, and to finish the buildings begun at Jerusalem. In the twentieth year of the same prince, Nehemias, his cup-bearer, a most zealous and virtuous Jew, whether of the tribe of Juda or of Levi is uncertain, procured the most ample authority to encompass Jerusalem with walls, and to restore its splendour; which authority was again confirmed to him two years after. (2 Esd. ii. 5.) This excellent man re-established over all Judæa the commonwealth of the Jews, though still subject to the Persians. The empire of the latter flourished during two hundred and seven years. under thirteen kings.

the Persian kings, and shared the fate of that empire under Alexander the Great, and after his death under the Seleucidæ, kings of Syria. Antiochus III. (the sixth of these kings) was complimented with the surname of The Great, on account of his

But the princes who succeeded Artaxerxes Longimanus degenerated from the temperance and valour of their predecessors; and loathing the cresses and sallads, which were the abstemious food of Cyrus and the first Persians, abandoned themselves to voluptuousness, at least if we except Artaxerxes Mnemon. It was also a standing defect in this state, that it was not so properly a regular empire as a tumultuous disjointed assemblage of many nations; divided by their languages, interests, laws, customs, and government, which circumstances weakened its power, and rendered its fall inevitable.

Alexander the Great having vanquished the last king of Persia, Darius the son of Codomanus, in the year of the world 3674, before Christ 330, the sixth of his reign, founded the Grecian empire, which he extended in the East as far as the ocean. This rapid conqueror, who is compared in Daniel to a pard with four wings, (Dan. vii. 6,) flew, rather than marched; and in the space of six years made himself master of all the East. Having reigned twelve years, he fell sick at Babylon; and this lord of so many empires, and terror of so many kings, saw himself suddenly in the jaws of death, and divided his empire among his captains. (1 Mac. i. 7. See Calmet.) He left his wife Roxana with child, and her son when born was named Alexander, and styled king under the regency of his weak uncle, called Aridæus or Philip. But Perdiccas, general of the household troops, Ptolemy in Egypt, Antipater in Macedon, Eumenes in Cappadocia, Antigonus in Phrygia, Lysimachus in Thrace, Laomedon in Syria, Cassander in Caria, Seleucus, general of the royal cavalry and governor of Babylon, and others, under the title of governors, acted the part of kings. (Arrian. de Exped. Alex. Diodor. Justin.) Perdiccas, attacking Ptolemy, was slain. Antigonus made great conquest in Asia, and Cassander in Macedon; this latter having already murdered Olympias, the mother of Alexander, caused his widow Roxana and his son Alexander Ægus, then about fourteen years of age, to be secretly put to death by the keeper of the castle wherein they were confined. Hercules, the eldest son of Alexander by a concubine, was also treacherously murdered by him. The ambitious Antigonus, flushed with success, was the first among the captains who put a crown upon his own head in Asia, and sent another to his son Demetrius. This was immediately imitated by Ptolemy in Egypt. After which Seleucus, Lysimachus, and Cassander also took the title of king. Antigonus was slain, four years after, in battle, by Seleucus, and after various vicissitudes of fortune in Macedon and in Asia, Demetrius fell into his hands; and though he was honourably treated by him, died of grief when he had been a prisoner three years.

After various struggles, the empire of Alexander remained divided into four principal kingdoms. That of Macedon, founded by Antipater, devolved successively on Cassander, Demetrius, Pyrrhus king of Epirus, and Ptolemy; but at length was settled in the line of Antigonus king of Asia, by Antigonus Gonatas, son of Demetrius. That of Egypt was founded by Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, surnamed Soter, three hundred and four years before Christ. This prince was the most virtuous of all the successors of Alexander; most humane, compassionate, and generous

conquests in Asia Minor, and his reduction of Media and Persia; though these two latter provinces soon after submitted themselves again to the Parthians. But this prince met afterwards with great disgraces, especially in his war with the Ro-

to all: he retained on the throne the same simplicity of manners, which he had shown while in a private station; and it was his usual saying, that the true grandeur of a king consisted in enriching others, not himself, and in making many happy. But his successors soon forgot the example of prudence and moderation which he had set them. The kingdom of Thrace and Bithynia was erected by Lysimachus; but, upon his death, his disjointed dominions fell a prey to the neighbouring princes.

The fourth kingdom was that of Syria, or rather of Asia, which was founded by Seleucus after he had defeated Antigonus and Demetrius, from whom he had revolted, and fled into Egypt from Babylon, of which city he was left governor by Alexander. Returning with an army, he defeated Nicanor, whom Antigonus had made governor of Babylon in his room, and retook the city in the year of the world 3692, before Christ 212, from whence in autumn is dated the æra of the Seleucidæ, or of the kingdom of the Greeks in Asia: though the author of the first book of Machabees, Josephus, and the Jews, generally dated it from the spring or their month Nisan. Seleucus reigned first over Babylon, Bactriana, Media, and Persia; but twelve years after, by the defeat and death of Antigonus in the battle of Ipsus, added Syria to his kingdom, and built the city of Antioch, so called from his father or son, both named Antiochus, which his successors made the place of their residence, and the capital of all the East. He also built two cities called Seleucia; the one on the Orontes near the sea, and the other on the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates, about forty miles from Babylon, which latter city became by this means, and on account of its marshes, soon after abandoned. In his old age he vanquished Lysimachus, who was killed in the battle which was fought in Phrygia. By this victory he joined Asia Minor to his empire, and took from it the surname of Nicator or the Conqueror; but was soon after treacherously murdered as he was marching into Macedon.

Seleucus's successors were Antiochus Soter, Antiochus Theosæ, or the god, (to whom, yet living, many flattering nations paid divine honours, as his father and grandfather had been enrolled among the gods after their death,) Seleucus II. surnamed Callinicus, Seleucus III. called Ceraunus, Antiochus the Great, Seleucus Philopator, Antiochus Epiphanes, and sixteen others, till Syria was reduced into a Roman province sixty-five years before the birth of Christ. This kingdom was the most powerful of all those that were formed by the successors of Alexander, and besides Syria, comprised, under the first kings, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Chaldæa, Media, and Persia; and towards the west, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and several other provinces, whence these princes chose rather to be styled kings of Asia than of Syria. Pontus and Bithynia had their own kings from the time of Seleucus; and the former grew afterwards very powerful. Armenia revolted from Antiochus the Great in the beginning of his reign, and chose its governor king. Some time after, Eleasa in Mesopotamia, and Adiabene, the most fruitful province in Assyria, Bactriana, and some other little kingdoms were formed. But the Syrian empire received the greatest wound by the rise of the Parthian kingdom, founded by Arsaces, a Parthian, who, revolting from

mans, who curtailed his empire, taking from him all his dominions which lay west of Mount Taurus, a good part of which they bestowed on Eumenes.(1) He was likewise obliged to give up to them all his armed galleys, and all his elephants, to pay to them for twelve years the annual tribute

(1) See Calmet, *Hist. Prof.* t. 7. The new *Fr. Comm.* t. 7, p. 896, and Foy-Vaillant, *Hist. Seleucidarum*.

Antiochus Theos, erected a new empire, and made himself master also of Media, Persia, Hyrcania, Bactriana, and Caramania, in the midst of which provinces Parthia was situated. The Parthians often triumphed over the Roman eagles in the most flourishing times of that empire.— Their kingdom had subsisted four hundred and eighty years, when Artaxerxes, a Persian officer, revolted with his countrymen, and defeated and killed the Parthian king, Artabanus III. in the eleventh year of Alexander Severus, the two hundred and thirty-third year of Christ.— Upon its ruins he raised the second Persian monarchy, which was destroyed by Abubeker, the first caliph of the Saracens, the father-in-law and successor to the impostor Mahomet. See Lewis's *History of the Parthians*; and Abbé Guyon, t. 8, *Hist. des Assyrs.* &c. t. 8.

The prophet Daniel saw in a vision the empires rising one out of the ashes of the other, and passing in a review before his eyes. The four great empires which were represented to him under the figures of four beasts, (Dan. ii.) and of a great statue composed of four kinds of metal, (Dan. vii.) were those of the Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, according to the most general opinion, which is confirmed by a judicious dissertation prefixed to the book of Daniel, in the new French commentary; though Calmet and some others have attempted to expound the fourth of the successors of Alexander, principally the Ptolemies in Egypt, and the Seleucids in Syria. The fifth empire is evidently the church of Christ, being compared to a stone cut from a mountain without the hands of men, which, increasing, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This was the kingdom raised by God, which was to subsist for ever.

Nothing could exhibit a stronger portrait of the instability of all human things than the rapid revolutions of the greatest empires, which Daniel saw in this vision rise and fall like vast billows of water succeeding one another on the surface of the ocean. The empires of the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, are long ago as if they had never been, and those strong and rich cities of wonders, Ninive, Babylon, Ecbatana, Persepolis, Thebes, and many others, have either left no traces at all, or dismal ruins which serve only for lurking-holes and dens for serpents and wild beasts. Those immortal works, the mausoleums, pyramids, and obelisks, which seem to outbrave time itself, have scarcely been able to preserve the names of any of their vain founders. "*Mors etiam saxa nominibusque venit.*"— What wonder then if families are liable still to greater vicissitudes? It was the remark of the judicious antiquary Mr. Erdeswick, that within the space of a hundred years three parts of the estates in a county passed into the hands of new families. This observation made the ingenious Marquis of Halifax frequently say, that the raising of a family seemed to him like children's play when they build houses of cards, which the next shake or puff of wind throws down again.

of one thousand talents (or two hundred and fifty-eight thousand three hundred and thirty-three pounds sterling), and one hundred and forty thousand *modii* of the best wheat (or thirty-five thousand English bushels), and to send to Rome twenty hostages, of which his son Antiochus was to be one. In Elymais, a province of Persia, between Media and the Persian gulf, which, from the death of Alexander, was governed by its own kings, there stood two famous rich temples, the one of Diana, the other of Jupiter Belus. Antiochus, after his fall, being in extreme want of money, marched to Elymais, and in the night plundered this temple of Belus; but the inhabitants pursued and slew him, and recovered the treasure.(1) The Jews had often done important services to this king, and to several of his predecessors, particularly in the reign of his father, Seleucus II. When a numerous army of Gauls or Galatians had invaded Babylonia, and the Syrians and Macedonians had not courage to meet them in the field, six thousand Jews boldly attacked, and, by the divine assistance, defeated and repulsed them, having slain a hundred and twenty thousand of them.(2)

Seleucus III., eldest son of Antiochus, succeeded him in the throne, and continued for some time to favour the Jews as his father had done. The Jews were then in such high esteem, that sovereign princes courted their friendship, and made magnificent presents to the temple; and Seleucus furnished out of his own treasury all the expenses of it. Judæa enjoyed a profound peace; and their laws were observed with a religious strictness under their worthy high-priest Onias III.(3), until a misunderstanding which happened between him and Simon, a powerful man of the tribe of Benjamin, and governor of the temple, brought a series of evils on the whole nation. This contest grew to such a height, that Simon, finding he could not carry his iniquitous design into execution, or get the better of the zealous high-priest, who had then held that dignity about sixteen years, went away to Apollonius, governor of Cœlesyria and Palestine under Seleucus, and acquainted him, that there

(1) S. Hier. in Dan. c. 11. Diodor. Sicul. in excerpt. Vales. p. 292. Strabo, l. 16. Justin, l. 32, c. 2.

(2) 2 Mach. viii. 20.

(3) 2 Mach. iii. 1.

were immense treasures deposited in the temple of Jerusalem, which might be seized upon for the king's use. The governor sent to inform Seleucus of the matter, who, being in distress for money to pay the Roman tribute, was taken with the bait, and despatched Heliodorus to fetch the treasure away to Antioch.

When this officer was arrived at Jerusalem, and had disclosed his commission to the high-priest, the pontiff made the strongest remonstrances against the sacrilegious attempt, urging that the sacred treasure consisted of things consecrated to God, or the deposits of orphans and widows. Heliodorus, still intent upon executing the king's orders, entered the place with a body of armed men; and, as he was about to seize upon the treasure, there appeared a man on horseback in shining armour, who flew upon him with the utmost fury, and whose horse struck him with his fore feet. There were seen at the same time two other young men, strong, beautiful, and glorious; who, standing by him, one on each side, scourged him severely. Heliodorus fell down to the ground half dead; and all who presumed to accompany him were struck with fear and trembling. Being carried out in a litter almost dead, he continued in this condition till some of his friends entreated Onias to call upon God to grant him his life; who, having offered a sacrifice for the man's recovery, he was restored to health. He thereupon went back to Antioch, and made a faithful relation to the king of all that had befallen him; adding that, if he had any enemy whom he desired to get rid of, he needed but send him to rifle that sacred place, and he would see him come back in such a condition, as would convince him, that the Jewish temple was under the protection of some divine and irresistible power. (1) Heaven did not long defer punishing this king for his sacrilegious attempt, by that very hand which he had employed in it. Seleucus had agreed with the Romans to send his own son Demetrius, then ten years old, to remain an hostage at Rome in the place of his brother Antiochus, who should be allowed to return to Syria. During the absence of the two heirs to the crown, Heliodorus cut off Seleucus by poison, and placed himself on the throne. Antiochus, who was then at Athens on

his return, obtained by great promises the assistance of Eumenes, king of Pergamus, and of Attalus, that king's brother, who led him into Syria with a powerful army, and driving out the usurper, left him in quiet possession of the kingdom. Antiochus took the title of Epiphanes, or The Illustrious, though by the whole series of his life he better deserved that of Vile or Despicable, which was given him long before his birth by the prophet Daniel,⁽¹⁾ and which is confirmed by Polybius and Philarchus, his contemporaries, quoted by Athenæus. Livy and Diodorus Siculus say, that he would frequently ramble about the streets of Antioch with two or three lewd companions, drink and carouse with the dregs of the people, and intrude himself into the parties of the vilest rakes, and be their ringleader in wanton frolics, public lewdness, and a thousand ridiculous follies, without any regard to virtue, law, decency, or his royal character: above all other vices, he was addicted to drunkenness and lust, and most profuse and extravagant in squandering away his revenues; on which see Guyon, *Hist. des Emp. t. 7, p. 218*. Upon the death of Ptolemy Epiphanes in Egypt, and his widow Cleopatra, a war was lighted up between the Syrians and the two Ptolemies, the elder brother surnamed Philometor, and the younger Physcon or Big-bellied, who reigned sometimes jointly, and sometimes the one, sometimes the other alone, as their parties prevailed; though the latter survived, and was the most profligate and barbarous tyrant that ever reigned in Egypt.

Joshua or Jesus, the wicked brother of Onias, the good high-priest, blinded by ambition, changed his name into that of Jason, which he thought more conformable and pleasing to the Greeks, and repairing to Antiochus Epiphanes, as soon as he was settled on the throne, for the price of four hundred and forty talents of silver, procured from him the high-priesthood and an order that Onias should not only be deposed, but sent to Antioch, and confined to dwell there. Jason, apostatizing in many articles from the Jewish religion, gave Antiochus another sum of a hundred and fifty talents of silver for the liberty of erecting at Jerusalem a gymnasium, or place of public exercises, such as were practised in Greece, with an academy

(1) Dan. xi. 21.

for training up youth in the fashion and manners of the heathen; and for the liberty of making such as he thought fit free of the city of Antioch. By this bait he drew many into his apostacy, whom commerce with the heathens, and vanity or interest had already disposed to prefer worldly advantages to those which are to come. Jason had not enjoyed his ill-gotten dignity three years when another Jew, brother of the treacherous Simon abovementioned,(1) changed his name Onias into that of Menelaus, bought the high-priesthood of Antiochus for three hundred talents more, and outdid Jason in his apostacy, endeavouring to engage the Jews to forsake their religion, and wholly to conform to that of the heathens. He procured Onias, the true high-priest, to be put to death at Antioch.

Dreadful signs in the heavens prognosticated the evils that were to befall the city of Jerusalem.(2) They were begun by the seditions raised by Jason and Menelaus. Upon a false report that Antiochus was slain in the Egyptian war, Jason came out of the land of the Ammonites, and at the head of a thousand men possessed himself of the city and temple of Jerusalem. But he was obliged to retire upon the approach of Antiochus, who led his army from Egypt to Jerusalem; and, in the space of three days, killed in that city four score thousand Jews, sold forty thousand to neighbouring nations for slaves,(3) and made as many more prisoners. His fury did not stop here. He caused the traitor Menelaus, who had recovered his good graces, to lead him into the most holy recesses of the temple, and he laid his impious hands upon all that was most sacred. He seized the golden altar of incense, the golden table of the shewbread, the golden candlestick, the censers, vessels, and other holy utensils, and the crowns, golden shields, and other ornaments which had been dedicated to the temple, besides one thousand eight hundred talents of gold and silver, which he forcibly took out of the treasury. He took away the gold plating that covered the gates, the veil of the innermost sanctuary, and all that was valuable, whether for its metal or workmanship. After this, leaving Philip, a most brutish Phrygian, governor of Judæa, and the impious Menelaus in possession of the high priesthood, he returned to Antioch in triumph,

(1) 2 Mach. iv. 23. (2) 2 Mach. v. 2. (3) 2 Mach. v. 11, 14.

"thinking through pride, that he might now make the land navigable, and the sea passable on foot; such was the haughtiness of his mind." (1) He thence set out at the head of a numerous army on another expedition into Egypt, having nothing less in view than the entire conquest of that rich kingdom. He reduced the country as far as Memphis, and there received the submission of most of the other cities and provinces. Thence he marched towards Alexandria, but at Eleusina, a village but four miles from that city, was met by Caius Popilius Lænas, Caius Decimius, and Caius Hostilius, three ambassadors sent by the Roman senate, with an order that he should suspend all hostilities, and put an end to the war; which, if he refused to do, the Roman people would no longer look upon him as their friend and ally. Popilius delivered to him this decree at the head of his army; and when the king desired leave to advise with his council about an answer, the ambassador drew a circle round him in the sand with the staff he held in his hand, and raising his voice said: "You shall not go out of this circle till you either accept or reject the proposal which is made you." Hereupon the king answered: "I will do what your republic requires of me." (2)

Antiochus, exceedingly mortified at this check, led back his army; but being resolved to vent his rage upon the Jews, in his return detached Apollonius with twenty-two thousand men to plunder Jerusalem. Apollonius came to that city dissembling his design under an outward show of a peaceable intention. But on the next Sabbath day, when all things were in profound quiet he commanded his soldiers to go through the streets, and massacre all persons they should meet; which they did without the least resistance from the Jews, who suffered themselves to be butchered for fear of violating the Sabbath. About ten thousand persons who escaped the slaughter were carried away captives: and some others fled. Apollonius then ordered the city to be plundered, and afterwards set on fire. The walls were demolished, the service of the temple quite abandoned, and the holy place everywhere polluted. The temple itself was

(1) 2 Mach. v. 21.

(2) Polybius, Legat. 92. Livy, l. 45, c. 11.. Appian. in Syriac. Patern. l. 1, c. 10. Hier. in Dan. xl. 27.

dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, and his statue was erected on the altar of burnt offerings, which was foretold by Daniel.(1) Sacrifices were begun to be offered to this abominable idol on the king's birth-day, which was the 25th day of the month Casleu, which answers to part of our November and December.(2)

About the same time the temple of the Samaritans on Mount Garizim was dedicated to Jupiter Hospitalis, or the Protector of Strangers; which implied that the Samaritans were not originally natives of that country, but a colony of strangers settled there. These latter strove to prevent the king's orders so ready were they to offer sacrifice to their abominable idol. Many also among the Jews, who professed the true religion, apostatized under this persecution; but others courageously sealed their fidelity to the law of God with their blood. Altars and statues were set up in every town of Judæa, and groves were in every part consecrated to idolatrous mysteries; and the Jews were compelled, under pain of death, to offer sacrifice to idols; so that the whole land became a scene of idolatry, debaucheries, and the most horrid butcheries. It was made immediate death to be caught observing the Sabbath, the rite of circumcision, or any other part of the Mosaic law. Two women having been discovered to have circumcised their children, were led, with their infants hung about their necks, through the streets of Jerusalem, and at length thrown headlong from the walls. Great multitudes fled into the deserts, and hid themselves among craggy rocks in holes and caverns. Philip the governor being informed that a considerable number of Jews were assembled in caves to keep the Sabbath, marched against them with a sufficient force; and, after having in vain offered them a general amnesty if they would forsake their religion, caused them all, men, women and children, to be burnt. The persecutors committed to the flames the books of the law of God, and put to death every one with whom those books were found, and whoever observed the law of the Lord; but many determined that they would not eat unclean things, and chose rather to die than to be defiled with forbidden meats, or to break the holy law of God.(3)

(1) Dan. xi. 31.

• (2) 2 Mach. vi. 7, x. 5. 1 Mach. i. 57, 22.

(3) 1 Mach. i. 60, 66.

Among the glorious martyrs who preferred torments and death to the least violation of the divine law, one of the most eminent was Eleazer. He was one of the chief among the scribes or expounders of the law, a man ninety years-old; and, notwithstanding his great age, of a comely aspect. His countenance breathing a mixture of majesty and sweetness, inspired all who approached him with veneration for his person, and confidence in his virtue. The persecutors flattered themselves that they should gain all the rest, if they could succeed in perverting this holy man, whose example held many others steadfast. Him, therefore, they brought upon the butchering stage: and as it was their design not so much to torment as to seduce him, they employed successively threats and promises. Finding these weapons too feeble against so stout a soldier, they had recourse to a most ridiculous act of violence, opening his mouth by force that they might at least thrust into it some swine's flesh; not considering that an action in which the heart has no share, can never be construed a criminal transgression of the law; but this free consent was what they could never extort from the martyr. To purchase life by such an infidelity he justly regarded as the basest infamy and crime; and, out of a holy eagerness rather to suffer the most dreadful torments and death, he courageously walked of his own accord towards the place of execution. Certain Gentiles or apostates who were his friends, being moved with a false and wicked pity, taking him aside, desired that flesh might be brought which it was lawful for him to eat, that the people might believe that he had eaten swine's flesh, and the king be satisfied by such a pretended obedience; but the holy old man rejected with horror the impious suggestion, and answered, that by such a dissimulation the young men would be tempted to transgress the law, thinking that Eleazer, at the age of fourscore and ten years, had gone over to the rites of the heathens; adding, that if he should be guilty of such a crime, he could not escape the hand of the Almighty, either alive or dead. Having spoken thus, he was forthwith carried to execution; and they that led him were, by his resolute answer, exceedingly exasperated against him. When he was ready to expire under the stripes, he groaned, and said: "O Lord, whose holy light pierces the most secret

recesses of our hearts, thou seest the miseries I endure ; but my soul feelleth a real joy in suffering these things for the sake of thy law, because I fear thee." With these words the holy man gave up the ghost, leaving, by his death, an example of noble courage, and a memorial of virtue to his whole nation.

The glorious conflict of this venerable old man was followed by the martyrdom of seven brothers, who suffered, one after another, the most exquisite torments, with invincible courage and constancy ; whilst their heroic mother, divested of all the weakness of her sex, stood by, encouraging and strengthening them, in the Hebrew tongue, and last of all died herself with the same cheerfulness and intrepidity. Their victory was the more glorious because they triumphed over the king in person, who seems to have taken a journey to Jerusalem on purpose to endeavour, by the weight of his authority, and by the most barbarous inventions of cruelty, to overcome the inflexible constancy of men who were proof against all the artifices and most barbarous racks of his ministers. Some moderns think they rather suffered at Antioch than at Jerusalem : (1) but this latter city seems the theatre of this as well as the other transactions related by the sacred writer. (2) By an order of Antiochus, these seven brothers were apprehended with their mother, and tormented with whips and scourges in order to compel them to eat swine's flesh, against their divine law. The eldest said to the tyrant : " We are ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of God." The king being provoked at this resolute answer, commanded the frying pans and brazen caldrons to be made hot ; then the tongue of him who had spoken thus to be cut out, and the skin of his head to be drawn off, and afterwards the extremities of his hands and feet to be chopped off, his mother and the rest of his brothers looking on. When he was maimed in all his parts, the tyrant commanded him, yet alive, to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in a pan. While he was suffering therein a long time, the other brothers and the mother exhorted one another to die manfully, because God, who is glorified by the fidelity of his servants, takes pleasure in beholding them suffer-

(1) Rufinus, Serrarius, and Calmet.

(2) Mach. vii. Guyon, *Hist. des Seleucides*, t. 7, p. 250 ; F. Berruyer, t. 7.

ing for his truth. The first having thus ended his painful life, the guards advanced with his second brother. The executioner having flayed off all the hair and skin of his beard, face, and head, inquired whether he would eat of the meats the king commanded, before they proceeded any farther and tormented him? Finding, by his answer, that he was in the same noble resolution with his brother, they inflicted on him the same torments. When he was at the last gasp, he said to the king, with a courage and strength which God alone can inspire in those moments: "You indeed destroy our mortal life; but the king of the world for whose laws we suffer, will raise us up in the resurrection of eternal life." After him the third was made a laughing-stock; and when he was commanded, he quickly put forth his tongue, and courageously stretched out his hands, saying with confidence: "These have I received from heaven, and with pleasure resign them, to bear testimony to the laws of God; and I trust that I shall one day receive them again from the omnipotent hand of Him who gave them." The king and his courtiers stood amazed at his courage, not understanding by what means religion could inspire such an excess of greatness of soul, by which a tender youth despised, in such an age, the most frightful torment; but the tyrant seeing his power set at nought and foiled grew more enraged than ever, and after this martyr was dead, without giving himself time to breathe, or to put any questions to the fourth, he commanded him to be flayed, his hands and feet maimed, and his body at length thrown into the burning pan; but he, looking upon the king, said: "Death is our advantage, who meet it with an assured hope in God that he will raise us up again. As for thee thou wilt have no share in the resurrection to eternal life." No sooner had his brother finished his course, but the fifth was brought forth to be butchered after the like manner, unless he chose to accept of the conditions of escape; but the executioners finding him resolute, they inflicted on him the same torments with those already mentioned. Being near his end, he told the king, that he ought not to imagine God had entirely forsaken his people, and that he had reason to tremble for himself, for he should very soon find himself and his family overtaken by the divine vengeance. When he was dead the sixth youth was presently brought for

ward, and being put into the hands of the bloody executioners, on his refusal to comply with the king's orders, they immediately fell to work, cutting, slashing, and burning him without being able to shake his constancy. Addressing himself also to the barbarous king in his latter moments he said: "Deceive not thyself; for though we suffer these things because we have offended God, do not flatter thyself that thou wilt escape unpunished: who hast attempted to fight against God."

The admirable mother, animated by a lively faith, saw her seven sons slain, one after another, by the most barbarous torments, in the space of one day. Filled with a heavenly wisdom, and more than heroic courage, she overcame the weakness of her sex, and giving nothing to nature, did not let drop one dangerous tear, which might have discouraged her children; all this time she thought of nothing but of securing their victory to which she animated them by the strongest and most inflamed exhortations. She bravely encouraged every one of them in her own language: "I know not how you were formed in my womb," said she to them, "you received not a soul or life from me; nor did I frame your limbs. It is God the Creator of the world, who gave you all this; it is easy for him to repair his own work, and he will again restore to you, in his mercy, that breath and life which you now despise for the sake of his laws." The tyrant all this while was intent only on the affront, which he thought put upon him by the courageous martyrs, who seemed to outbrave his power, to which he desired to make every thing bend; and his mind was wholly taken up in carrying his impotent revenge to the utmost extremities; but his rage was turned into despair when he saw himself already so often vanquished, and that of these heroic brothers there now remained only one tender child alive. He earnestly desired at least to overcome him, and for this purpose he had recourse to that feigned compassion which tyrants often make so dangerous a use of, and by a thousand engaging caresses endeavoured to seduce him. He called himself his master, his king, and his father; and promised him upon his oath, if he would comply with his desire and turn to his religion, he would make him rich, happy, and powerful; would treat him as his friend, and always rank him among his principal favour-

ites ; in a word, that his obedience should be recompensed beyond his utmost desires

The youth not being yet moved, the king addressed himself also to the mother with a seeming compassion for her loss, and entreated her to prevail upon her only surviving child ; in pity to herself at least to spare this small remnant of the family, and not give herself the affliction of having her whole offspring torn away from her at once. She joyfully undertook to give him counsel, but of a very different kind from that intended by the king ; for, bearing towards her son, and leaning to his ear, she said in her own language : " My dear child, now my only one, have pity on me thy mother, who bore thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age. Afflict me not by any base infidelity and cowardice. Look up to the heavens, behold the earth, and the vast variety of creatures in both ; and consider, I conjure thee, my son, that God made them all out of nothing, by his almighty power. This is the God whom thou adorest. Have him before thy eyes, and thou wilt not fear this bloody executioner. Show thyself worthy of thy brothers, and receive death with constancy ; that I may have the comfort to see you all joined in martyrdom, and meet you in the place of eternal mercy and repose." The young martyr had scarcely patience to hear his mother finish these words, but desiring ardently to complete his sacrifice, and to follow his brothers, cried out to his executioners : " For whom do you wait ? I do not obey the command of the king, but the precept of the divine law." Then, addressing himself to the king, he said : " You, who glory in the invention of so much malice and evil against the Hebrews, shall not escape the hand of God. We suffer thus for our sins, yet God will again reconciled to his servants. My brothers having now undergone a short pain, are under the covenant of eternal life. Like them I offer up my life and my body for the holy laws of our fathers, begging God to be speedily merciful to our people. In me and in my brothers the wrath of the Almighty, which has been justly brought upon our nation, shall cease." The king hearing him speak to this purpose, was no longer master of himself ; but, condemning himself for having had this little spark of patience, resolved

to wreak his vengeance on this tender child with greater excess and cruelty than he had done on all his brothers. This last therefore stood the utmost shock of the rage of the executioners, and exhausted both their invention and their strength. Persevering faithful to his last breath, he deserved to receive the most glorious crown. The mother, standing now alone amidst the mangled limbs of her seven sons, triumphed with joy, and embraced their dead bodies with greater tenderness than she had ever embraced them living. She sighed to arrive herself at the like crown of martyrdom, and prayed that God would give her a share in the glory of her sons, to survive whom one day would have been her grief. Antiochus, always the same tyrant, ashamed to yield, and incapable of relenting or forgiving, gave orders that the mother should likewise be tormented, and put to death. She therefore was cut off last of all. These martyrs suffered in the year of the world 3837, of the era of the Seleucidæ 145, before Christ 164.

Antiochus, covered with confusion and shame to see himself vanquished by a weak woman and her children, retired; giving every where the strictest orders for the extirpation of the Jewish religion; but God turned his rage and vain projects to his own disgrace and ruin, and raised his people again to a flourishing condition. This was effected by the glorious achievements chiefly of the sons of Mathathias, who, when the temple was profaned, had left Jerusalem, and retired into the mountains near Modin, his native place. He was an eminent priest, of the family of Joarib, which was the first of the twenty-four classes appointed by David to officiate in the temple.⁽¹⁾ He was descended from Aaron by his eldest son and successor Eleazar, and was the son of John, the son of Simon, the son of Asmoneus, from whom the princes of this family, who afterwards reigned in Judæa, were called Asmoneans. Mathathias was then very old, and had with him his five sons, John surnamed Gaddia, Simon surnamed Thasi, Judas called Machabeus, Eleazar, and Jonathan. When the officers of King Antiochus arrived at Modin, to compel all the Jews to forsake the true religion, he went to the town; and to encourage others to remain steadfast, declared to those officers that he would

(1) 1 Paral. xxiv. 6, 7.

continue faithful to God, and, imitating the zeal of Phineas, he slew an apostate who was going to offer sacrifice to an idol. After which he fled into the wilderness, and was followed by others. Dying soon after, in the hundred and sixty-sixth year before Christ, he appointed Judas Machabeus general.(1)

This valiant captain, with six thousand men, defeated and slew Apollonius, the governor of Samaria, and a great persecutor of the Jews, who had marched against him with a numerous army. Seron, deputy-governor of Coele Syria, under Ptolemy Macron, the chief governor, advanced with a fresh body of forces, but was overthrown and killed. Philip the Phrygian, governor of Jerusalem, sent to Antioch for succour. Antiochus, being absent beyond the Euphrates, Lysias, whom he had left regent, despatched forty thousand foot to Ptolemy Macron, governor of Coele Syria and Phœnicia, with Nicanor and Gorgias, two experienced commanders; but Judas discomfited Nicanor, burned Gorgias's camp, and when Timotheus, governor of the country beyond the Jordan, with Bacchides, another famous general, came up, he met and overthrew them in a set battle, killing twenty thousand of their men. Upon this news Lysias, the regent, came in person into Judæa with sixty thousand foot and five thousand horse. Judas, by the divine assistance, gave him an entire overthrow, and obliged him to fly to Antioch. After the retreat of the enemy, Judas purified the temple, celebrated the dedication during eight days, and restored the sacrifices to the true God. This dedication* was performed on the twenty-fifth of the month Casleu, in the hundred and sixtieth year before Christ, the second of Judas's government, on the very day on which the temple had been polluted by the abomination of desolation, or the statue of Jupiter Olympius set up in it three years before. Judas prospered exceedingly, and performed exploits of valour against three Syrian kings and other enemies of the people of God, far

(1) 1 Mach. ii; 2 Mach. viii.

* The feast of this dedication was kept by the Jews ever after, though instituted only by the synagogue. Our Saviour assisted at it near the winter solstice. (John x. 22.) See Grotius in loc. The Jews also celebrated the feast of the dedication under King Solomon, in the month Tisri, in Autumn; and of that under Zorobabel in the month Adar, in spring.

more wonderful and more glorious than those of the most famous heroes recorded in profane history. He was no less eminent for virtue and religion. He died in battle with great honour in the hundred and fifty-seventh year before Christ, having been general six years, and executed the office of high-priest three years, as Josephus says.

Menelaus, the apostate high-priest, having been condemned to death by the young King Antiochus IV., or Eupator, son of Epiphanes, and smothered in ashes, Alcimus, an apostate of the race of Aaron, obtained of King Demetrius Soter (who by the murder of Antiochus Eupator, and his regent Lysias, had stepped into the throne) the title of high-priest, and fought against Judas, and his religion and country. Onias, son of Onias III., to whom the high-priesthood belonged, upon the intrusion of Alcimus, retired to Alexandria, and with leave of Ptolemy Philometer built a temple at Heliopolis in Egypt for the Hellenistical Jews in the year 169 before Christ. Alcimus being struck with a palsy, and carried off by a miserable death, Jonathan, the worthy brother of Judas Machabeus, who after his death had been chosen general of the people of God, was appointed lawful high-priest in the hundred and fifty-third year before Christ, and was succeeded in both those dignities by his virtuous and valiant brother Simon. The posterity of this last enjoyed the same, and are called the Asmonean princes. His son and immediate successor, John Hircanus, discharged the functions of that double office with virtue, wisdom, and valour; and added to his dominions Idumæa, Samaria, and Galilee. His sons Aristobulus (during a short reign of one year) and Alexander Jannæus, about one hundred and seven years before Christ, assumed the regal diadem and title, but degenerated from the virtue of their ancestors; and from their time pride, hypocrisy, and luxury, began to overrun the Jewish state and nation, and to pave the way to the most grievous of all crimes, the crucifixion of the Son of God, by which that ungrateful people completed the measure of their iniquities.

The servants of God equally triumphed, whether by a glorious death or by temporal victories in the cause of virtue.*

* The name of *Machabees* was given to Judas by way of eminence, and from him it passed to all those who took up arms, or who died for the

Infinitely different was the miserable conflict which the persecutor sustained with himself in the terrible agonies of his unhappy death. Antiochus being much distressed for money, his treasury being always drained by his perpetual follies and extravagant expenses, he marched with fifty thousand men beyond the Euphrates in quest of spoils; but attempting to plunder a rich temple in Persepolis, and afterwards another at Elymais,⁽¹⁾ he was in both places repulsed by the inhabitants. Wherefore he fled with great grief and shame towards Babylonia, and met on the road about Ecbatana an express with news that Judas had defeated Lysias, taken his fortresses in Judæa, and exterminated the idol which he had set up. Swelling with anger, he said he would march straight to Jerusalem, and make it a sepulchre of the Jews. In this fit of rage he commanded his chariot to be driven with the utmost speed, and without stopping. He had no sooner done speaking than God struck him with an incurable disease, and a dreadful pain in his bowels came upon him, and bitter torments of the inner parts. Still breathing revenge in his rage against the Jews, and travelling in great haste, he fell from his chariot, and his body was grievously bruised. Then he, who seemed to himself to command the waves of the sea, and to be raised above the condition of

(1) 1 Mach. vi. 2; 2 Mach. ix. 2.

Jewish religion in this persecution, especially the seven brothers martyrs. The etymology of this word is more uncertain, as the name is nowhere extant in the original Hebrew or Syriac; nor is it known whether the middle letter be מ, כ or פ. Some derive the word from the Hebrew מַכַּחֲבֵה, *Maccahabeh*, *hid*: others from *Makkabah*, *a cavern*: because these holy men were at first, lurkers in caverns. Many deduce the name from the four initial letters of those four words of the eleventh verse of the fifteenth chapter of Exod. מִי כַמּוֹבָה כְּאֵלִים יְיָ, *Mi camoca baelim Jehovah*; "Who is like to thee, O Lord, among the gods?" which words these heroes of religion are said to have embroidered on their standards and shields. See Rabbi Isaac, Sixtus of Sienna, Genebrard, and Grotius. Calmet derives it from the words, *Makke bejah*, "Striking or conquering in the Lord." The saints in the Old Law are saved by the same faith which we more explicitly confess; they believed in Christ to come; we believe in him already come. The words are changed, Our Redeemer will come, and He is come, as St. Austin frequently observes; but the object of this faith is the same. Nor could any man ever be saved but by supernatural faith in this Redeemer. Many saints of the Old Law were commemorated in the Roman Martyrology: churches in some places, particularly at Venice, are dedicated to God in their honour. The lives of the saints in the Old Testament are elegantly compiled in French.

man, being cast down to the ground was carried in a litter, worms swarmed out of his body, and his flesh fell off; and the man, who, a little before, thought he could reach to the stars, no man could endure to carry, by reason of the intolerable stench of his body which was noisome to the whole army; and when he was not able to bear the smell of his own flesh, and great grief came upon him, he called for all his friends, and said to them: "*Sleep is gone from my eyes, and I am fallen away, and my heart is cast down through anxiety. And I said in my heart: Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein I now am? I who was pleasant and beloved in my power; but now I remember the evils that I did in Jerusalem. I know that for this cause these evils have found me: and behold I perish with great grief in a strange land.*"(1) He promised to make Jerusalem a free city, and to favour it with the most honourable privileges, equal to those which the commonwealth of Athens enjoyed; to adorn the temple with great gifts, increase the holy vessels, and allow out of his revenues the charges belonging to the sacrifices; also that he would become a Jew, and go through every place of the earth, and declare the power of God; but his repentance was only founded on temporal motives. Wherefore the Holy Ghost says of him: *This wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not like to obtain mercy.*(2) He died one hundred and sixty years before the Christian era. See 2 Mach. v. vi. vii. Joseph l. de Imperio Rationis. Guyon, t. 7. Univ. Hist. t. 10. p. 275. Calmet on the Machabees. F. Berruyer, t. 7. The feast of the Seven Machabees and their mother was celebrated on the 1st of August in the first ages of the church, as may be seen by very ancient Calendars, especially that of Carthage.(3) Also by those of the Syrians, Arabians, and other Orientals.(4) We have panegyrics in honour of these Martyrs by SS. Greg. Naz. Chrysost. August, Gaudent, and Leo the Great.

SS. FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY, VV. MM.

THESE three holy sisters suffered many torments and a cruel

(1) 1 Mach. vi. 10—13.

(2) 2 Mach. ix. 13.

(3) Ap. Jos. Assemani, Bibl. Orient.

(4) Ap. Ruinart et Bolland.