



SEPTEMBER XXX.

ST. JEROM, P.,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH.

[From his epistles and other works, and from other fathers and ancient historians. See Tillemont, t. xii.; Ceillier, t. x.; and his life compiled in French by Dom. Martianay, in 4to., in 1706, dedicated to the abbess of Lauzun; and that in Latin by Villarsi, in the Verona edition of his works. Consult also Orsi, lib. xviii. n. 51; t. viii. p. 113; lib. xx. n. 31; t. ix. p. 77; Dolei de rebus gestis St. Hieronymi, 4to. Anconæ, 1750; Stilling, t. viii. Sept. pp. 418, 699.]

A.D. 420.

ST. JEROM, who is allowed to have been, in many respects, the most learned of all the Latin fathers, was born, not at Strigonium, now called Gran, situated upon the Danube in Lower Hungary, but at Stridonium, now Sdrigni, a small town upon the confines of Pannonia, Dalmatia, and Italy, near Aquileia. He had a brother much younger than himself, whose name was Paulinian. His father, called Eusebius, was descended from a good family, and had a competent estate; but, being persuaded that a good education is the most precious inheritance that a parent can leave to his children, took great care to have his son instructed in piety, and in the first principles of literature at home, and afterwards sent him to Rome. St. Jerom had there, for tutor, the famous pagan grammarian Donatus (well known for his commentaries on Virgil and Terence), also Victorinus the rhetorician, who by a decree of the senate was honoured with a statue in Trajan's square. In this city he became master of the Latin and Greek tongues, read the best writers in both languages with great application, and made such progress in oratory, that he for some time pleaded at the bar: but being left without a guide, under the discipline of a heathen master, in a school where an exterior

regard to decency in morals was all that was aimed at, he forgot the sentiments of true piety, which had been instilled into him in his infancy, neglected sufficiently to restrain his passions, and was full only of worldly views. His misfortune confirms the truth of that important maxim, that though the advantages of emulation and mutual communication in studies be exceeding great with regard to learning, these are never to be purchased with danger to virtue; nor is a youth to be trusted in public schools without the utmost precaution: both that he be under the watchful eye and prudent direction of a person who is sincerely pious and experienced; and that he be linked in society with virtuous companions, whose gravity, inclinations, discourse, and whole deportment and spirit, may be to him a constant spur to all virtue, and a support and fence against the torrent of the world, or of the dangerous example of others. Jerom went out of this school free indeed from gross vices, but unhappily a stranger to a Christian spirit, and enslaved to vanity and the more refined passions, as he afterwards confessed and bitterly lamented.

Being arrived at man's estate, and very desirous of improving his studies, he resolved upon travelling, in order to further this design. St. Jerom in his first journies was conducted by the divine mercy into the paths of virtue and salvation. A vehement thirst after learning put him upon making a tour through Gaul, where the Romans had erected several famous schools, especially at Marseilles, Toulouse, Bourdeaux, Autun, Lyons, and Triers. This latter was esteemed an imperial city, being in that age frequently honoured with the presence of the emperors, when Rome, by the attachment of many powerful senators to idolatry, and their regret for the loss of their ancient liberty and privileges, was not so agreeable a residence to its princes. The Emperor Gratian, a learned man, and

a great lover of learning, who appointed out of his own revenue fixed salaries for the public masters of rhetoric, and of the Greek and Latin languages in all great cities,¹ distinguished the schools of Gaul with special favours, and above the rest those of Triers, to whose professors he granted greater salaries than to those of other cities, and whither he drew Ausonius from Bourdeaux. By prudent regulations he forbade the students of this city to frequent public diversions, or shows in the theatre, or to assist at great banquets or entertainments, and gave other strict orders for the regulation of their manners. Ausonius extols the eloquence and learning of the illustrious Harmonius and Ursulus, professors of eloquence at Triers.² It had been St. Jerom's greatest pleasure at Rome to collect a good library, and to read all the best authors: in this such was his passion, that it made him sometimes forget to eat or drink. Cicero and Plautus were his chief delight. He purchased a great many books, copied several, and procured many to be transcribed by his friends.³

He arrived at Triers, with his friend, Bonosus, not long before the year 370, and it was in this city that the sentiments of piety which he imbibed in his infancy were awaked, and his heart was entirely converted to God; so that, renouncing the vanity of his former pursuits, and the irregularities of his life, he took a resolution to devote himself wholly to the divine service, in a state of perpetual continence.⁴ From this time his ardour for virtue far surpassed that with which he had before applied himself to profane sciences, and he converted the course of his studies into a new channel.

Tyranius Rufinus, famous first for his friendship, and afterwards for his controversies, with St. Jerom, entered himself a monk at Aquileia, in 370, as is clear both

(1) Cod. Theodos. 13, t. iii. lib. xi. pp. 39, 40.

(2) Auson. Ep. 18, p. 644.

(3) St. Hier. Ep. 4.

(4) Ep. 1, p. 3. See Dom Rivet, Hist. Littér. de la Fr. t. i. part 2, p. 12.

from his own and St. Jerom's works.¹ St. Jerom shut himself up in this monastery at Aquileia for some time, that he might with greater leisure and freedom pursue his studies, in the course of which he was closely linked in friendship with Rufinus, and with great grief saw himself, by some unknown accident, torn from his company.² From what quarter this storm arose is uncertain; though it seems to have come from his own family. For he mentions, that paying his friends a visit, he found his sister had been drawn aside from the path of virtue. He brought her to a deep sense of her duty, and engaged her to make a vow of perpetual continency, in which affair he probably met with those difficulties which obliged him, for the sake of his own peace, to leave the country: his aunt, Castorina, about the same time, vowed her continency to God.

St. Jerom returned to Rome, resolving to betake himself wholly to his studies and retirement. In his letters to Pope Damasus, he testifies that he received at Rome the sacrament of regeneration: Tillemont thinks this happened after his return from Aquileia, because the saint tells us that his merciful conversion to God happened when he resided near the Rhine.³ But Martianay and Fontanini more probably maintain that he was baptized before he left Rome to go into Gaul, though it was only at Triers that he engaged himself by vow to serve God in a state of perpetual continency. Experience soon convinced him that neither his own country nor Rome were fit places for a life of perfect solitude, at which he aimed, wherefore he resolved to withdraw into some distant country. Bonosus, his countryman and relation, who had been the companion of all his studies and travels from his infancy, did not enter into his views on this occasion, but retired into a desert

island on the coast of Dalmatia, and there led a monastic life. Evagrius, the celebrated priest of Antioch, who was come into the West upon the affairs of that church, offered himself to our saint to be his guide into the East; and Innocent, Heliodorus, and Hylas (who had been a servant of Melania), would needs bear him company.

Being arrived at Antioch, St. Jerom made some stay in that city to attend the lectures of Apollinaris, who had not yet openly broached his heresy, and then read comments upon the scriptures with great reputation. St. Jerom had carried nothing with him but his library, and a sum of money to bear the charges of his journey. But Evagrius, who was rich, supplied him with all necessaries, and maintained several amanuenses to write for him and assist him in his studies. The saint having spent some time at Antioch, went into a hideous desert, lying between Syria and Arabia, in the country of the Saracens, where the holy abbot, Theodosius, received him with great joy. This wilderness took its name from Chalcis, a town in Syria, and was situated in the diocess of Antioch. Innocent and Hylas soon died in this desert, and Heliodorus left it to return into the West; but Jerom spent there four years in studies, and the fervent exercises of piety. In this lonely habitation he had many fits of sickness, but suffered a much more severe affliction from violent temptations of impurity, which he describes as follows: 'In the remotest part of a wild and sharp desert, which being burnt up with the heats of the scorching sun, strikes with horror and terror even the monks that inhabit it, I seemed to myself to be in the midst of the delights and assemblies of Rome. I loved solitude, that in the bitterness of my soul I might more freely bewail my miseries, and call upon my Saviour. My hideous emaciated limbs were covered with sackcloth; my skin was parched dry and black, and my flesh

(1) Rufin. Apol. 1; St. Hieron. Apol. 1 et 2 Chron. ad au. 376, &c.

(2) St. Hier. Ep. 1, alias 41, &c.

(3) Ibid.

(1) Ep. 22, ad Eustochium, de Virgin, c. 3.

was almost wasted away. The days I passed in tears and groans, and when sleep overpowered me against my will, I cast my wearied bones, which hardly hung together, upon the bare ground, not so properly to give them rest as to torture myself. I say nothing of my eating and drinking: for the monks in that desert, when they are sick, know no other drink but cold water, and look upon it as sensuality ever to eat any thing dressed by fire. In this exile and prison, to which, for the fear of hell, I had voluntarily condemned myself, having no other company but scorpions and wild beasts, I many times found my imagination filled with lively representations of dances in the company of Roman ladies, as if I had been in the midst of them. My face was pale with fasting; yet my will felt violent assaults of irregular desires: in my cold body and in my parched-up flesh, which seemed dead before its death, concupiscence was able to live; and though I vigorously repressed all its sallies, it strove always to rise again, and to cast forth more violent and dangerous flames. Finding myself abandoned, as it were, to the power of this enemy, I threw myself in spirit at the feet of Jesus, watering them with my tears, and I tamed my flesh by fasting whole weeks. I am not ashamed to disclose my temptations; but I grieve that I am not now what I then was. I often joined whole nights to the days, crying, sighing, and beating my breast till the desired calm returned. I feared the very cell in which I lived, because it was witness to the foul suggestions of my enemy; and being angry, and armed with severity against myself, I went alone into the most secret parts of the wilderness, and if I discovered any where a deep valley or a craggy rock, that was the place of my prayer, there I threw this miserable sack of my body. The same Lord is my witness, that after so many sobs and tears—after having in much sorrow looked long up to heaven, I felt most delightful comforts

and interior sweetness; and these so great, that, transported and absorbed, I seemed to myself to be amidst the choirs of angels, and glad and joyful I sung to God, "After thee, O Lord, we will run in the fragraney of thy celestial ointments."

In this manner does God, who often suffers the fidelity of his servants to be severely tried, strengthen them by his triumphant grace, and abundantly recompense their constancy. St. Jeroni, among the arms with which he fortified himself against this dangerous enemy, added to his corporal austerities a new study, which he hoped would fix his rambling imagination, and, by curbing his will, give him the victory over himself. This was, after having dealt only in polite and agreeable studies, to learn of a converted Jew the Hebrew alphabet, and form his mouth to the uncouth aspirations and difficult pronunciation of that language. "When my soul was on fire with bad thoughts," says he,¹ writing to the monk Rusticus in 411, "that I might subdue my flesh, I became a scholar to a monk who had been a Jew, to learn of him the Hebrew alphabet; and after I had most diligently studied the judicious rules of Quintilian, the copious flowing eloquence of Cicero, the grave style of Fronto, and the smoothness of Pliny, I inured myself to hissing and broken-winded words. What labour it cost me, what difficulties I went through, how often I despaired and left off, and how I began again to learn, both I myself who felt the burden, can witness, and they also who lived with me. And I thank our Lord, that I now gather sweet fruit from the bitter seed of those studies." However, he still continued to read the classics with an eagerness and pleasure which degenerated into a passion, and gave him just remorse, it being an impediment to the perfect disengagement of his affections, and the entire reign of God in his heart. Of this disorder he was cured by the merciful hand of God. The saint, in his long epistle to Eusto-

(1) Ep. 15, ad. Rustic. p. 769.

chium, exhorting that virgin, who had embraced a religious state, to read only the holy scriptures and other books of piety and devotion, relates, that being seized with a grievous sickness in the desert, in the heat of a burning fever, he fell into a trance or dream, in which he seemed to himself arraigned before the dreadful tribunal of Christ. Being asked his profession, he answered, that he was a Christian. "Thou liest," said the judge, "thou art a Ciceronian: for the works of that author possess thy heart." The judge thereupon condemned him to be severely scourged by angels; the remembrance of which chastisement left a strong impression upon his imagination after his recovery, and gave him a deep sense of his fault. He promised the judge never more to read those profane authors. "And from that time," says he, "I gave myself to the reading of divine things with greater diligence and attention than I had ever read other authors." He indeed declares this to have been a dream:³ nevertheless he looked upon it as a divine admonition, by which he was put in mind of a fault incompatible with the perfection to which every Christian, especially a monk, ought to aspire. From that time he corrected this immoderate passion for reading the classics.

A great schism at that time divided the church of Antioch, some acknowledging Meletius, and others Paulinus, patriarch. The breach was considerably widened when the Apollinarist heretics chose Vitalis, a man of their sect, bishop of that great city. The monks in the desert of Chalcis warmly took part in this unhappy division, and were for compelling St. Jerom to declare to which of these candidates he adhered. Another controversy among them was, whether one or three hypostases were to be acknowledged in Christ. The Greek word *hypostasis* was then ambiguous, being by some used for

nature, by others for *person* or *subsistence*; though it is now taken only for the latter. The Arians on one side, and the Sabellians on the other, sought to ensnare the faithful under the ambiguity of this word. Our saint therefore stood upon his guard against their captious artifices, and answered with caution that if Nature was understood by this word, there was but one in God; but if Person, that there were three. Teased, however, by these importunities, and afflicted with a bad state of health, he left his wilderness, after having passed in it four years, and went to Antioch to his friend Evagrius. A little before he left his desert, he wrote two letters to consult St. Damasus, who had been raised to the papal throne at Rome in 336, what course he ought to steer. In the first he says,¹ "I am joined in communion with your holiness, that is, with the chair of Peter; upon that rock I know the church is built. Whoever eats the lamb out of that house is a profane person. Whoever is not in the ark shall perish in the flood. I do not know Vitalis; I do not communicate with Meletius; Paulinus is a stranger to me. Whoever gathers not with you, scatters; that is, he who is not Christ's, belongs to Antichrist." This letter was wrote towards the end of the year 376, or in the beginning of 377. The saint, not receiving a speedy answer sent soon after another letter to Damasus on the same subject, in which he conjures his holiness to answer his difficulties, and not despise a soul for which Jesus Christ died. "On one side," said he, "the Arian fury rages, supported by the secular power: on the other side, the church (at Antioch) being divided into three parts, each would needs draw me to itself. All the time I cease not to cry out, 'Whoever is united to the chair of Peter he is mine'"² The answer of Damasus is not extant; but it is certain that he and all the West acknowledged Paulinus patriarch

(1) Ep. 18, alias 22, ad Eustoch. de Virginit.
 (2) St. Hieron. Apol. lib. i.

(1) Ep. 14, alias 57, ad Damas, p. 19, t. iv.
 (2) Ep. 16, alias 58, ad Damas, p. 22.

of Antioch, and St. Jerom received from his hands at Antioch the holy order of priesthood before the end of the year 377; to which promotion he only consented on this condition, that he should not be obliged to serve that or any other church in the functions of his ministry. Soon after his ordination he went into Palestine, and visited the principal holy places situated in different parts of that country, but made Bethlehem his most usual residence. He had recourse to the ablest Jewish doctors to inform himself of all particulars relating to all the remarkable places mentioned in the sacred history,¹ and he neglected no means to perfect himself in the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue. For this he addressed himself to the most skilful among the Jews: one of his masters, by whose instructions he exceedingly improved himself, spoke Hebrew with such gracefulness, true accent, and propriety of expression, that he passed among the Jewish doctors for a true Chaldean.²

About the year 380, our saint went to Constantinople, there to study the holy scriptures under St. Gregory Nazianzen, who was then bishop of that city. In several parts of his works he mentions this with singular satisfaction, and gratitude for the honour and happiness of having had so great a master in expounding the divine oracles, as that most eloquent and learned doctor. Upon St. Gregory's leaving Constantinople, in 381, he returned into Palestine. Not long after, he was called to Rome, as he testifies.³ He went thither in the same year, 381, with St. Paulinus of Antioch and St. Epiphanius, who undertook that journey to attend a council which Damasus held about the schism of Antioch. The two bishops stayed the winter in Rome, and then returned into the East; but Pope Damasus detained St. Jerom with him, and em-

ployed him as his secretary in writing his letters, in answering the consultations of bishops, and in other important affairs of the church.¹

Our holy doctor soon gained at Rome a universal love and esteem, on account of his religious life, his humility, eloquence, and learning. Many among the chief nobility, clergy, and monks sought to be instructed by him in the holy scriptures, and in the rules of Christian perfection. He was charged likewise with the conduct of many devout ladies, as St. Marcella, her sister Asella, and their mother Albina; Melania the elder (who is not less famous by the praises of St. Jerom² than by those of Rufinus), Marcellina, Felicitas, Lea, Fabiola, Læta, Paula, and her daughters, with many others. The holy widow, St. Marcella, having lost her husband in the seventh month after her marriage, refused to marry Cerealis, who had been consul, retired to a country-house near Rome, and made choice of a monastic life forty years before this, in 341, under Pope Julius I., when St. Athanasius came to Rome, from whom she received an account of the life of St. Antony, who was then living. St. Marcella died in 412, and St. Jerom wrote her funeral elegy to her spiritual daughter, Principia.³ Lea was at the head of a monastery of virgins, whom she instructed more by example than by words. She used to spend whole nights in prayer; her clothes and food were very mean, but free from all affectation or ostentation. She was so humble that she appeared to be the servant of all her sisters, though she had formerly been mistress of a great number of slaves. The church honours her memory on the 22nd of March. St. Jerom wrote her funeral elegy after her death, in 384.⁴

Asella was consecrated to God at the age of ten years, and at twelve retired

(1) St. Hier. Præf. in. Paralip.

(2) T. iii. ad Damas, p. 515.

(3) Ep. 16, et 27, ed. Vet.

(1) St. Hier. in Apol. ad Pammac, et Ep. 11.

(2) S. Hier. Ep. 1, alias 41, Ep. 2, alias 5, Ep. 22, alias 25.

(3) Ib. p. 778. See January 31.

(4) T. ii. par. 2, p. 51.

into a cell, where she lay on the ground, and lived upon bread and water, fasting all the year, and being often two or three days without eating, especially in Lent; yet her austerities did not impair her health. She used to work with her hands, and never went abroad, unless it was to visit the churches of the martyrs, and that she did without being seen. Nothing was more cheerful and pleasing than her severity, nor more grave than her sweetness. Her very speech proclaimed her love of recollection and silence, and her silence spake aloud to the heart. She never spoke to any man unless upon her spiritual necessities; even her sister Marcella could hardly ever see her. Her conduct was simple and regular, and in the midst of Rome she led a life of solitude. She was fifty years old in 384.¹ Fabiola was of the illustrious Fabian family, and being obliged to be separated from her husband on account of his disorderly conduct, made use of the liberty allowed her by the civil laws, and took a second husband. After his death, finding this had been against the laws of the gospel, she did public penance in the most austere and exemplary manner. After this she sold all her estate, and erected a hospital for the sick in Rome, where she served them with her own hands. She gave immense alms to several monasteries, which were built upon the coasts of Tuscany, and to the poor in Italy and Palestine.² She died at Rome about the year 400. The most illustrious of the Roman ladies whom St. Jerom instructed, was St. Paula,³ who engaged him to accept of a lodging in her house during his abode in Rome, that she and her family might more easily have recourse to him for their spiritual direction. He tells us that Marcella, Paula, Blesilla, and Eustochium spoke, wrote, and recited the Psalter

in the Hebrew as perfectly as in the Greek and Latin tongues. The instruction of these and many other devout persons did not so engross our saint's time and attention, but he was always ready to acquit himself of all that Pope Damasus recommended to his care, and, by other labours, to render important services to the catholic church. After having stayed about three years at Rome, St. Jerom resolved to return into the East, there to seek a quiet retreat. He embarked at Porto in the month of August, in 385, with his young brother, Paulinian, a priest called Vincent, and some others, having been attended from Rome to the ship by many pious persons of distinction. Landing at Cyprus, he was received with great joy by St. Epiphanius. At Antioch he visited the Bishop Paulinus, who, when he departed, attended him a considerable part of the way to Palestine. He arrived at Jerusalem in the middle of winter, near the close of the year 385, and in the following spring went into Egypt, to improve himself in sacred learning, and in the most perfect practices of the monastic institutes. At Alexandria, he, for a month, received the lessons of the famous Didymus, and profited very much by his conversation in 386. He visited the chief monasteries of Egypt; after which he returned into Palestine, and retired to Bethlehem. St. Paula, who had followed him thither, built for him a monastery, and put under his direction also the monastery of nuns, which she founded and governed. St. Jerom was soon obliged to enlarge his own monastery, and for that purpose sent his brother Paulinian into Dalmatia, to sell an estate which he still had there. For, as Sanchez and Suarez remark from this example, anciently private religious men could retain the dominion, or a property in estates, though by their vows they renounced the administration, unless they exercised it by the commission of the abbot. St. Jerom also erected a hospital, in which he entertained pilgrims.

(1) St. Hier. Ep. 15, ad Marcell. ib. p. 52.

(2) St. Jerom in two letters to Fabiola, pp. 574, 586, and in her funeral elegy, which he wrote to Oceanus, p. 657.

(3) See her life, Jan. 26.

It was thought that he could not be further instructed in the knowledge of the Hebrew language; but this was not his own judgment of the matter; and he applied again to a famous Jewish master, called Bar-Ananias, who, for a sum of money, came to teach him in the night-time, lest the Jews should know it.¹ Church history, which is called one of the eyes of theology, became a favourite study of our holy doctor. All the heresies which were broached in the church in his time, found him a warm and indefatigable adversary.

Whilst he was an inhabitant of the desert of Chalcis, he drew his pen against the Luciferian schismatics. After the unhappy council of Rimini, in which many orthodox bishops had been betrayed, contrary to their meaning, into a subscription favourable to the Arians, St. Athanasius, in his council at Alexandria, in 362, and other Catholic prelates, came to a resolution to admit those prelates to communion, upon their repentance. This indulgence displeased Lucifer, Bishop of Cagliari, a person famous for his zeal and writings against the Arians, in the reign of Constantius. St. Jerom composed a dialogue against the Luciferians, in which he plainly demonstrates, by the acts of the council of Rimini, that in it the bishops were imposed upon. In the same work he confutes the private heresy of Hilary, a Luciferian deacon at Rome, that the Arians, and all other heretics and schismatics, were to be rebaptized; on which account St. Jerom calls him the Deucalion of the world.²

Our holy doctor, whilst he resided at Rome, in the time of Pope Damasus, in 384, composed his book against Helvidius, "On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary."³ That heretic was an Arian priest, a disciple of the impious Auxentius, of Milan, and had wrote a

book, in which he broached this error, that Mary did not remain always a virgin, but had other children by St. Joseph, after the birth of Christ. This heresy was also adopted by Jovinian, who having spent his youth at Milan in fasting, manual labour, and other austerities of a monastic state, left his monastery, went to Rome, and there began to spread his errors, which may be chiefly reduced to these four:—That they who have been regenerated by baptism with perfect faith, cannot be again vanquished by the devil. That all who shall have preserved the grace of baptism, will have an equal reward in heaven. That virgins have no greater merit before God than married women, if they are equal in other virtues; and, that the Mother of God was not always a virgin. Lastly, That abstinence from certain meats is unprofitable.¹ Jovinian lived at Rome in a manner suitable to his sensual principles. Though he still called himself a monk, and observed celibacy, he threw off his black habit, wore fine white stuffs, linen, and silks, curled his hair, frequented the baths and houses of entertainment, and was fond of sumptuous feasts and delicate wines. St. Pammachius, and certain other noble laymen, were scandalized at this new doctrine, and having met with a writing of Jovinian, in which these errors were contained, carried it to Pope Siricius, who, assembling his clergy in 390, condemned the same, cut off Jovinian, and eight others (who are named together as authors of this new heresy) from the communion of the church. Upon this, Jovinian, and the rest that were condemned, withdrew to Milan, and Siricius sent thither the sentence of condemnation he had published against them, with a brief confutation of their errors, so that they were rejected there by everybody with horror, and driven out of the city. St. Ambrose also held a council of seven bishops, who happened

(1) St. Hier. Ep. 85.

(2) St. Hier. Op. t. iv, par. 2, p. 289.

(3) Ib. p. 180.

(1) St. Ambr. Ep. 42; St. Aug. de hæret. c. 82; St. Hieron. lib. in Jovianum.

then to be at Milan, in which these errors were again condemned.¹ Two years after this, St. Jerom wrote two books against Jovinian.² In the first, he shows the merit and excellency of holy virginity embruced for the sake of virtue; which he demonstrates from St. Paul, and other parts of the New Testament, from the tradition and sense of the church, from the celibacy of its ministers, and from the advantages of this state for piety, especially for the exercises of prayer, though he grants marriage to be holy in the general state of the world. Jovinian himself confessed the obligation of bishops to live continent, and that a violation of a vow of virginity is a spiritual incest.³ Our saint, in his second book, confutes the other errors of that heresiarch. Certain expressions in this work seemed to some persons in Rome, harsh and derogatory from the honour due to matrimony; and St. Pammachius informed St. Jerom of the offence which some took at them. The holy doctor wrote his Apology to Pammachius, sometimes called his third book against Jovinian,⁴ in which he shows, from his own book, which had raised this clamour, that he commended marriage as honourable and holy, and protests that he condemns not even second or third marriages. He repeated the same thing in a letter which he wrote to Domnio, about the same time, and upon the same subject.⁵

In the year 404, Riparius, a priest in Spain, wrote to St. Jerom, to acquaint him that Vigilantius, a native of Convenæ, now called Comminges, in Gaul, but a priest of Barcelona, depreciated the merit of holy virginity, and condemned the veneration of relics, calling those who paid it idolaters and Cinerarians, or worshippers of ashes. St. Jerom, in his answer, exclaimed loudly against those novelties, and said: "We

do not adore the relics of the martyrs; but we honour them, that we may adore him whose martyrs they are. We honour the servants, that the respect which is paid to them may be reflected back on the Lord." He prayed Riparius to send him Vigilantius's book, which he no sooner received, than he set himself to confute it in a very sharp style.¹ He shows, first, the excellency of virginity, and the celibacy of the clergy, from the discipline observed in the three patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. He vindicates the honour paid to martyrs from idolatry, because no Christian ever adored them as gods. Vigilantius complained, that their relics were covered with precious silks. St. Jerom asked him, if Constantius was guilty of sacrilege, when he translated to Constantinople, in rich shrines, the relics of SS. Andrew, Luke, and Timothy, in the presence of which the evil spirits roar? or Arcadius, when he caused the bones of Samuel to be carried out of Palestine to Thrace, where they were deposited, with the greatest honour and solemnity, in a church built in honour of that prophet near the Hebdomon? In order to show that the saints pray for us, St. Jerom saith, "If the apostles and martyrs, being still living upon earth, can pray for other men, how much more may they do it after their victories? Have they less power now they are with Jesus Christ?" He insists much on the miracles wrought at their tombs. Vigilantius said they were for the sake of the infidels. The holy doctor answers, they would still be no less a proof of the power of the martyrs, and, testifying his respect for these relics and holy places, he says of himself, "When I have been molested with anger, evil thoughts, or nocturnal illusions, I have not dared to enter the churches of the martyrs." He mentions that the bishops of Rome offered up sacrifices to God over the venerable bones of the apostles Peter and Paul, and made altars of their tombs. He accuseth

(1) St. Ambr. Ep. 42, ad Siricium, p. 968.

(2) T. iv. par. 2, p. 144.

(3) St. Ambr. t. iv. par. 1, p. 175

(4) Ib. p. 244.

(5) Ep. 37, ad Ripar. p. 279.

(1) Lib. adv. Vigilant, t. iv. par 2, p. 286.

Eunomius of being the author of this heresy, and says, that if his new doctrine were true, all the bishops in the world would be in an error. He defends the institution of vigils and the monastic state; and says, that a monk seeks his own security by flying occasions and dangers, because he mistrusteth his own weakness, and is sensible that there is no safety if a man sleeps near a serpent. St. Jerom often speaks of the saints in heaven praying for us. Thus he entreated Heliodorus to pray for him when he should be in glory,¹ and told St. Paula, upon the death of her daughter Blesilla,² "She now prayeth the Lord for you, and obtaineth for me the pardon of my sins."

Our saint was also engaged in a long war against Origenism. Few ever made more use of Origen's works, and no one seemed a greater admirer of his erudition than St. Jerom declared himself for a considerable time;³ but finding in the East that several monks and others had been seduced into grievous errors by the authority of his name, and some of his writings, our saint joined St. Epiphanius in warmly opposing the spreading evil. This produced a violent quarrel between him and his old friend Rufinus, after an intimacy of twenty-five years; the latter every where extolling the authority of Origen, and having translated into Latin the most erroneous of all his works, though it afterwards appeared by his conduct that he had no design to favour the pestilential heresies of the Origenists, who denied the eternity of the torments of hell, held the pre-existence of souls, the plurality of worlds succeeding one another to eternity, and other errors. St. Jerom could suffer no heresy to pass without his censure. Being informed by one Ctesiphon, that the errors of Pelagius made great progress in the East, and that many were seduced

by them, he wrote him a short confutation thereof in 414. He again handled the same questions in his Dialogue against the Pelagians, which he published in 416. In these dialogues he writes: "I will answer them that I never spared heretics, and have done my utmost endeavours that the enemies of the church should be also my enemies." He was deeply concerned to hear of the plundering of Rome by Alarie, in 410, and of the cruel famine which succeeded that calamity. When Demetrias, daughter of the consul Olibrius, took the religious veil at Carthage, her mother, Juliana, and her grandmother, Proba, wrote to St. Jerom, praying him to give her some instructions for her conduct. In order to comply with their request, he wrote her a long letter, in which he directed her how she was to serve God, recommending to her pious reading, the exercise of penance, constant but moderate fasting, obedience, humility, modesty, almsdeeds, prayers at all hours of the day, and working daily with her hands. He would have her rather choose to dwell in a nunnery, with other virgins, than to live alone, as at that time some did.

Nothing has rendered the name of St. Jerom so famous as his critical labours on the holy scriptures. For this the church acknowledges him to have been raised by God through a special providence, and particularly assisted from above, and she styles him the greatest of all her doctors in expounding the divine oracles. Pope Clement VIII. scruples not to call him a man, in translating the holy scriptures, divinely assisted and inspired. He was furnished with the greatest helps for such an undertaking; living many years upon the spot, whilst the remains of ancient places, names, customs which were still recent, and other circumstances, set before his eyes a clearer representation of many things recorded in holy writ than it is possible to have at a great distance of place and time. The Greek and Chaldaic were then living languages, and the Hebrew,

(1) Ep. 5, p. 7.

(2) Ep. 24, p. 59.

(3) See his letter to Paula, written before the year 392, p. 67; also lib. ii. in Michasam Præf. lib. de Nominib. Hebraic, &c.; likewise Rufinus Apolog. lib. ii.

though it had ceased to be such from the time of the captivity, was not less perfectly understood and spoke among the doctors of the law in its full extent, and with the true pronunciation. It was carefully cultivated in the Jewish academy, or great school of Tiberias, out of which St. Jerom had a master. It is long since become very imperfect, reduced to a small number of radical words, and only to be learned from the Hebrew Bible, the only ancient book in the world extant in that language. Most of the Rabbinical writers are more likely to mislead us in the study of the Hebrew sacred text than to direct us in it; so that we have now no means to come at many succours which St. Jerom had for this task. Among others, the Hexapla of Origen, which he possessed pure and entire, were not the least; and, by comparing his version with the present remains of those of Aquila, Theodotio, and Symmachus, we find he had often recourse to them, especially to that of Symmachus.¹ Above other conditions, it is necessary that an interpreter of the holy scriptures be a man of prayer and sincere piety. This alone can obtain light and succour from heaven, give to the mind a turn and temper which are necessary for being admitted into the sanctuary of the divine oracles, and present the key. Our holy doctor was prepared, by a great purity of heart, and a life spent in penance and holy contemplation, before he was called by God to this important undertaking.

A Latin translation of the Bible was made from the Greek in the time of the apostles, and probably approved or recommended by some of them, especially, according to Rufinus,² by St. Peter, who, as he says, sat twenty-five years at Rome. In the fourth century great variations had crept into the copies, as St. Jerom mentions, so that almost every one differed.³ For many that understood Greek under-

took to translate anew some part, or to make some alterations from the original.¹ However, as Blanchini observes, these alterations seem to have been all grafted upon, or inserted in, the first translation; for they seem all to have gone under the name of the Latin Vulgate, or Common Translation. Amongst them one obtained the name of the Italic, perhaps because it was chiefly used in Italy and Rome; and this was far preferable to all the other Latin editions, as St. Austin testifies. To remedy the inconvenience of this variety of editions, and to correct the faults of bold or careless copiers, Pope Damasus commissioned St. Jerom to revise and correct the Latin version of the gospels by the original Greek, which this holy doctor executed to the great satisfaction of the whole church.² He afterwards did the same with the rest of the New Testament.³ This work of St. Jerom's differs very much in the words from the ancient Italic. It insensibly took place in all the Western churches, and is the Latin Vulgate of the New Testament, which is now every where in use. The edition of the Greek Septuagint which was inserted in Origen's Hexapla, being the most exact extant, St. Jerom corrected by it the ancient Italic of many books of the Old Testament, and twice the Psalter: first, by order of Pope Damasus, at Rome, about the year 382; and a second time at Bethlehem, about the year 389.

His new translation of the books of the Old Testament, writ in Hebrew, made from that original text, was a more noble and a more difficult undertaking. Many motives concurred to engage him in this work; as, the earnest entreaties of many devout and illustrious friends, the preference of the original to any version how venerable soever, and the necessity of answering the Jews, who in all disputations would allow no other. He did not

(1) See Calmet, *Diss. sur la Vulgate*.

(2) *Invect. 2.*

(3) Hieron. *Præf. in Josue*.

(1) *St. Aug. de Christ. lib. ii. c. 11.*

(2) *St. Hier. Præf. in Evang. ad Damas. t. i. p. 4261; St. Aug. Ep. 71, ad Hieron.*

(3) *St. Hier. in catal. c. 135.*

translate the books in order, but began by the book of Kings, and took the rest in hand at different times. This translation of St. Jerom's was received in many churches in the time of St. Gregory the Great, who gave it the preference.¹ And in a short time after, St. Isidore of Seville wrote that all churches made use of it.² They retained the ancient Italic version of the Psalter, which they were accustomed to sing in the divine office; but admitted by degrees, in some places the first, in others the second correction of St. Jerom upon the Seventy; and this is printed in the Vulgate Bible, not his translation. The old Italic, without his correction, is still sung in the Church of the Vatican, and in St. Mark's, at Venice. The books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, the two books of the Machabees; the prophecy of Baruch, the epistle of Jeremy, the additions at the end of Esther, and thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Daniel, and the Canticle of the Three Children, are in the ancient Vulgate, because they were not translated by St. Jerom, not being extant in Hebrew or Chaldaic. The rest of the Old Testament in the present Vulgate is taken from the translation of St. Jerom, except certain passages retained from the old Vulgate or Italic.

This saint ascertained the geographical description of ancient Palestine, by translating, correcting, and enlarging Eusebius's book on "The Holy Places," and by his letters to Dardanus and Fabiola. In several little treatises and epistles he has cleared a great number of critical difficulties relating to the Hebrew text of the Holy Bible. In his commentaries "On the Prophets," he inquires after the sense of the Hebrew text or truth, as he calls it, to which he scrupulously adheres, though he compares it with all the ancient Greek translations. He adds short allegorical explications, and professes that he

sometimes inserts certain opinions and interpretations of Origen and others, without adopting or approving them. His commentary on St. Matthew he calls only an essay which he wrote in the compass of a few days, to satisfy the importunity of a friend, with an intention to enlarge and improve it when he should have leisure for such an undertaking, which he never found.

St. Jerom, toward the end of his life, was obliged to interrupt his studies by an incursion of barbarians, who penetrated through Egypt into Palestine,¹ and, some time after, by the violences and persecutions of the Pelagians, who, after the council of Diospolis, in 416, relying on the protection of John of Jerusalem, sent the year following a troop of seditious banditti to Bethlehem, to assault the holy monks and nuns who lived there under the direction of St. Jerom.² Some were beaten, and a deacon was killed by them. The heretics set fire to all the monasteries, and reduced them to ashes. St. Jerom with great difficulty escaped their fury by a timely flight, retiring to a strong castle. After this storm, St. Jerom continued his exercises and labours, hated by all enemies of the church, but beloved and revered by all good men, as St. Sulpicius Severus and St. Austin testify.³ Having triumphed over all vices, subdued the infernal monsters of heresies, and made his life a martyrdom of penance and labours, at length by a fever, in a good old age, he was released from the prison of his body, in the year 420, on the 30th of September. His festival is mentioned in the Sacramentary of St. Gregory, and in the Martyrologies of Bede, Usuard, &c. He was buried in a vault at the ruins of his monastery at Bethlehem; but his remains lie at present in the Church of St. Mary Major at Rome.

It was equally in a spirit of penance, and of zeal to advance the divine honour

(1) St. Hier. Ep. 78, ad Paulin, p. 643.

(2) St. Aug. de Gestis Pelag. c. 36, t. x.

(3) Sulp. Sev. Dial. c. 4; St. Ang. Ep. 82, n. 80, p. 201.

(1) St. Greg. M. lib. i. hom. 10, n. 6, in Ezech. lib. xx. Mor. in cap. 30, Job cap. 32, n. 62.

(2) St. Isidore. lib. i. de Offic. Eccl.

that this holy doctor applied himself with such unwearied diligence to those sacred studies, by which he rendered most eminent services to the church. The commentaries of the ancient fathers on the divine oracles are not all equally useful. Allegorical interpretations, unless pointed out by some inspired writer, serve chiefly to convey that moral instruction which they contain, and to introduce which they have been sometimes employed by great men in familiar discourses to the people. Of all commentaries those are most useful which expound the mysteries of faith, or dwell on and enforce Christian virtues by motives founded in the literal genuine sense of the sacred writings, in which inspired words the perfect spirit, and, as it were, the marrow of all virtues is contained. It is only by assiduous humble meditation on the sacred text that its inexhausted riches in this respect, concealed in every tittle, can be understood. The admirable comments of St. Chrysostom will be an excellent guide and key; by making some parts of them familiar to us we shall inure ourselves to this method in our application to these sacred studies. We must bring with us that spirit of prayer, and that humble docility by which so many holy doctors have been rendered faithful interpreters of the word of God. The tradition of the church must be our direction. Without an humble submission

to this light we are sure to be led astray; and the most learned men who do not stick close to this rule (as experience and the most sacred authority conspire to teach us) tread in the steps of all those whose study of the scriptures has hurt the church instead of serving her, as Dr. Hare, the learned Bishop of Chichester observes. "For," says he, "the orthodox faith does not depend upon the scriptures considered in themselves, but as explained by catholic tradition." As the solid interpretation of the sacred books is founded in the genuine and literal sense, to give this its fullest extent and force in every particle, the aid of sober criticism is to be called in; in which, among the Latin fathers, no one equals St. Jerom. But then his moderation must be imitated. What can be more absurd than that, in explaining the oracles of God, their end should be forgot, and kept out of sight; that interpreters should stop at the shell, and spend all their time in grammatical and critical niceties, and make the divine truth an object of idle amusement and curiosity, or a gratification of foolish sinful vanity, in displaying an empty show of philosophical learning and insignificant criticism. This is the case of many huge volumes of modern commentators, in which Christ and virtue are scarce named in the pretended expositions of those divine oracles which point out nothing but them.