

extolled the power of Christ. The judge commanded them to be hung on the rack and cruelly tortured. The martyrs reproached him, that whilst they worshipped idols they had committed many crimes, and had made open profession of practising art magic without incurring any chastisement; but, when they were become Christians and good citizens they were barbarously punished. The proconsul threatened them with more grievous torments. "We are ready to suffer," said Marcian, "but we will never renounce the true God, lest we be cast into a fire which will never be quenched." At this word Sabinus condemned them to be burned alive. They went joyfully to the place of execution, and, singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God, expired amidst the flames. They suffered at Nicomedia in 250, and are honoured in the Martyrologies on the 26th of October. See their genuine acts in Surius, Rainart, p. 151; Tillemont, t. 3, p. 383, and in the original Chaldaic, probably of Eusebius, in Stephen Assemani's *Acta Martyrum Occid.* t. 2, p. 49.

OCTOBER XXVII.

ST FRUMENTIUS, APOSTLE OF ETHIOPIA, B. C.

See Rufinus, *Hist.* l. 1, c. 19. Theodoret, l. 1, c. 22. St. Athan. *Apol.* 1, p. 696. Socrates, l. 1, c. 19. Sozomen, l. 2, c. 24. Hermant, *Vie de S. Athanase*, t. 2, p. 240. Tillemont, t. 7, p. 234; t. 8, p. 13.—Montfaucon, *Vit. S. Athan.* p. 15, t. 1, Op. S. Athan. Job Ludolf, (who died at Francfort, in 1704, and is famous for his travels and skill in the Ethiopian and other Oriental languages) *Hist. Æthiop.* l. 3, c. 7, n. 17, et *Comment. in eandem Hist.* p. 290. Le Quien, *Or. Chr.* t. 2, p. 643.

FOURTH AGE.

A CERTAIN philosopher named Metrodorus, out of curiosity and a desire of seeing the world, and improving his stock of knowledge, made several voyages, and travelled both into Persia, and into Farther India, which name the ancients gave to Ethiopia.* At his return he presented Constantine the Great,

* The Ethiopians are so called in Greek, from the black colour of their skin. Herodotus and other ancients mention some in Asia, near the Araxis, &c. and others in Africa, where their territories reached from the Red Sea above Egypt beyond the equator, and very far to the west, taking in all the middle parts of Africa. Probably an early colony from

who had then lately made himself master of the East, with a quantity of diamonds and other precious stones and curiosities, assuring that prince his collection would have been much more valuable, had not Sapor, king of Persia, seized on the best part of his treasure. His success encouraged Meropius, a philosopher of Tyre, to undertake a like voyage upon the same motive.

Asia mingled with these Africans. Whence Ethiopia above Egypt is often called by the ancients, India, no less than the Southern Asia.—Blacks anciently peopled many of the southern islands of Asia: perhaps passed from thence into Africa. Huet (*Diss. on Paradise*) shows against Bochart, that Chus, son of Cham, was father of the Madianites, and also (by his descendants at least) of the Ethiopians.

The Ethiopians anciently disputed antiquity and science, especially in astronomy, with the Egyptians. Lucian observes (*Astrol.*) that their open southern country was most proper for observing the stars. Their manners were then most pure, as was their doctrine on morality, according to the remark of Abbé Marsy from Diodorus Siculus, &c. If their science of the heavens exceeded general observations of the seasons, of the annual revolution of the sun, the monthly changes or phases of the moon, and the like, it was in the lapse of time buried in oblivion, and Ethiopia sunk into that state of barbarism which, to this day, has ever covered the whole face of Africa, except Egypt, and those parts which successively two Phenician colonies and afterwards the Romans cultivated.

Abyssinia, called by the ancients Ethiopia under Egypt, is thought to have taken its name from Habasch, a supposed son of Chus, or, from that word which in Hebrew (the original language of Palestine and Arabia) signifies a *Mixture* or a *Stranger*. For a colony of Sabæans passed hither about the time of Solomon, from the southern point of Arabia, and the country lower towards the Red Sea, which, beyond the sandy coast, is the most fruitful and delightful part of Arabia Felix, now rich in the best coffee about Mocca, and bordering on the only province in the world which produces true frankincense. These Sabæans mixed with the first inhabitants of Abyssinia, as their histories mention, and as appears in the features and many ancient customs, in which the Abyssinians resemble the Arabs more than the Ethiopians. The Abyssinians imbibed the Eutychian heresy from Dioscorus, the heretical patriarch of Alexandria, to which they still adhere. The Jesuits and other missionaries converted many in this kingdom to the Catholic faith, and the great and good Emperor Zadenghe, himself, who was slain fighting against rebels that took up arms in defence of their ancient heresy in 1604, and his successor, Negus Susnejos, surnamed Sultan-Saghed, who, after a troublesome reign of twenty-five years, died constant in the Catholic faith, in 1632. His son and successor, Basilides Sultan-Saghed, a zealous Eutychian, by law banished all the missionaries and Portuguese, and forbid the Catholic religion. Many who, out of charity for their converts staid behind, were crowned with martyrdom with many of the converts. Several attempts have been since made by missionaries to find admittance; but always without success, so strictly are the frontiers guarded. In the prosperous times of this mission several Jesuits were successively ordained Latin patriarchs of Ethiopia. See *Modern Universal Hist.* vol. 15, 8vo. and *Hist. d'Asie, Afrique, et Amérique*, par. M. L. A. B. t. 11, p. 12, 28. &c.

But God, who conducts all the steps of men, even when they least think of him, raised in him this design for an end of infinitely greater importance and value than all the diamonds which the philosopher could bring back. Meropius carried with him two of his nephews, Frumentius and Edesius, with whose education he was intrusted. In the course of their voyage homewards the vessel touched at a certain port to take in provisions and fresh water. The barbarians of that country, who were then at war with the Romans, stopped the ship, and put the whole crew and all the passengers to the sword, except the two children, who were studying their lessons under a tree at some distance. When they were found, their innocence, tender age, and beauty, pleaded strongly in their favour, and moved the barbarians to compassion; and they were carried to the king, who resided at Axuma, formerly one of the greatest cities in the East, now a poor village in Abyssinia, called Accum, filled with ruins of stately edifices, and sumptuous obeliaks which seem to have been funeral monuments of the dead, though none of the inscriptions are now intelligible.(1) The prince was charmed with the wit and sprightliness of the two boys, took special care of their education; and, not long after, made Edesius his cup-bearer, and Frumentius, who was the elder, his treasurer and secretary of state, intrusting him with all the public writings and accounts. They lived in great honour with this prince, who, on his death-bed, thanked them for their services, and, in recompence, gave them their liberty. After his demise, the queen, who was left regent for her eldest son, entreated them to remain at court, and assist her in the government of the state, wherein she found their fidelity, abilities, and integrity her greatest support and comfort. Frumentius had the principal management of affairs, and desiring to promote the faith of Christ in that kingdom, engaged several Christian merchants, who traded there, to settle in the country, and procured them great privileges, and all the conveniences for their religious worship, and by his own fervour and example strongly recommended the true religion to the infidels. When the young king, whose name was Aizan, came of age, and took the reins of

(1) See Ludolf, *Hist. Æthiop.* M. Almeida, *Hist. of Higher Ethiopia*, and Thevenot.

government into his own hands, the brothers resigned their posts, and though he invited them to stay, Edesius went back to Tyre, where he was afterwards ordained priest. But Frumentius having nothing so much at heart as the conversion of the whole nation, took the route of Alexandria, and entreated the holy archbishop, St. Athanasius, to send some pastor to that country, ripe for a conversion to the faith. St. Athanasius called a synod of bishops, and by their unanimous advice ordained Frumentius himself bishop of the Ethiopians, judging no one more proper than himself to finish the work which he had begun.* Frumentius, vested with this sacred character, went back to Axuma, and gained great numbers to the faith by his discourses and miracles: for seldom did any nation embrace Christianity with greater ardour, or defend it with greater courage. King Aizan and his brother Sazan, whom he had associated in the throne, received baptism, and, by their fervour, were a spur to their subjects in the practice of every virtue and religious duty. The Arian Emperor Constantius conceived an implacable jealousy against St. Frumentius, because he was linked in faith and affection with St. Athanasius; and when he found that he was not even to be tempted, much less seduced by him, he wrote a haughty letter to the two converted kings, in which he commanded them with threats, to deliver up Frumen-

* The Abyssinians or Ethiopians received the first seeds of the faith from the eunuch of their queen, who being baptized by St. Philip the Deacon, (Act. viii. 7.) afterwards initiated many of his countrymen in the Christian religion, as Eusebius assures us. (l. 2, c. 1.) See the Bollandists, (t. 1, Junij. p. 618.) Tillemont, (t. 2, p. 72, et 531.) Job Ludolf, (Hist. Æthiop. l. 3, c. 4.) But the Abyssinians acknowledge that they owe their conversion principally to St. Frumentius. They were in later ages engaged in the Eutychian heresy, and to this day believe only one nature in Christ. In the sixteenth century their king sent an embassy to Pope Clement VII. Several missions have been established in that country. The Jesuits were sent thither by Gregory XIII. but were all banished in 1636. The success of several other missions of Capuchins and others had been prosperous for some time, but failed in the end: and in 1670, several missionaries suffered martyrdom in that country. Others are from time to time sent thither from Rome. See Ludolph, Renaudot, *Apol. pour l'Hist. des. Patr. Alexandr.* p. 162.) Fabricius, (*Salut. Lux. Evang.* c. 45.) Cerri, secretary to the Congr. de Propagandâ Fide, (*Istruzione dello stato della Congr. di Prop. Fide*, in 1670, p. 122.) La Croze (*Hist. du Christianisme d'Ethiophe et d'Armenie*, at the Hague, in 1739) commits many gross mistakes in his account of these missions in Abyssinia.

tius into the hands of George, the barbarous invader of the see of Alexandria. This letter was communicated by them to St. Athanasius, who has inserted it in his apology to Constantius. Our holy bishop continued to feed and defend his flock till it pleased the Supreme Pastor to recompense his fidelity and labours. The Latins commemorate him on the 27th of October; the Greeks on the 30th of November. The Abyssinians honour him as the apostle of the country of the Axumites, which is the most considerable part of their empire.* They also place among the saints the two kings Aizan, whom they call Abreha and Sazan, whose name in their modern language is Atzbeha. St. Frumentius they call St. Fremonat.

In every age, from Christ down to this very time, some new nations have been added to the fold of Christ, as the annals of the church show; and the apostacy of those that have forsaken the path of truth, has been repaired by fresh acquisitions. This is the work of the Most High; the wonderful effect of all-powerful grace. It is owing to the divine blessing that the heavenly seed fructifies in the hearts of men, and it is God who raises up, and animates with his spirit zealous successors of the apostles, whom he vouchsafes to make his instruments in this great work. We are indebted to his gratuitous mercy for the inestimable benefit of this light of faith. If we correspond not faithfully, with fear and trembling, to so great a grace, our punishment will be so much the more dreadful.

ST. ELESBAAN, KING OF ETHIOPIA, C.

THE Axumite Ethiopians, whose dominions were extended from the western coast of the Red Sea, very far on the continent, were in the sixth century a powerful and flourishing nation. St. Elesbaan their king, during the reign of Justin the Elder, in all his actions and designs had no other desire than to procure in all things the happiness of his people, and the divine

* Axuma was capital of all Ethiopia: now called Accum, reduced to a village since the kings of Abyssinia reside at a great distance: small and in ruins, it is called the only city in Abyssinia. It is forty-two leagues from Adala, two miles from the Red Sea, the ancient great sea-port of all Ethiopia. Obelisks, ancient inscriptions in characters entirely unknown, neighbouring vast and magnificent vaults for burying-places, like those near Memphis, &c. are proofs of its ancient magnificence.