

Our corporal necessities were not the motive which drew our omnipotent Physician down from heaven, but the spiritual miseries of our souls. In his mortal life he restored many sick to their health, and delivered demoniacs, to give men a sensible proof of his divine power, and for an emblem that he came to relieve the spiritual miseries of our souls, and to put an end to the empire of the devil over them. In like manner, when through his servants he has bestowed corporal blessings on men, he excites our confidence in his mercy to ask through their intercession his invisible graces. We ought to pray for our daily bread, or all necessary supplies of our bodily necessities; but should make these petitions subordinate to the great end of our sanctification, and his divine honour, offering them under this condition, as we know not in temporal blessings what is most expedient for us. God offers us his grace, his love, himself: him we must make the great and ultimate end of all our requests to him. If some rich prince should engage himself to grant us whatever we should ask, it would be putting an affront upon him, if we confined our petition to pins or such trifles, as St. Teresa remarks.

### ST. NICODEMUS.

HE was by sect a Pharisee, and passed for a master and doctor in Israel, even when he was ignorant of the truths of eternal life. He seems to have been a senator of Jerusalem; for he is called a Jewish chief. The Pharisees were in general, by their pride, the most opposite of all others to the humility of the

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performed by the relics of St. Stephen, among which he reckons five persons raised from the dead, mentioning their names, families, and all the circumstances of the facts. Two were restored to life by garments which some had devoutly applied to the relics of the protomartyr, imitating what they had read in the Acts of the Apostles, (c. 19,) of cloths and handkerchiefs which had touched St. Paul, having been the instruments of such favours. (See John Le Clerc, under the name of John Phreponus, Cens. in Tom. 5, Op. S. Aug. p. 550. Middleton's Free Inquiry, and Beausobre, Hist. de Manichée, l. 9, c. 3, t. 2, p. 648.) These authors, to try the fallacy of their sophistry and raillery, may turn its edge upon the history of the dead man raised to life by touching the bones of Eliseus, 4 alias 2 Kings xiii. 21, and upon that of the sick who were cured by a devout application of aprons and handkerchiefs taken from the body of St. Paul. (Acts xix, 12.) God can by any instruments manifest his power and mercy, as Christ often used sensible signs in working miracles.

gospel. St. Nicodemus was an exception, and believed in Christ.(1) At first, something of a sacred opinion of his own wisdom and learning, which it is so hard and so rare a thing for men to be perfectly divested of, seems to have been an obstacle to his opening his heart perfectly to the grace of his conversion. To humble him, Christ explained to him the mystery of regeneration by baptism, which St. Nicodemus did not understand, though it was expressed in the prophets. Our merciful Redeemer reproached him for his ignorance. St. Nicodemus, far from being offended at the reproof, received it with such humility, and was so confounded within himself, that perfecting these dispositions, Christ conducted him into the paths of true virtue. He returned to Jesus from time to time; defended him openly against the Pharisees,(2) assisted at his burial, and embalmed his sacred body with rich spices.(3) Having been turned out of the synagogue by the Jews for believing in Christ, he retired to St. Gamaliel at his country house, and died there, as St. Austin(4) and Photius testify from the Acts of the Invention of St. Stephen's relics.

#### ST. GAMALIEL.

HE was of the sect of the Pharisees, and a doctor of the law, in the highest reputation at Jerusalem. St. Paul recommended himself to the Jews by saying that he had been his scholar.(5) When the Jews were deliberating to put the apostle to death, St. Gamaliel prevented such a resolution, and indirectly showed the Christian religion to be the work of God; yet this he did with so much prudence as not to incur any suspicion. Though he had not then embraced the faith, his conversion was more early than that of St. Paul, as St. Chrysostom assures us.(6) Having buried St. Stephen at his own estate, twenty miles from Jerusalem, he was afterwards himself interred in the same sepulchre, and discovered his relics to Lucian, in a vision, in 415, as was related above.

(1) John iii.

(3) John xix. 39.

(5) Acts v. 34; xxii. 3.

(2) John vii. 50.

(4) Hom. 120, in Joan.

(6) Hom. xiv. in Act.