

tained that the body of Christ in his mortal state was not passible, or subject to pain, alteration, &c., which was a spawn of Eutychianism. St. Nicetius tells him with an episcopal authority and zeal, that since he had published an edict commanding all bishops to subscribe his error, all Italy, Africa, Spain, and Gaul, anathematized his name.(1) Dom d'Acheri has published two other treatises of St. Nicetius; the first, on Watching in Holy Prayer, which he extols from the testimony of Isaiah, the Psalms, the example of Christ, SS. Peter and Paul, &c.; also from the advantages and necessity of fervent prayer, &c. The second is entitled, on the Good or Advantage of Psalmody, or singing the divine praises assiduously, and in common.(2) St. Nicetius died about the year 566. Many great men of the age wherein he lived bear testimony to the innocence of his manners and his extraordinary sanctity and miracles.(3) See St. Gregory of Tours, Vit. Patr. c. 17; Fortunat. l. 3, c. 9; D'Acheri, in Spicileg. t. 12, p. 209; Bultau, Hist. Occid. t. 1, p. 120; Rivet, Hist. Littér. t. 3, p. 291

DECEMBER VI.

SAINT NICHOLAS, C. ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA.

The Acts of St. Nicholas, published about the year 912 by Metaphrastes, are extant, translated by Lipoman, Surius, &c. Others much shorter, but imperfect, compiled by Methodius, patriarch of Constantinople, about the year 840, are published by Mombritius Falconius, &c.—Another life of St. Nicholas was written by John, deacon of Naples, anno 860, from Methodius and others. (See Murat. Ital. Scriptor. t. 1, part 2, p. 287, and Jos. Assemani, t. 5, p. 417.) Mention is made of a vision of St. Nicholas in the second council of Nice: also by Suidas, (on whose testimony see Putignani, Diatr. 1, p. 66,) &c. See several acts of his life, published by Falconius, archbishop of San-Senerino, at Naples, in 1751, together with those of St. Nicholas of Pinara, with whom this author confounds him; which hypothesis is confuted by Nicholas Putignani, a canon of Bari, author of *Vindiciæ Vitæ S. Nicolai*, at Naples, an. 1753, and more fully by Jos. Assemani in *Cal. Univ.* t. 5, ad 6, Dec. p. 415, et t. 6, ad 4, Apr. p. 226, et ad 9, Maij, p. 822. See also Tillemont, t. 6, Vie de S. Nicholas, et Note, l. 2, Fleury, t. 13, p. 446.

A. D. 342.

THE great veneration with which this saint has been honoured,

(1) Conc. t. 5, p. 832. Du Chesne and Freher, ib.

(2) Spicileg. t. 3, p. 9, &c.

(3) Ap. Du Chesne, ib. pp. 851, 852, 863

both in the Greek and Latin churches for many ages, and the great number of altars and churches which have been everywhere erected in his memory, are proofs of his extraordinary sanctity, and of the glory which he enjoys with God. The Emperor Justinian built a church in his honour at Constantinople, in the quarter called Blaquernæ, about the year 430,(1) and he was titular saint of four churches in Constantinople.(2) All accounts agree that he was a native of Patara, in Lycia. We are told that in his infancy he observed the fasts of Wednesdays and Fridays, refusing to suck the breasts on those days, which were consecrated to fasting by the law of the church, as St. Clement of Alexandria mentions,(3) and as Bishop Potter proves, in his note upon that passage from the Apostolic Constitutions,(4) and the canonical epistle of St. Peter, bishop of Alexandria, and martyr. Also St. Epiphanius(5) and others testify the same. Happy are they who, from their infancy and innocent age, are inured to the exercises of devotion, penance, and perfect obedience. St. Nicholas increased his fervour in these and all other virtues with his years, especially when he had devoted himself to a religious life in the monastery of holy Sion, near Myra, of which house he was made abbot, by the archbishop, its founder. Charity in comforting and relieving the distressed, seemed his characteristic virtue. Amongst many other instances, it is related, that when three young virgins were exposed through distress to the danger of falling into vicious courses, he, for three successive nights, conveyed to them through the window a competent sum of money for a fortune for one of them, so that they were all portioned, and afterwards happily married. Lycia was a large ancient province of Asia, in which St. Paul had planted the faith. Myra, the capital, three miles from Patara, and from the sea, was an archiepiscopal see, founded by St. Nicander, of such great dignity, that, in later ages,

(1) Procop. de *Ædific.* Justinian, l. 1, c. 6, p. 31. Putignani, *Diatr.* 1, c. 5, pp. 37, 52.

(2) Du Cange, *Constantinopolis Christiana*, l. 4, c. 6, n. 67. Codinus *Orig. Constan.* p. 62.

(3) Clem. Alex. *Strom.* l. 7, t. 2, p. 877, n. 10 et 15, ed Oxon. ann. 1715.

(4) *Constit. Apost.* l. 5, c. 19, et l. 7, c. 24.

(5) See Pope Benedict XIV. in *Litteris Apostolicis ad Joann. V. Portug. Reg. novæ edit. Martyr. Rom. præfixis*, à n. 19, ad 36.

thirty-six suffragan bishoprics were subject to it. This metropolitan church falling vacant, the holy abbot Nicholas was chosen archbishop, and in that exalted station became famous by his extraordinary piety and zeal, and an incredible number of stupendous miracles. The Greek histories of his life agree, that he suffered imprisonment for the faith, and made a glorious confession in the latter part of the persecution raised by Dioclesian: and that he was present at the great council of Nice, and there condemned Arianism. The silence of other authors make many justly suspect these circumstances. The history of the translation of his relics place his death in 342. He died at Myra, and was buried in his own cathedral.* Several churches were built in his honour, even in the West, long before the translation of his relics to Bari: and the manner in which Usuard mentions him in his Martyrology, almost three ages before, shows in what great veneration his name then was in the West. The history of the translation of his relics to Bari, assures us, that no saint was more universally honoured in all Christian nations than St. Nicholas. The Muscovites, who received their account of him from the Greeks, seem to pay a greater veneration

* Falconius published, in 1751, from a manuscript of the tenth age, in the Vatican library, the life of St. Nicholas of Pinara, whom he pretends to be the same with St. Nicholas of Myra. But, in the life of the former, express mention is made of a church or *martyrium*, dedicated in honour of the great St. Nicholas (of Myra,) who must consequently have been dead before the other was born, as Jos. Assemani proves; (in Cal. Univ. ad 6 Dec. p. 424, t. 5;) and this distinction is demonstrated by the church built at Constantinople by Justinian, in honour of the great St. Nicholas, as he is usually styled by the Greeks, and by many other arguments. (See Jos. Assemani, ib. and Nicholas Putignani, *Diatribâ* l.) St. Nicholas of Pinara was born at Pharrais, near Myra, was afterwards abbot of Holy Zion, and was at length consecrated bishop of Pinara, which church he governed five years, and died there; and his relics were kept with honour in the church of the monastery of Holy Zion in Pharroa, near Pinara in Lycia, the abbot of which place subscribed the second council of Nice, in 787. Falconius supposes St. Nicholas of Pinara to have been born in 480, ordained bishop in 547: that he assisted at the council of Myra, held about the controversy concerning the three chapters in 550, and died in 551. From the year of his death, the other epochs are determined by the history of his life. But Jos. Assemani demonstrates (t. 6, in Calend. Univ. ad 4 Apr. p. 230,) that St. Nicholas of Pinara flourished in the seventh century, and died in 699, having governed the see of Pinara, from the year 694, five years. His body remained in the church of his monastery at Pharroa, together with the relics of St. John Baptist, SS. Theodorus, Sergius and Bacchus, M.M. and of the forty martyrs of Sebaste. See Assemani ad 4 April.

tion to his memory than to that of any other saint who lived since the times of the apostles. The relics of St. Nicholas were kept with great honour at Myra till they were translated into Italy. Certain merchants of Bari, a sea-port in the kingdom of Naples, situate on the Adriatic Gulf, sailed in three ships to the coast of Lycia; and watching an opportunity when no Mahometans were near the place, went to the church in which the relics of St. Nicholas were kept, which stood in a desert place, three miles from the sea, and was guarded by a small community of monks. They broke open the marble coffin, in which the sacred bones lay, and carried them off to their ships; the inhabitants, upon the alarm given, pursued them to the shore with horrible outcries, but the Europeans were got safe on board. They landed at Bari on the 9th of May, 1087, and the sacred treasure was deposited by the archbishop in the church of St. Stephen. On the first day, thirty persons were cured of various distempers, imploring the intercession of St. Nicholas, and from that time the tomb of St. Nicholas of Bari has been famous for pilgrimages. The authentic history of this translation, written by John, at that time archdeacon of Bari, by order of the archbishop, is extant in Surius. The same account is confirmed by another history of this translation, drawn up at the same time by Nicephorus of Bari, also an eye-witness, commissioned by the magistrates of the city, quoted in manuscript by Baronius, and published by Falconius.(1) By this history of Nicephorus, it appears, that the Venetians having formed a design of carrying off the relics of St. Nicholas, certain merchants from Bari, who happened then to be at Antioch, prevented them.* This enterprise could only be justified by the laws of a just war, joined

(1) Falconius, *Acta Primigenia S. Nicolai*, p. 131.

* See also on this translation, Dandulus, in *Chronico Veneto*, l. 7, pp. 157, 256, ap Murat. *Italic. Rerum Scriptores*, t. 12. Though Dandulus lived only in 1350, neither can he or other Venetians be heard, who pretend, so many years after, that the relics of St. Nicholas were brought to Venice, since two learned men of Bari, and Sigebert, a foreigner of the same age, assure us they were translated to Bari. And it is manifest, that the Venetians only carried home, in 1097, what the citizens of Bari had left, namely, the bodies of two other bishops, Theodorus and another Nicholas, and some of the unctuous matter that was found in the sepulchre of St. Nicholas. The church of one of the twenty-three great monasteries of the Greeks on Mount Athos, is dedicated in honour of St. Nicholas. See Montfaucon, *Paleographia Græca*, l. 7, p. 493.

with the apprehension of the sacrilegious impiety of the Mahometans. Mention is made in a novella of the Emperor Emmanuel, recorded by Balsamon, and all modern writers, of a fragrant unctuous matter which issues from the relics of St. Nicholas in his shrine at Bari, a large quantity of which was found in his sepulchre near Myra in Lycia, when his relics were brought thence.

St. Nicholas is esteemed a patron of children, because he was from his infancy a model of innocence and virtue, and to form that tender age to sincere piety was always his first care and delight.* To impress on the minds of children perfect sentiments of devotion, religion, and all virtues, with an earnestness in all duties, is a task often as delicate as it is important. Instructions must be made sensible, and adapted by similes, parables, and examples, to the weakness of their capacities. Above all, they are to be enforced by the conduct of those with whom children converse. They learn their maxims, imbibe their spirit, and are moulded upon their example. A child which sees those who are about him love their own ease, and ever seek what best pleases their senses; still more if he observes them to be cholerick, peevish, vain, slothful, or impatient, will naturally cherish these passions, and yield up the government of himself to them, instead of learning by tractableness, humility, meekness, and self-denial, to subdue and govern them. And so in all other points. Precepts and exhortations lose their force when contradicted by example: and whilst the infant sees every one study to please himself in every thing, in flat opposition to the rules of the gospel, which he hears preached from their mouths, he seems tacitly persuaded, that such a conduct is reconcilable with those very maxims which condemn it.

* St. Nicholas is called particularly the patron of children, not only because he made their instruction a principal part of his pastoral care, but chiefly because he always retained the virtues, the meekness, the simplicity, without guile or malice, and the humility of his tender age, and in his very infancy devoted himself to God by a heroic piety: these reasons are given in the ancient MS. book of Festivals at Sarum, fol. 55. On the great solemnity with which it was kept by the boys at the cathedral of Sarum, at Eton school, and in other schools and colleges. See the History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury, printed anno 1722, p. 74.