

class, with an octave. It is inserted in the Roman Martyrology on the 22nd of September. There is a town in Normandy which bears the saint's name, and a parochial church at Rouen dedicated under his invocation. See the acts of the saints; *l'Abrégé de la Vie des Evêques de Coutances* by Rouault, Coutances, 1742, in 12mo. Trigan, *Hist. Ecclés de Normand.* p. 94, 128 et 458.

## SEPTEMBER XXII.

### ST. MAURICE AND HIS COMPANIONS, MM.

From the authentic account of their martyrdom, compiled a hundred and fifty years after it happened, by St. Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, who quotes their acts, and the relation of Isaac, the holy bishop of Geneva. This last-mentioned prelate received the particulars of this history of these martyrs from Theodore, bishop of Octodurum, (in whose diocese they had suffered,) who assisted at the council of Aquileia in 381, and must have seen persons who had been eye-witnesses, or at least lived upon the spot when the inhuman butchery was committed. The gravity and sanctity of St. Eucherius are set off by the modest simplicity of his style in this piece, which is acknowledged a sincere and incontestable history by Ruinart, (*Acta sincera*, p. 290.) Tillemont, Baillet, and all Catholic critics. This account is perfectly conformable to the Acts of these martyrs which were common in that country in the fifth, nay, says Mosheim, in the fourth century, as appears from certain circumstances related from them by the author of the life of St. Romanus, who wrote before the close of the fifth century. The same is confirmed from the title of a sermon of St. Alcimius Avitus, written about the year 490, preserved among his works, though the sermon itself be lost. (*Op. Sirmondi*, t. 2.) The truth of this history is nevertheless attacked by some Protestant historians. The minister Dubordier raised the contest, and was followed by Hottinger; Moyle exerted more erudition and subtilty in the same controversy, and Dr. Gilbert Burnet (*Præf. in Lactant. de Mort. Persec. &c.*) retailed his objections with greater confidence than strength. The learned Dr. Hickes defended against him the authenticity of these Acts, and the controversy became warm between these eminent antagonists, when their opposite political principles concerning passive obedience were made to interfere. Dr. Hickes demonstrates no stress can be laid on the silence of Eusebius who lived in the East, or of others, and, that though Maximian at first favoured the Christians, yet in certain circumstances, especially in the army, he put many to death for the faith. Constantius spared the Christians; but was only made Cæsar in 293, whereas this massacre most probably happened soon after Maximian was associated to the empire in 286. Neither is it certain that the territory where it was committed was in Constantius's dominions: and, were it so, his power as Cæsar could not tie up that of the emperor, especially over his own soldiers, wherever he marched with them.—Mosheim, who allows these arguments of Moyle to lose their weight when they are put in that balance against the authority with which

this history is supported ; yet forms an objection from certain Greek Acts which place the martyrdom of St. Mauricius (after suffering many torments for the space of ten days) with his companions, under Maximian, at Apamea in Syria. (See Mosheim, *Comm. de Rebus Eccl. ante Constantinum* M. Helmstadii. 1753, p. 588.) He confounds St. Maurice of Agaunum with another St. Mauritius, M. who is mentioned by Theodoret ; (Serm. 8, de curand. Græcor. Affect.) but his modern Greek Acts can claim no authority. Before Dr. Hickes entered the lists with Burnet, Bishop Stillingfleet had confuted the exceptions of Moyle to this history, which Dr. Burnet then began to urge in conversation. (*Origin. Britann.* p. 71.) To the authorities produced by Stillingfleet in favour of these martyrs and their Acts, we seem authorized to add the testimony of Prudentius Psychom. v. 36, whose silence some have falsely pleaded against these Acts. See F. Jos. Lisle, Ben. of the Congr. of St. Vannes, *Défense de la Vérité du Martyre de la Légion Thebéenne*, 1737, in octavo. Also Baldesano, *Historia di S. Mauritio* ; F. John Clè the Bollandist, t. 6, Sept. p. 308 to 403, and App. ib. 895 to 920. N.B. The acts in Surius are interpolated : for mention is made in them of King Sigismund, and of the Rule of Agaunum which was instituted in 515, whereas St. Eucherius of Lyons subscribed the first council of Orange in 441. But F. Chifflet discovered an exact copy which he published, and which Ruinart proves to be the genuine work of St. Eucherius. It is from these acts we are to argue against Dubordier, &c. The martyrdom of SS. Maurice and his companions is mentioned in the life of St. Severin of Agaunum, written soon after the year 500 ; in the two works, still more ancient, already quoted ; in the Martyrologies of St. Jerom, Florentinius, &c. in the council of Agaunum, an. 515, in St. Gregory of Tours, *De Glor. Mart.* l. 1, c. 75 ; in Fortunatus, l. 2, carm. 15. From all these authorities it is evident, that our holy martyrs were held in great veneration in the sixth age.

## A. D. 286.

THE emperor Carus, who had impiously assumed the title of a god, being killed by lightning, and his son Numerianus Augustus being cut off by the treachery of his uncle Aper, Dioclesian, a man of low birth, was saluted emperor by the army which he then commanded in the East, on the 17th of September, 284. He defeated and slew Carinus, the second debauched son of Carus, the year following, in Mæsia, and after this victory took the haughty name of Jovius from Jupiter, and creating Maximian Cæsar, allotted to him the care and defence of the West. The Bagaudæ, a people consisting chiefly of peasants in Gaul, who had been attached to the interest of Carinus, took up arms to revenge his death, under two commanders, Amandus and Ælian. Dioclesian ordered Maximian to march against them, and on that occasion declared him Augustus and partner in the empire ; and this new emperor assumed the surname of Hercules, from the god Hercules. In

this expedition the most judicious historians place the martyrdom of the Thebean legion. It seems to have received its name from being raised in Thebais or Upper Egypt, a country full of zealous Christians. This legion was entirely composed of such; and St. Maurice, who seems to have been the first commanding officer who was then with it, might make it a point to admit no others among them.

Dioclesian, in the beginning of his reign, was no enemy to the Christian religion, and employed many who openly professed it, near his own person, and in posts of trust and importance, as Eusebius assures us. Yet even private governors, and the giddy populace were at liberty to indulge the blindest passion and fury against the servants of Christ; and Maximian, on certain extraordinary occasions, stained his progresses with the blood of many martyrs. The Thebean legion was one of those which were sent by Dioclesian out of the East to compose his army for his expedition into Gaul. Maximian in crossing the Alps made a halt with his army some days, that the soldiers might repose themselves in their tedious march, while some detachments filed off towards Triers. They were then arrived at Octodurum, at that time a considerable city on the Rhone, above the lake of Geneva, now a village called Martignac or Martigni in the Valais. Its episcopal see seems to have been transferred to Sion in the sixth century. Here Maximian issued out an order that the whole army should join in offering sacrifice to the gods for the success of their expedition. The Thebean legion hereupon withdrew itself, and encamped near Agaunum, now called St. Maurice, three leagues from Octodurum. The emperor sent them repeated orders to return to the camp, and join in the sacrifice; and, upon their constant and unanimous refusal, he commanded them to be decimated. Thus every tenth man was put to death, according as the lot fell; the rest exhorting one another all the while to perseverance. After the first decimation, a second was commanded, unless the soldiers obeyed the orders given; but they cried out over their whole camp, that they would rather suffer all extremities than do any thing contrary to their holy religion. They were principally encouraged by three of their general officers, Maurice or Mauricius, Exuperius, and Candi-

du. St. Eucherius does not style St. Mauricius the tribune, but Primicerius, which was the dignity of the first captain, next to that of the tribune or colonel. He calls Exuperius Campiductor or Major, and Candidus the senator of the troops.

The emperor sent forth fresh threats that it was in vain they confided in their multitude ; and that if they persisted in their disobedience, not a man among them should escape death. The legion, by the advice of their generous leaders, answered him by a dutiful remonstrance, the substance of which was as follows : " We are your soldiers, but are servants of the true God. We owe you military service and obedience ; but we cannot renounce Him who is our Creator and Master, and also yours, even whilst you reject him. In all things which are not against his law we most willingly obey you, as we have done hitherto. We readily oppose all your enemies, whoever they are ; but we cannot dip our hands in the blood of innocent persons. We have taken an oath to God before we took one to you : you can place no confidence in our second oath, should we violate the first. You command us to punish the Christians : behold we are all such. We confess God the Father, author of all things, and his Son, Jesus Christ. We have seen our companions slain without lamenting them ; and we rejoice at their honour. Neither this extremity to which we are reduced, nor any provocation hath tempted us to revolt. We have arms in our hands ; but we do not resist, because we had rather die innocent than live by any sin."

This legion consisted of about six thousand six hundred men, who were all well armed, and might have sold their lives very dear. But they had learned to give to God what is God's, and to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and they showed their courage more in dying than they had ever done in the most hazardous enterprises. Maximian having no hopes of overcoming their constancy, commanded his whole army to surround them, and cut them to pieces. They made no resistance, but, dropping their arms, suffered themselves to be butchered like innocent sheep, without opening their mouths, except mutually to encourage one another ; and not one out of so great a number failed in courage to the last. The ground was covered with their dead bodies, and streams of blood flowed on every side. Maximian gave the

spoils of the slain to his army for their booty, and the soldiers were making merry over them, when Victor, a veteran soldier, who belonged not to that troop, happened to pass by. They invited him to eat with them; but he, detesting their feast, offered to retire. At this the soldiers inquired if he was also a Christian. He answered that he was, and would always continue one: upon which they instantly fell upon him and slew him. Ursus and Victor, two straggling soldiers of this legion, were found at Solodora, now Soleure, and massacred upon the spot. Their relics are still preserved at Soleure. There suffered at Turin, about the same time, SS. Octavius, Adventitius, and Solutor, who are celebrated by St. Maximus in his sermons, and by Ennodius of Pavia, in his poems. These martyrs were styled by Fortunatus, "The happy legion." Their festival is mentioned on this day in the Martyrologies of St. Jerom, Bede, and others. St. Eucherius, speaking of their relics, preserved at Agaunum, in his time, says: "Many come from divers provinces devoutly to honour these saints, and offer presents of gold, silver, and other things. I humbly present this monument of my pen, begging intercession for the pardon of my sins, and the perpetual protection of my patrons." (1) He mentions many miracles to have been performed at their relics, and says of a certain woman who had been cured of a palsy by them: "Now she carries her own miracle about her." (2) The foundation of the monastery of St. Maurice at Agaunum is generally ascribed to King Sigismund in 515; but Mabillon (3) demonstrates it to have been more early, and that Sigismund only repaired and enlarged it.\*

(1) P. 275.

(2) P. 278.

(3) Annal. Bened. t. 1, p. 508.

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\* This monastery is still enriched with the relics of the holy martyrs, notwithstanding the several distributions made of them. In the cathedral of Sion a magnificent chapel is dedicated in honour of St. Maurice, who is the principal patron of the Valais.

In 1489, were found two hundred bodies of the companions of St. Maurice at the village of Schoz about two leagues from Lucerne, where a chapel stood long before, famous for privileges and indulgences. (Murer, Helvet. Sacr. p. 30.) F. Chardon gives a history of the miracles wrought there. St. Maurice and his companions are honoured in many churches of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal; and St. Maurice is principal patron of the royal house of Savoy.

Amedeus VIII. duke of Savoy, having in 1434 resigned the sove-

In the martyrs we learn the character of true fortitude, of which virtue many may form a very false idea. Real valour differs infinitely from that fury, rashness, and inconsiderate contempt of dangers, which the basest passions often inspire. It is founded in motives of duty and virtue; it doth brave and great things, and it beareth injuries and torments; nor this for hope or reward, the desire of honour, or the fear of punishment; but out of a conscience of duty, and to preserve virtue entire. So infinitely more precious is the least part of integrity than all the possessions of this world, and so much does it overbalance all torments, that, rather than suffer it to be lost or impaired in the least point, the good man is ready to venture upon all perils, and behaves amidst them without terror. This foundation of great and heroical performances, this just and rational, this considerate and sedate, this constant, perpetual, and uniform contempt of dangers, and of death in all its shapes, is only derived from the Christian principle. The characters of true virtue go along with it, especially patience, humility, and gentleness. The Christian hero obeys the precepts of loving his enemies, doing good to those who persecute him, bearing wrong, and being ready to give his coat, without repining, to him who would take away his cloak.

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reignty, retired to Rapaille, near the lake of Geneva, to lead an eremitical life; and was followed by six gentlemen, all widowers, and above the age of sixty. Here he laid the foundation of the military Order of St. Maurice; of which the king of Sardinia is grand master. The knights can marry but once, unless dispensed with. The Order, in its present state, was instituted by Emmanuel Philibert, duke of Savoy, and confirmed by Pope Gregory XIII. in 1572. See Augustinus Patricius, *Hist. Conc. Basil. ap. Labbe, Concil. t. 13, col. 1488.* Joan. Gobelinus, seu Pontius Æneas Sylvius, post Pius II. (qui sub amanuensis sui nomine latere voluit) *Comment. vitæ suæ. Petrus Monodus, in Amœdæo pacifico (quem librum latine edidit initio sec. xvii.) p. 53.*

Aganum, now called St. Maurice, passed from the kings of Burgundy to the house of Savoy in the eleventh century; but was taken from Charles, father of Emmanuel Philibert, by Francis I. of France, assisted by the Swiss and Genevans. By one of the articles of the treaty of peace, the duke of Savoy consented to give it up to the canton of Valais, on condition that the relics of the martyrs of the Theban legion should be removed to Turin. The bishop of Sion, protector and governor of Valais, sent notice to the inhabitants of St. Maurice to agree to the treaty, which had been ratified by the oath of the contending powers; and the bishop of Aoste presented himself in the name of the duke of Savoy to demand the relics. This demand threw the whole city into the utmost confusion: the people in exchange offered to give up their troops