

this command under Constantius, after Lucius and Sebastian. If, in executing some commissions under Constantius, he appeared against St. Athanasius, by various contrivances he afforded him means and opportunities to make his escape. If he betrayed too great weakness in obeying his prince at that time, he never approved his heresy. At least that he was orthodox in his faith in the reign of Julian, is evident from Theodoret, the Paschal Chronicle, and the ancient Greek Calendars. The idolaters in Egypt accused him before that emperor of having demolished their temples, and broken down their idols. Julian summoned him to appear before him at Antioch in 362, and upon this indictment condemned him to be beheaded in that city, about the month of June in 362.

Artemius engaged in the service of impious Arians, who embred their hands in the blood of the saints, and placed on the pinnacle of worldly honours, stands upon the brink of the precipice, in imminent danger of being tumbled down headlong into everlasting flames; yet the omnipotent hand of God rescues him from these dangers, and leads him to bliss by a glorious martyrdom. The view of the many imminent dangers of perishing eternally, to which our souls have been often exposed, must fill us with the deepest sentiments of gratitude, love, and praise, for the infinite and most undeserved mercy by which we have been preserved. Should not we burst forth into incessant hymns of praise and thanksgiving? singing with the royal prophet: *Unless the Lord had helped me, my soul had long ago dwelt in hell.*(1) Should not we, in a transport of gratitude, implore, without interruption, the divine grace, and resolve to serve God with all our strength, that the fruit of so great mercies may not perish through our malice?

### ST. BARSABIAS, ABBOT,

AND HIS COMPANIONS, MARTYRS, IN PERSIA.

EUGENIUS, called by the Orientals, Abus, by the Chaldeans, Avus, that is, Our Father, and corruptly by Sozomen, Aones, was a disciple of the great St. Antony. Travelling into the East, he founded and governed a numerous monastery near Nisibis, from whence he sent out colonies over all Persia, in

(1) 1'salm xciv. 17.

which country there were many monasteries in the fourth century, as appears from Theodoret, (1) Barebræus, and other Syrian writers. (2) Sozomen tells us, that these monks, the disciples of Abus, completed the conversion of all Syria, and by their preaching brought to the right faith many among the Persians and Sarcens. (3) Barsabias was one of these zealous disciples of Abus, and was abbot in Persia, having under him ten monks, whom he educated with great attention and care in the paths of Christian perfection. His distinguished zeal made the persecutors mark him out one of the first for the slaughter. He was apprehended in the beginning of the great persecution of Sapor, and impeached before the governor of the province upon an indictment that he laboured to abolish in Persia the religion of the Magians. With him his ten monks were led in chains to Astahara, a city near the ruins of Persepolis, where the governor of the province resided. This inhuman judge racked his brain to invent the most cruel kind of torments to inflict upon them. By his order their knees were bruised and shattered, their legs were broken; then their arms, sides, and ears were cut and torn in the most barbarous manner, their eyes were beaten, and their faces were swollen and inflamed with the buffets they had received. At length, the governor, enraged to see himself vanquished by their invincible virtue, and tired with tormenting them, condemned them to lose their heads. The martyrs walked joyfully to the place of execution, singing the praises of God in hymns and psalms, being surrounded by a great troop of soldiers and executioners, and followed by an incredible number of people. The good abbot desired earnestly to send before him to bliss, all those souls which God had committed to his charge, and this petition which he put up to God with great ardour and charity, was granted.

The slaughter was already begun, when a Magian who happened to be travelling that way, with his wife, two children, and several servants, seeing the crowd, rode up through the people with a servant before him, to see what the matter was. He beheld the venerable abbot standing joyful, singing the

(1) Theodoret Philoth. c. 1.

(2) Apud. Jos. Assemani Bibl. Orient. t. 3, p. 2.

(3) Sozomen, l. 6, c. 34.

divine praises, and taking each monk by the hand as they passed, as if it were to deliver them to the executioner. The Acts say he saw also a bright cross of fire shining over the bodies of the slain. Whether he had been before inclined to the Christian religion, or owed his conversion wholly to a sudden extraordinary light, he became on the spot a perfect Christian: and being moved by a strong impulse of divine grace, felt in himself an earnest desire to make one in that blessed company. He therefore alighted from his horse, changed clothes with his servant, and whispered in the abbot's ear, begging to be admitted into the happy number of his holy troop, as he was united with them in faith and desire. The abbot assenting, he passed through his hands after the ninth, and was beheaded by the executioner, who did not know him. He was succeeded by the eleventh martyr. Last of all, the venerable Barsabias, the father of these martyrs, presented his neck to the executioner. The bodies of these twelve saints were left to be devoured by the wild beasts and birds of prey; but their heads were brought to the city, and set up in the temple of Nahitis, or Venus. For, though the Magians detested all idols, there were several sects of idolaters in many parts of Persia.\* The example of the Magian martyr moved his wife, children, and whole family zealously to profess the Christian faith.—These martyrs suffered on the 3d day of June, in the third year of the great persecution of Sapor, the thirty-third of his reign, of Christ 342. St. Barsabias is commemorated both in the Greek Menologies and in the Roman Martyrology on the 11th of December. See the Chaldaic Acts of these martyrs, published by Monsignor Stephen Assemani, *Acta Mart. Orient.* t. 1.

#### ST. ZENOBIUS, BISHOP OF FLORENCE, C.

THIS holy pastor is honoured at Florence as the patron, protector, and principal apostle of that city, of which he was a

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\* The system of a good and evil principle was not peculiar to the Magians; for it prevailed in many parts of Asia and Africa, especially in some sects among the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syrians, Indians, and Egyptians, but made its appearance in great variety of shapes and dresses. See Joan Christoph. Welfii *Manicheismus ante Manichæos*, Hamb. 1707; et Moshemi *Observationes ad Cudworthi Systema*, pp. 323, 423. But, as in all these countries, there were other numerous sects which worshipped idols, so there were also in Persia.