

on the Vatican, on the 20th of September, the day which the Western church has consecrated to his memory. The Greeks commemorate his name on the day of his death, the 17th of April. See his epistles, and other monuments, Conc. t. 5; also *Liberatus Breviar.* c. 21, 22, and *Anastasius's Pontifical*, especially the new edition, or *Liber Pontificalis, seu de Gestis Rom. Pontificum, quem cum Cod. MSS. collatum emendavit et supplevit Joannes Vignolius, Bibl. Vaticanæ Præfectus alter: Romæ, 1756, three vol. in 4to. Cle, t. 6, Sept. p. 163.*

SEPTEMBER XXI.

ST. MATTHEW,

APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

Matt. ix. Mark ii. Luke v. See Tillemont, Calmet, Ceillier, Hammond, &c.

ST. MATTHEW is called by two evangelists Levi, both which names are of Jewish extraction.* The latter he bore before his conversion, the other he seems to have taken after it, to show that he had renounced his profession, and had become a new man. St. Mark calls him the son of Alphæus; but the conjecture which some form from hence, that he was brother to St. James the Less, has not the very shadow of probability. He seems to have been a Galilæan by birth, and was by profession a publican, or gatherer of taxes for the Romans, which office was equally odious and scandalous among the Jews. The Romans sent publicans into the provinces to gather the tributes, and this was amongst them a post of honour, power, and credit, usually conferred on Roman knights. T. Flavius Sabinus, father of the Emperor Vespasian, was the publican of the provinces of Asia. These Roman general publicans employed under them natives of each province, as persons best acquainted with the customs of their own country. These collectors or farmers of the tributes often griped and scraped all they could by various methods of extortion, having frequent opportunities of oppressing others to raise their own fortunes, and they were usually

* *Levi* signifies one associated; *Matthew*, him that is given; in Latin, *Donatus*.

covetous. On this account even the Gentiles often speak of them as exactors, cheats, and public robbers.* Zaccheus, a chief among these collectors, was sensible of these occasions of fraud and oppression, when he offered four-fold restitution to any whom he had injured.

Among the Jews these publicans were more infamous and odious, because this nation looked upon them as enemies to their privilege of natural freedom which God had given them, and as persons defiled by their frequent conversation and dealing with the pagans, and as conspiring with the Romans to entail slavery upon their countrymen. Hence the Jews universally abhorred them, regarding their estates or money as the fortunes of notorious thieves, banished them from their communion in all religious worship, and shunned them in all affairs of civil society and commerce. Tertullian is certainly mistaken when he affirms that none but Gentiles were employed in this sordid office, as St. Jerom demonstrates from several passages in the gospels.(1) And it is certain that St. Matthew was a Jew, though a publican. His office is said to have particularly consisted in gathering customs of commodities that came by the lake of Genesareth or Tiberias, and a toll which passengers paid that came by water; of which mention is made by Jewish writers. Hence the Hebrew gospel published by Munster renders the word Publican in this place by, "The Lord of the Passage." St. Mark says that St. Matthew kept his office or toll-booth by the side of the lake, where he sat at the receipt of custom.

Jesus having lately cured a famous paralytic, went out of Capharnaum, and walked on the banks of the lake or sea of Genesareth, teaching the people who flocked after him. Here he espied Matthew sitting in his custom-house, whom he called to come and follow him. The man was rich, enjoyed a very lucrative post, was a wise and prudent man, and perfectly understood what his compliance would cost him, and what an ex-

(1) Ep. 146, ad Damas.

* The profession of a tax-gatherer is in itself lawful and necessary, and may be innocent. It has even furnished eminent examples of sanctity, witness the baron of Montmorency in Flanders, and Bernieres in Normandy, &c. VOL. IX. R

change he made of wealth for poverty. But he overlooked all these considerations, and left all his interests and relations to become our Lord's disciple, and to embrace a spiritual kind of commerce or traffic. We cannot suppose that he was before wholly unacquainted with our Saviour's person or doctrine, especially as his custom-office was near Capharnaum, and his house seems to have been in that city, where Christ had resided for some time, had preached and wrought many miracles, by which he was in some measure prepared to receive the impression which the call of Christ made upon him. St. Jerom says, that a certain amiable brightness and air of majesty which shone in the countenance of our divine Redeemer, pierced his soul, and strongly attracted him. But the great cause of his wonderful conversion was, as Bede remarks, that, "He who called him outwardly by his word, at the same time moved him inwardly by the invisible instinct of his grace." We must earnestly entreat this same gracious Saviour that he would vouchsafe to touch our hearts with the like powerful interior call, that we may be perfectly converted to him. He often raises his voice in the secret of our hearts: but by putting wilful obstacles we are deaf to it, and the seed of salvation is often choked in our souls.

This apostle, at the first invitation, broke all ties; forsook his riches, his family, his worldly concerns, his pleasures, and his profession. His conversion was sincere and perfect, manifesting itself by the following marks. First, it admitted no deliberation or delay; to balance one moment between God and sin or the world, is to resist the divine call, and to lose the offered grace. Secondly, it was courageous; surmounting and bearing down all opposition which his passions or the world could raise in his way. Thirdly, it was constant; the apostle from that moment looked no more back, but following Christ with fervour, persevered to the end, marching every day forward with fresh vigour. It is the remark of St. Gregory, that those apostles who left their boats and nets to follow Christ, were sometimes afterwards found in the same employment of fishing, from which they were called: but St. Matthew never returned to the custom-house, because it was a dangerous profession, and an occasion of avarice, oppression, and extortion. St.

Jerom and St. Chrysostom take notice, that St. Mark and St. Luke mention our apostle by the name of Levi, when they speak of his former profession of publican, as if it were to cover and keep out of sight the remembrance of this apostle's sin, or at least to touch it tenderly; but our evangelist openly calls himself Matthew, by which name he was then known in the church, being desirous out of humility to publish his former infamy and sin, and to proclaim the excess of the divine mercy which had made an apostle of a publican. The other evangelists, by mentioning him in his former dishonourable course of life under the name of Levi, teach us, that we ought to treat penitent sinners with all modesty and tenderness; it being against the laws of religion, justice, and charity, to upbraid and reproach a convert with errors or sins which God himself has forgiven and effaced, so as to declare that he no longer remembers them, and for which the devil himself, with all his malice, can no longer accuse or reproach him.

St. Matthew, upon his conversion, to show that he was not discontented at his change, but looked upon it as his greatest happiness, entertained our Lord and his disciples, at a great dinner in his house, whither he invited his friends, especially those of his late profession, doubtless hoping that by our Saviour's divine conversation, they also might be converted. The Pharisees carped at this conduct of Christ, in eating with publicans and sinners. Our divine Saviour answered their malicious secret suggestions, that he came for the sick, not for the sound and healthy, or for those who conceited themselves so, and imagined they stood in no need of a physician; and he put them in mind, that God prefers acts of mercy and charity, especially in reclaiming sinners, and doing good to souls, before ritual observances, as the more necessary and noble precept, to which other laws were subordinate. Commerce with idolaters was forbidden the Jews for fear of the contagion of vice by evil company. This law the proud Pharisees extended not only beyond its bounds, but even against the essential laws of charity, the first among the divine precepts. Yet this nicety they called the strict observance of the law, in which they prided themselves, whereas in the sight of God it was hypocrisy and overbearing pride, with a contempt of their neighbours,

which degraded their pretended righteousness beneath the most scandalous sinners, with whom they scorned to converse, even for the sake of reclaiming them, which the law, far from forbidding, required as the first and most excellent of its precepts. Christ came from heaven, and clothed himself with our mortality, in the bowels of the most tender compassion and of his infinite mercy for sinners: he burned continually with the most ardent thirst for their salvation, and it was his greatest delight to converse with those who were sunk in the deepest abyss, in order to bring them to repentance and salvation. How affectionately he cherished, and how tenderly he received those who were sincerely converted to him he has expressed by the most affecting parables, and of this, St. Matthew is, among others, an admirable instance.

The vocation of St. Matthew happened in the second year of the public ministry of Christ, who soon after forming the college of his apostles, adopted him into that holy family of the spiritual princes and founders of his church. The humility of our saint is remarked in the following circumstance. Whereas the other evangelists, in describing the apostles by pairs, constantly rank him before St. Thomas, he places that apostle before himself, and in this very list adds to his name the epithet of the publican. He delighted in the title of Matthew the Publican, because he found in it his own humiliation, magnified by it the divine mercy and grace of his conversion, and expressed the deep spirit of compunction in which he had his former guilt always before his eyes. Eusebius and St. Epiphanius tell us, that after our Lord's ascension, St. Matthew preached several years in Judea and the neighbouring countries till the dispersion of the apostles; and that a little before it he wrote his gospel, or short history of our blessed Redeemer, at the entreaty of the Jewish converts, and, as St. Epiphanius says, at the command of the other apostles. That he compiled it before their dispersion appears, not only because it was written before the other gospels, but also because St. Bartholomew took a copy of it with him into India, and left it there.*

* The English word *Gospel* signifies, in the language of our ancestors, not God's Word, but Good Word, or tidings, as *Evangelium* in Greek. Good they wrote God; and God, Gode, with *e*. We now retain the

Christ no where appears to have given any charge about committing to writing his history or divine doctrine; particular accidents gave the occasions. St. Matthew wrote his gospel to satisfy the converts of Palestine; (1) St. Mark at the pressing

(1) Eus. l. 3, c. 24. S. Hieron. in Catal.

word *Spell* only to signify a charm. See Hammond, (p. 3,) Somner, and Fr. Junius's Etymological Dictionary by Edm. Lye. That St. Matthew's gospel was originally written in the modern Hebrew, that is, in the Syro-Chaldaic language, used by the Jews after the captivity, is affirmed by Papias, Origen, SS. Irenæus, Eusebius, Jerom, Epiphanius, Theodoret, and all the ancient fathers, so positively and so unanimously, that it is matter of surprise that Erasmus, Calvin, Lightfoot, and some few others, should pretend it was written first in Greek, which they falsely mistake to have then been the vulgar language of the Jews in Palestine. That Christ preached to them in the Syro-Chaldaic tongue is plain from many words of that language used by him, which the evangelists retain and interpret in the gospels. St. Paul, haranguing the Jews at Jerusalem, spoke in the Syro-Chaldaic tongue, (Act. xx. 2, xxvii. 40, xxvi. 14.) The Syro-Chaldaic paraphrase of Onkelos on the Pentateuch, composed about the time of our Redeemer, and that of Jonathan on the books of Josue, Judges, and Kings, not much later, extant in the Polyglot, &c. were made to expound the Bible to the common people, who no longer understood the true ancient Hebrew, in which language the sacred books were still read in the synagogues. (See Huet, de Clavis Interpret. § 6, Simon, l. 2, c. 18; Walton, Proleg. 12; Frassen, contra Morin. l. 2; Exercit. 8, et Nat. Alex. Sæc. 2, Diss. 11.)

What Erasmus and the rest of these authors ground their conjecture upon, that St. Matthew quotes the Old Testament according to the Greek Septuagint, is another mistake. For out of ten quotations found in his gospel, seven are visibly taken from the Hebrew, and the rest are no way contrary to that text, though they are mentioned only as to the sense, not in the words. St. Jerom expressly observes, from a copy of this gospel in the original Hebrew which he saw in the library at Cæsarea, that St. Matthew's quotations are made from the Hebrew. (in Catal.) We are fools, says Isaac Vossius, (Præf. App. in l. de 70 Interpr.) if we spend our time in confuting all idle dreams which trample upon the unanimous testimony of all antiquity, and the authority of all churches, which conspire in assuring us, that the gospel of St. Matthew was originally written in the Syro-Chaldaic language. The Greek translation was made in the time of the apostles, as St. Jerom and St. Austin affirm, perhaps by some of them; it was at least approved by them, and from their time has been always looked upon to hold the place of the original. For, the Syro-Chaldaic copy seems to have been soon corrupted by the Nazareans, or Jewish converts, who adhered to the ceremonies of the law. Also the Ebionite heretics retrenched many passages.

Among the additions made by the Nazareans some consisted of sayings of our Divine Redeemer, handed down by those who had received them from his sacred mouth, and are quoted as such by the fathers. See a collection of these in Grabe. (Spicilegii, t. 1, p. 12.) Other additions of these heretics were fictions. These interpolations and falsifications brought the Hebrew copy into disrepute in the church; or if the gospel of the Nazareans had a different ground from the Hebrew text of St.

entreaties of the faithful at Rome ;(1) St. Luke, to oppose false histories ;(2) St. John, at the request of the bishops of Asia, to leave an authentic testimony against the heresies of Cerinthus and Ebion.(3) It was, nevertheless, by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that this work was undertaken and executed by each of them. The gospels are the most excellent part of the sacred writings. For in them Christ teaches us, not by his prophets, but by his own divine mouth, the great lessons of faith, and of eternal life ; and in the history of his holy life the most perfect pattern of sanctity is set before our eyes for us to copy after. The gospel of St. Matthew descends to a fuller and more particular detail in the actions of Christ, than the other three, but from ch. v., to ch. xiv., he often differs from them in the series of his narration, neglecting the order of time, that those instructions might be related together which have a closer affinity with each other. This evangelist enlarges chiefly on our Saviour's lessons of morality, and describes his temporal or human generation, in which the promises made to Abraham and David, concerning the Messias to be born of their seed, were fulfilled ; which argument was a particular inducement to the Jews to believe in him.

St. Matthew, after having made a great harvest of souls in Judea, went to preach the faith to the barbarous and uncivilized nations of the East. He was a person much devoted to heavenly contemplation, and led an austere life, using a very slender and mean diet ; for he ate no flesh, satisfying nature with herbs, roots, seeds, and berries, as St. Clement of Alexandria assures us.(4) St. Ambrose says,(5) that God opened

(1) Eus. l. 2, c. 15.

(2) Luke i. 1.

(3) S. Hieron. Prol. in Matt. S. Epiph. hæ. 31, t. 12.

(4) Pædag. l. 2, c. 1.

(5) In Ps. 45.

Matthew, at least the latter is long since lost : and St. Epiphanius tells us (Hær. 29, n. 9,) that the gospel of the Nazareans or Hebrews was only that of St. Matthew interpolated. The Chaldaic text of St. Matthew's gospel, published by Tillet, and republished from another more imperfect copy by Munster, is evidently a modern translation made from the Greek. The Latin Vulgate, or rather the old Italic, was translated from the Greek text, and corrected according to it by St. Jerom. See Le Long, Biblioth. Sacra : Mills, Proleg. in Gr. Test. p. 5 et 31, &c. Dom Martianay published, in 1695, the ancient Italic version of this gospel. Since that time an old MS. copy of the four gospels in the true ancient Italic version, was found at Corbie ; and published at Verona.

to him the country of the Persians. Rufinus(1) and Socrates(2) tell us, that he carried the gospel into Ethiopia, meaning probably the southern and eastern parts of Asia. St. Paulinus mentions,(3) that he ended his course in Parthia. Venantius Fortunatus relates, that he suffered martyrdom at Nadabar, a city in those parts. According to Dorotheus, he was honourably interred at Hierapolis in Parthia. His relics were long ago brought into the West. Pope Gregory VII., in a letter to the bishop of Salerno, in 1080, testifies that they were then kept in a church which bore his name in that city. They still remain in the same place.

St. Irenæus, St. Jerom, St. Austin, and other fathers find a figure of the four evangelists in the four mystical animals represented in Ezechiel,(4) and in the Apocalypse of St. John.(5) The eagle is generally said to represent St. John, who in the first lines of his gospel soars up to the contemplation of the eternal generation of the Word. The calf agrees to St. Luke, who begins his gospel with the mention of the priesthood. St. Austin makes the lion the symbol of St. Matthew, who explains the royal dignity of Christ; but others give it to St. Mark, and the man to St. Matthew, who begins his gospel with Christ's human generation.

In the gospel, *The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him*,(6) and hath delivered to us the most sublime truths. Wherefore St. Austin writes,(7) "Let us hear the gospel as if we listened to Christ present." The primitive Christians always stood up when they read it, or heard it read.(8) St. Jerom says: "While the gospel is read, in all the churches of the East, candles are lighted, though the sun shine, in token of joy."(9) St. Thomas Aquinas always read the gospel on his knees. In this divine book not only the divine instructions of our Blessed Redeemer are delivered to us, but moreover a copy of his sacred life on earth is painted before our eyes. As St. Basil says;(10) "Every action and every word of our Saviour Jesus Christ is a rule of piety. He took upon him human nature that he might draw as on a tablet,

(1) L. 10, c. 9.

(2) L. 1, c. 19.

(3) Carm. 26.

(4) Ezech. i. 10.

(5) Apoc. iv. 7.

(6) John i. 18.

(7) Tract. 30, in Joan.

(8) Const. Apost. l. 2, c. 62.

(9) Adv. Vigilant.

(10) Constit. Monast. c. 2

and set before us a perfect model for us to imitate." Let us study this rule, and beg the patronage of this apostle, that the spirit of Christ, or that of his humility, compunction, self-denial, charity, and perfect disengagement from the things of this world, may be imprinted in our hearts.

ST. MAURA, V.

SHE was nobly born at Troyes in Champagne in the ninth century, and in her youth obtained of God by her prayers the wonderful conversion of her father, who had till then led a worldly life. After his happy death, Maura continued to live in the most dutiful subjection and obedience to her mother, Sedulia, and by the fervour of her example was the sanctification of her brother Eutropius and of the whole family. The greater part of the revenues of their large estate was converted into the patrimony of the poor. The virgin's whole time was consecrated to the exercises of prayer, to offices of obedience or charity, in attending on her mother and serving the poor, or to her work, which was devoted to the service either of the poor or of the church: for it was her delight in a spirit of religion to make sacred vestments, trim the lamps, and prepare wax and other things for the altar. As order in what we do leads a soul to God, according to the remark of St. Austin, she was regular in the distribution of her time, and in all her actions. She spent almost all the whole morning in the church, adoring God, praying to her divine Redeemer, and meditating on the circumstances of his sacred life and passion. Every Wednesday and Friday she fasted, allowing herself no other sustenance than bread and water, and she walked barefoot to the monastery of Mantenay, two leagues from the town, where she prayed a long time in the church, and with the most perfect humility and compunction laid open the secrets of her soul to the holy abbot of that place, her spiritual director, without whose advice she did nothing. The profound respect with which she was penetrated for the word of God, and whatever regarded the honour of his adorable name, is not to be expressed. So wonderful was her gift of tears, that she seemed never to fall upon her knees to pray but they streamed from her eyes in torrents. God performed many miracles in her