

The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and other Principal Saints

Compiled from Original Monuments and other Authentic Records
Illustrated with the Remarks of Judicious Modern Critics and Historians

by

The Reverend Alban Butler

Book One

Vol. I - January and Introductory Material
with a short description of Alban Butler's life and works



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D. & J. Sadlier's New York reprinting
of the Dublin Edition of 1833

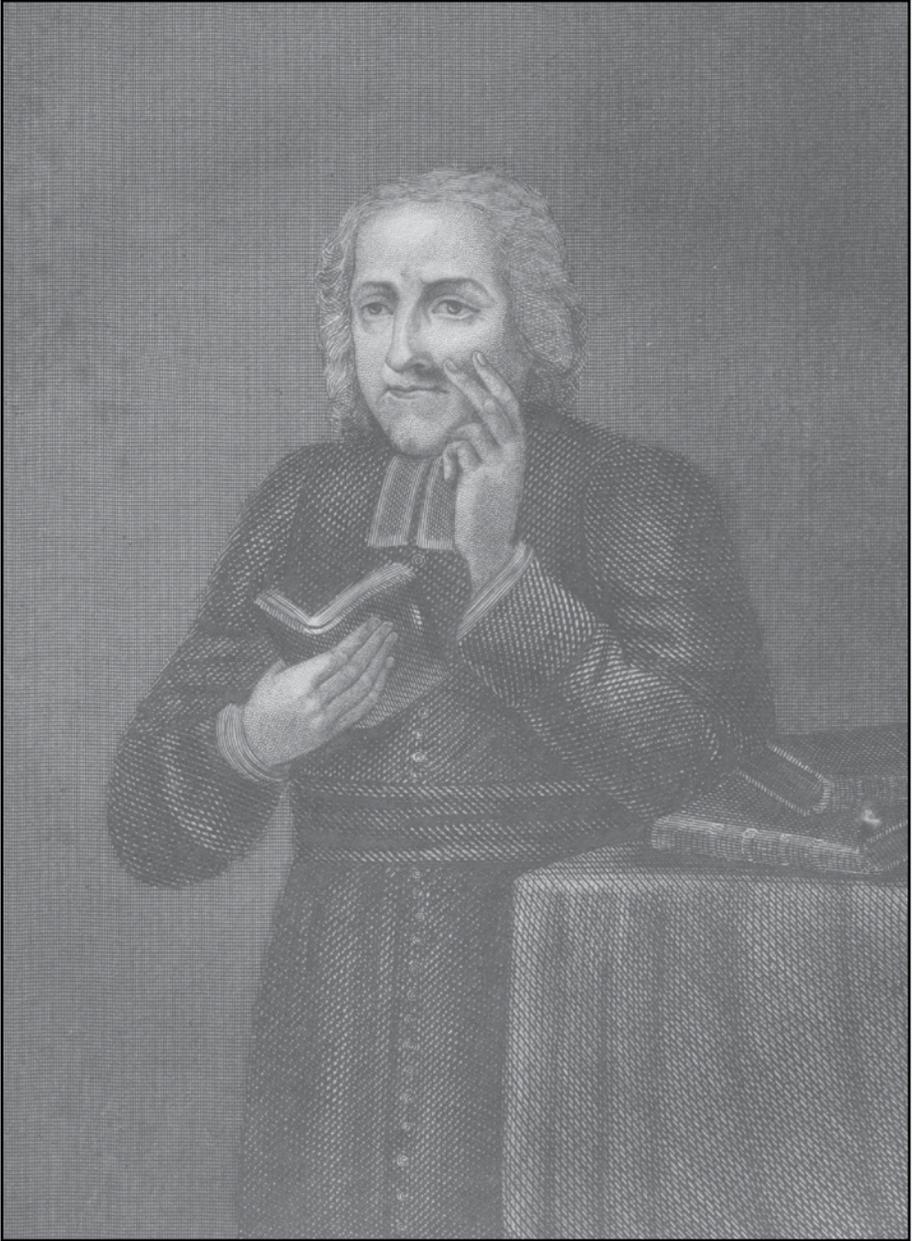
Vol. I - January with Introductory material and a short description of Alban Butler's life and works

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The Rev. Alban Butler

Approbation

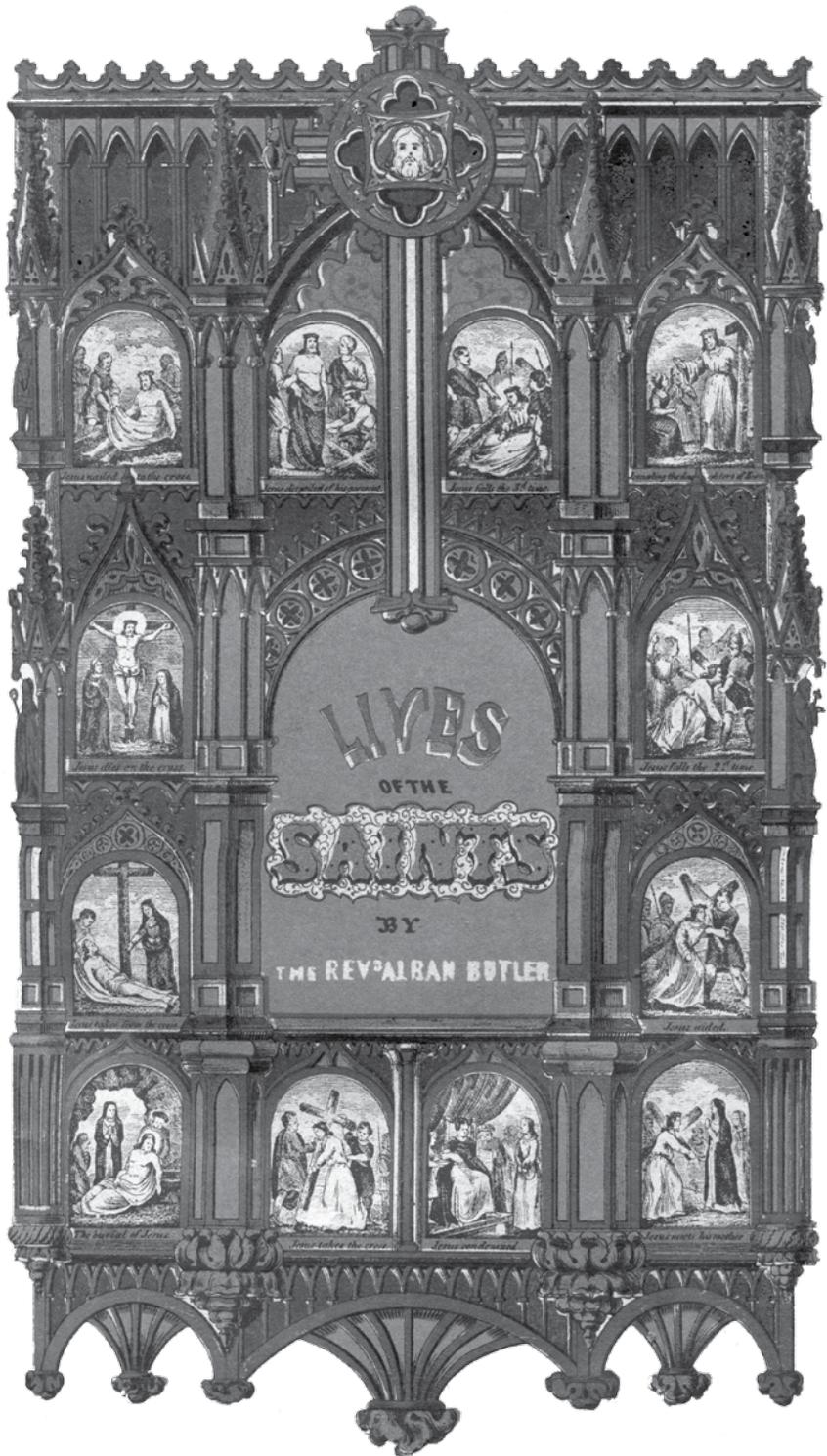
We the undersigned Archbishops and Bishops, having seen a Stereotype Edition of the *Lives of the Saints*, by the Rev. Alban Butler, now published by Richard Coyne, of Capel Street, Dublin, and being satisfied of its conformity with the twelve volume edition of the same work, do most earnestly recommend the same to the clergy and laity of our respective dioceses.

We assure them of the exceeding utility of this most pious and learned compilation, and are glad to express our ardent desire, that a copy of it were placed in the hands of every family of the numerous people committed to our care. It will, if perused with humility and devotion, teach those who read it to aspire after that happy life which God does not fail to “give to those who never change their faith from him.”

Given at Dublin, January 29th, 1833

✕ D. Murray, D.D. etc.
✕ Robert Laffan, D.D. etc.
✕ John Murphy, D.D.
✕ Thomas Coen, D.D.
✕ Cornelius Egan, D. D.
✕ Edmond Ffrench, D.D.
✕ James Doyle, D.D.
✕ William Kinsella, D.D.
✕ William Abraham, D.D.
✕ William Higgins, D.D.
✕ John MacHale, D.D.
✕ Patrick M'Mahon, D.D.
✕ Patrick M'Loughlin, D.D.
✕ Edward Kernan, D.D.
✕ T. Kelly, D.D. etc.
✕ Oliver Kelly, D.D. etc.

✕ James Keating, D.D.
✕ John Ryan, D.D.
✕ Patrick Burke, D.D.
✕ Patrick MacGettigan, D.D.
✕ William Crolly, D.D.
✕ James Browne, D.D.
✕ John Cantwell, D.D.
✕ George J. P. Browne, D.D.
✕ Peter Waldron, D.D.
✕ Patrick MacNicholas, D.D.
✕ Michael Blake, D.D.
✕ John O'Connell, V.C.D.D.
✕ John Hughes, D.D., Bishop of New York
✕ John M'Closkey, D.D., Coadjutor Bishop of New York



Publisher's Note – Sadlier

To render the work as complete as possible, we have added the Lives of St. Alphonso Liguori and other saints canonized by the church since the death of the venerable author, and which have not been included in any former edition. When bound, it will form four elegant octavo volumes, to correspond with the Catholic bible and the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, whose revealed doctrines and sanctifying precepts the *Lives of the Saints* prove and illustrate.

The Publishers

Loreto Publications – 2018 Edition

Very few published works require such a lengthy explanation of exactly WHICH edition is being offered, in what format, and why, than Fr. Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*. The reason is that there are so many very different books being printed under this author's name and under this title due to its long history (the work is almost 300 years old) and its universal popularity. Few catholic books except the Bible, the Confessions, the Imitation, and the Summa, are as widely read. This book has also been extensively revised, altered, and updated since its original publication, with new editions, even 21st century revisions being made, that we feel the time is ripe for an original, unexpurgated, and unrevised print version to be made available.

This edition is widely considered to be the most complete and authoritative ever issued. It is the 1854 edition of D. J. Sadlier of New York, and in the Preface it gives its "pedigree." The original was printed anonymously in London in 1759, after 30 years work on the project. The edition published by Sadlier is an exact replica of the Dublin and London edition of 1833.

Being a scholarly work, but also a work deeply imbued with the piety and devotion of a priest's lifetime effort, it is loaded with footnotes which comprise a significant proportion of the total text. In the original book, the footnotes were printed in such a small, closely-set typeface, that they were almost unreadable.

Loreto Publications has utilized the recent development of OCR scanning to extract the original text and to put it into a modern, highly readable, and much larger font typeface than any of the old editions. We have extensively proofread the text thus generated, and have made the layout “user friendly” as the moderns so succinctly state. In addition, our already available edition of Butler's *Little Pictorial Lives*—which is a drastic abridgment of this original edition to one volume, illustrated, with one saint and one image for each day of the year—has provided us with 365 beautiful 19th century engravings which we have added to this original un-illustrated text.

Loreto has made a few corrections of obvious typographical errors and has slightly altered some capitalization rubrics and some spellings, but we have refrained from alterations to the text. We think that modern readers are not so uneducated as to need the work “updated” for them, either as to content or style, since the beautiful expressiveness of Butler's 18th century grammatical and rhetorical mastery is not so far removed historically as to render it unintelligible to any ordinary 21st century reader. We are certain that our readers will appreciate the original work for its piety, beauty, and comprehensive scholarship.

The good God willing, we will have in print by the close of 2019 all twelve months of Butler's complete masterpiece, with the various appendices, for our loyal readers. We ask your prayers for the blessings of St. Thérèse and Our Lady of Loreto on all of our apostolic undertakings.

The Publishers and staff of Loreto Publications
in the year of Our Lord 2018

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Preface to the Last Dublin Edition

The Lives of the Saints is republished. This work—this inestimable work, is at length given to the public. Hitherto the circulation of it was confined to those who could afford to purchase it in twelve volumes, and at a proportionate price. It is now stereotyped, printed in good character, on fine paper, and published at a price not only below its value, but below the hopes of the publisher: it is therefore now, and for the first time, that *The Lives of the Saints* are, properly speaking, given to the public.

And what is the nature and character of this work, which is thus placed within the reach of almost every family in Ireland? We presume to say, that *The Lives of the Saints* is an historical supplement to the Old and New Testaments; an illustration of all that God has revealed, and of all the sanctity which his divine grace has produced among the children of men. It is a history, not so much of men, as of all ages and nations; of their manners, customs, laws, usages, and creeds. It is a succinct, but most accurate and satisfactory account of all that the Church of God has done or suffered in this world from the creation to almost our own days: an account not extracted from authentic records only, but one which exhibits at every page the living examples, the speaking proofs, of whatever it sets forth or asserts. As drawings taken by an artist, and afterwards carved on plates of steel or copper, present to us views of a country, or of the productions of the earth and sea, so *The Lives of the Saints* exhibit to the reader images the most perfect of whatever the human race, in times past, has yielded to God in return for his countless mercies.

But *The Lives of the Saints* are not confined to history, though they embrace whatever is most valuable in history, whether sacred, ecclesiastical, or profane. No! This work extends farther; it presents to the reader a mass of general information, digested and arranged with an ability and a candor never surpassed. Here, no art, no science, is left unnoticed. Chronology, criticism, eloquence, painting, sculpture, architecture—in a word, whatever has occupied or distinguished man in times of barbarism or of civili-

zation; in peace or in war; in the countries which surround us, or in those which are far remote; in these latter ages, or in times over which centuries upon centuries have revolved; all, all of these are treated of, not flippantly nor ostentatiously, but with a sobriety and solidity peculiar to the writer of this work.

But there is one quality which may be said to characterize *The Lives of the Saints*. It is this: that here the doctrines of the Catholic Church are presented to us passing through the ordeal of time unchanged and unchangeable, while her discipline is seen to vary from age to age; like as a city fixed and immovable, but whose walls, ramparts, and outworks, undergo, from one period to another, the necessary changes, alterations, or repairs. Here are pointed out the persecutions which the Saints endured—persecutions which patience overcame, which the power of God subdued. Here are traced the causes of dissension in the Church; the schisms and heresies which arose; the errors which the pride and passions of bad men gave birth to; the obstinacy of the wicked—the seduction of the innocent—the labors and sufferings of the just; the conflicts which took place between light and darkness—between truth and error; the triumph, at one time of the city of God—at another, the temporary exaltation of the empire of Satan. In this work, we see the great and powerful leaders of God's people, the pastors and doctors of the Church, displaying lights given them from heaven, and exercising a courage all-divine; while crowds of the elect are presented to us in every age retiring from the world, hiding their lives with Christ in God, and deserving, by their innocence and sanctity, to be received into heaven until Christ, who was their life, will again appear, when they also will appear along with him in glory. Here we behold the Apostles, and their successors in the several ages, calling out to the nations who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, "Arise, thou who sleepest, and Christ will enlighten thee!"—men of God, and gifted with his power, who, by preaching peace, enduring wrongs, and pardoning injuries, subdued the power of tyrants, stopped the mouths of lions, upturned paganism, demolished idols, planted everywhere the standard of the cross, and left to us the whole world illuminated by the rays of divine truth. Here is seen the meek martyr who possessed his soul in patience, who, having suffered the loss of goods, the loss of kindred, the loss of fame, bowed down his head beneath the axe, and sealed, by the plentiful effusion of his blood, the testimony which he bore to virtue and to truth. Here the youthful virgin, robed in innocence and sanctity, clothed with the visible protection of God, is seen at one time to yield up her frame, unfit, as yet, for torments, to the power

of the executioner; while her spirit, ascending, like the smoke of incense, passed from earth to heaven. At another time we behold her conducted, as it were, into the wilderness by the Spirit; where, having left the house of her father, the allurements of the world, and the endearments of life, she dedicates her whole being to the service of God, and to the contemplation of those invisible goods which he has reserved for those who love him.

In *The Lives of the Saints* we behold the prince and the peasant, the warrior and the sage, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the peasant and the mechanic, the shepherd and the statesman, the wife and the widow, the prelate, the priest, and the recluse—men and women of every class, and age, and degree, and condition, and country, sanctified by the grace of God, exhibiting to the faithful reader models for his imitation, and saying to him, in a voice which he cannot fail to understand, “Go thou and do likewise.”

It is on this account we have ventured to designate *The Lives of the Saints* an historical supplement to the Old and New Testaments. We think this work deserves to be so considered, on account of the close resemblance it bears to the historical portions of holy writ. Let the divine economy, in this respect, be for a moment the subject of the reader's consideration.

When God was pleased to instruct men unto righteousness, he did so, as the whole series of revelation proves, by raising up from among the fallen children of Adam men and women of superior virtue, men and women whose lives, like shining lights, could direct in the ways of peace and justice the footsteps of those who looked towards them. He did more: he caused the lives of those his servants whom he sanctified and almost glorified in this world, to be recorded by their followers; and his own Spirit did not disdain to inspire the men who executed a work so salutary to mankind. From Adam to Noe, from Noe to Abraham, from Abraham to the days of Christ, what period is not marked by the life of some eminent saint; and what portion of the Old Testament has always been and still is most interesting to true believers? Is it not that which instructs us as to the life and manners of those patriarchs, prophets, and other holy persons of whom we ourselves are, according to the promise, the seed and the descendants? The innocence of Abel, the cruel deed of Cain, the piety of Seth, the fidelity and industry of Noe, furnish to us the finest moral instruction derived from the primeval times. The life of Abraham is perhaps the most precious record in the Old Testament! Who even now can read it, and not repose with more devotion on the providence of God? Who can contrast his life and conduct with that of all the sages of paganism, and not confess there is

a God; yea! a God who not only upholds this world, and fills every creature in it with his benediction, but who also conducts by a special providence all those who put their trust in him—a God who teaches his elect, by the unction of his Spirit, truths inaccessible to the wise of this world; and who makes them, by his grace, to practise a degree of virtue to which human nature unassisted is totally unable to attain? The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is exceedingly glorified by the virtues of those great men; and that glory is exalted, and we are led to adore it, because the lives of those men have been written for our instruction. Is not Moses the keystone, as it were, of the Jewish covenant? Are they not his trials, his meekness, his attachment to God and to God's people, his incessant toils, and patience, and long-suffering, even more than the miracles wrought by his interposition, which render the law published by him, and the ministry established by him, worthy of all acceptance in our eyes? Who can contemplate the rejection of Saul, and the election of David, the wisdom of Solomon in early life, and his utter abandonment in his latter days, and not be stricken with a salutary dread of the inscrutable judgments of a just God? Who can read the life of Judith, and not wonder?—of Susanna, and not love chastity and confide in God? Who has read the prophecies of Isaiah, and not believed the gospel which he foretold? And what example of a suffering Savior so full, so perfect, and expressive, as that exhibited in the life of Jeremiah? If thus, then, from the beginning to the day of Christ, the Spirit of God instructed mankind in truth and virtue, by writing for their instruction *The Lives of the Saints*, what can better agree with the ways of that God, than to continue the record—to prolong the narrative? If this mode of instruction has been adopted by the master, should it not be continued, by the servant?—if employed when the people of God were only one family, should it not be resorted to when all nations were enrolled with that people? if this mode of instruction was found useful when the knowledge of the Lord was confined to one province, should it not be preserved when that knowledge covered the whole earth even as the waters cover the sea? And is it not therefore with justice we have said that *The Lives of the Saints* might not improperly be designated “an historical supplement to the Old and New Testaments?”

And in good truth, who can peruse the life of Peter, and not be animated with a more lively faith? Who can read of the conversion of Paul, of his zeal and labor, and unbounded love—who can enter with him into the depths of those mysterious truths which he has revealed, and contemplate along with him the riches of the glory of the grace of God, and

not esteem this world as dung; or experience some throes of those heavenly desires, which urged him so pathetically to exclaim, "I wish to be dissolved, and to be with Christ!" Who can read the life of the evangelist John, and not feel the impulse of that subdued spirit, of that meek and humble charity, which so eminently distinguished him as the "beloved disciple of the Lord?" And if we advance through the several ages that have elapsed since our Savior ascended into heaven, we shall find each and all of them instructing us by examples of the most heroic virtue. The age of the martyrs ended, only to make room for that of the doctors and ascetics; so that each succeeding generation of the children of God presents to us the active and contemplative life equally fruitful in works of sanctification. An Athanasius, a Jerome, a Chrysostom, or an Augustine, are scarcely more precious as models in the house of God, than an Anthony, a Benedict, an Arseneus, or a Paul. Nor has the almighty limited his gifts, or confined the mode of instruction to those primitive times when the blood of the Mediator was as yet warm upon the earth, and the believers in him filled more abundantly with the first-fruits of the Spirit. No; he has extended his grace to every age! Only take up the history of those holy persons, men and women, whose lives shed a lustre upon the Church within these last few centuries, and you will acknowledge that the arm of the Lord is not shortened, and, to use the words of the Psalmist, that "Sanctity becometh the house of the Lord unto length of days," or to the end of time.

As therefore it hath pleased God to raise up for our help and edification so many and so perfect models of Christian perfection, and disposed by his all-wise providence that their lives should have been written for our instruction, we should not be faithful co-operators with the grace given to us, if we did not use our best efforts to learn and to imitate what our Father in heaven has designed for our use.

But *The Lives of the Saints* are a history, not so much of men, as of all ages and nations—of their manners, customs, laws, usages, and creeds. And in this licentious age, an age of corrupted literature, when that worldly wisdom or vain philosophy which God has declared to be folly, is again revived; in this age, when history has failed to represent the truth, and is only written for base lucre's sake, or to serve a sect or party, what can be so desirable to a Christian community, as to have placed in their hands a sincere and dispassionate account of the nations which surround us, and of the laws and manners and usages, whether civil or religious, which have passed, or are passing into the abyss of time? If the wisdom of God warns

us “to train up youth in the way in which they should walk,” and promises that “even when old they will not depart from it,” there is no duty more sacred, or more imperative on parents and pastors, than to remove from their reach such books as are irreligious, immoral, or untrue, and to place in their hands such works only as may serve to train their minds and affections to the knowledge of truth and to the love of virtue.

History is, of its nature, pleasing and instructive; it leaves after it the most lasting impressions; and when youth, as at present, is almost universally taught to read, and works of fiction or lying histories placed constantly in their way, is it not obvious that every parent and every pastor should be careful not only to exclude from their flocks and families such impious productions, but also to provide the youth committed to their care with works of an opposite description? But we make bold to say, that in no work now extant can there be found condensed so vast a quantity of historical information as is contained in *The Lives of the Saints* nor is it the store of knowledge here amassed which renders the work, as a history, of so much value; but it is the judicious arrangement, the undoubted candor, the dispassionate judgment of men, manners, and things, which the venerable historian everywhere displays.

He has been able to trace events to their true causes; to point out the influence of religion upon human policy, and of that policy on the Church of God; to exhibit the rise and fall of states and empires, the advancement or declension of knowledge, the state of barbarism or civilization which prevailed in the several countries of the world, the laws, the manners, the institutions, which arose, were changed, improved, or deteriorated, in the kingdoms and empires which brought forth the elect of God in every age: but in his narration there is always found to prevail a spirit, wanted in almost every history, written in our times—a spirit which assigns to the power and providence of God the first place in the conduct of human events, and which makes manifest to the unbiased reader the great and fundamental truth of the Christian religion, that “all things work together to the good of those who, according to the purpose or design of God, are called to be Saints.”

The great characteristic, however, of this work, and that which, perhaps, in these times and in this country, constitutes its chief excellence, is, that it exhibits to the reader the doctrine and discipline of the Catholic Church—the former always the same, “yesterday, today, and forever”—the latter receiving impressions from abroad, and moulding itself to the places, times, and circumstances, in which the Church herself was placed. In other works

may be found arguments and proofs in support of the dogmas of faith and the doctrines of the Catholic Church, set forth in due order and becoming force; but such works are of a controversial nature, and not always suited to the taste or capacity of every class of readers: not so *The Lives of the Saints*. This work presents to us the religion of Christ as it was first planted, as it grew up, and flourished, and covered with its shade all tribes, and tongues, and peoples, and nations. The trunk of this mighty tree is placed before our eyes, standing in the midst of time, with ages and empires revolving about it, its roots binding and embracing the earth, its top touching the heavens, its branches strong and healthful—bearing foliage and fruits in abundance. But to drop this allegory. *The Lives of the Saints* demonstrate the doctrines of the Church, by laying before us the history of the most precious portion of her children: of her martyrs, her doctors, her bishops; of holy and devout persons of all ranks and conditions; of what they believed, and taught, and practiced, in each and every age: so that if no Gospel had been written, or liturgy preserved, or decree recorded, we should find in *The Lives of the Saints* sufficient proofs of what has always, and in every place, and by all true believers, been held and practiced in the Church of God.

In this work there is no caviling about texts, no disputes about jurisdiction, no sophisms to delude, no imputations to irritate, no contradictions to confound the reader; but in place of all these there is found in it a simple detail of the truths professed, and of the virtues practiced by men and women, who were not only the hearers of the law but the doers thereof. Whosoever seeks for wisdom as men seek for gold, will find it in the perusal of *The Lives of the Saints*: for here not theory or speculation, but living examples, make truth manifest, and exhibit at once and together all the marks of the Church of God in the life and conduct of her children. These children will all be found to say the same thing, and to have no divisions among them—no difference of creed—no collision of belief. They will be found to have denied themselves, to have taken up the cross, to have followed Christ, and to have convinced the world by their sanctity that they were the children of God—that they were perfect even as their heavenly Father was perfect. These children of the Church will be found a Catholic or universal people, collected from all ages and nations, offering the same sacrifice, administering or receiving the same sacraments, and yielding to the same authority a reasonable obedience. Finally, there will be found included in this great family the Apostles and their disciples, and the descendants of those disciples—faithful men keeping the deposit of the faith, or transmitting it to others through all the vicissitudes to which this world

is a prey, even to that hour when the dead will arise and come to judgment. Thus it is that *The Lives of the Saints* put to silence the gainsayers, and convince, not by argument, but by historical and incontrovertible details of facts and of the lives of men, that the Church of God is one, that she is holy, that she, though universal, is not divided; that she is built upon the Apostles, as upon an immoveable foundation, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. This work strips schism of her mask, and stops the mouth of heresy. It points out, with an evidence not to be impeached, the day of separation, when schism commenced, and the hour of revolt and rebellion, when the heretic said, like Lucifer, in the pride of his heart, "*I will not serve.*" If ever there was a work which rendered almost visible and tangible to the sight and touch of men that promise of the Redeemer to his Church, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, surely this work is *The Lives of the Saints*.

Who, therefore, is a Catholic, and would not possess such a treasure? How great is the benefit derived to the public from the low price and convenient form in which this work is given to them! If infidelity, and immorality, and heresy have opened wide their mouths, and are everywhere devouring their victims, is it not a blessing from God that the children of the Church should be preserved from them, and fed with the wholesome food of pious reading? If the spirit of error, or of that worldly wisdom which is folly with God, has filled our shops and streets with circulating poison in the shape of books, is not the Spirit of truth, and of Him who has overcome the world, to have also such means of instruction as may save and strengthen those whom God, by his grace, has translated into the kingdom of his beloved Son? Accept, therefore, gentle reader, of *The Lives of the Saints*; which, for their own worth's sake, and for your good, we have endeavored to recommend. And with it permit us also to recommend to your pious prayers the spiritual wants of him who has thus addressed you.

✠ James Doyle



January

The Circumcision of Our Lord¹

Circumcision was a sacrament of the Old Law, and the first legal observance required by almighty God of that people, which he had chosen

I In the ancient Sacramentary of the Roman church, published by cardinal Thomassius, (the finishing of which some ascribe to pope Gelasius I, others more probably to Leo I, though the ground was doubtless the work of their predecessors) this festival is called the Octave of our Lord's Nativity. The same title is given to it in the Latin calendar (or rather collection of the gospels read at Mass throughout the year) written above 900 years ago, presented to the public by F. John Fronteau, regular canon of Saint Genevieve's at Paris, and by Leo Allatius. The inference which Baillet draws from hence, that the mystery of our Lord's circumcision was not then commemorated in the office of this day, is a notorious mistake. For Thomassin takes notice from Ivo of Chartres, that the word Octave here implies the circumcision of our Lord, which was performed on the eighth day after his birth; and in the above-mentioned Sacramentary express mention is made of the circumcision in the Secret of the Mass. In F. Fronteau's calendar the gospel read on this day is the history of the circumcision given by St. Luke. An old Vatican MS. copy of St. Gregory's Sacramentary, and that of Ussuard's Martyrology, kept at St. Germaindes Prés, express both the titles of the Octave day and of the circumcision.

Durandus in the 13th century, (Ration, offic. I. G, c. 15) John Belet, a theologian of Paris, (c. 71.) and several missals of the middle ages prescribe two masses to be said on this day, one on the circumcision, the other on the B. Virgin Mary. Micrologus (c. 39) assigns this reason, that as the B. Virgin, who had so great a share in the birth of Christ, could not be mentioned in that solemn office, therefore a commemoration of her is deferred to the Octave day. The second Mass is now abolished: but in a great part of the office a regard is had to the B. Virgin. In F. Fronteau's Roman calendar, after the title of the Octave is added, Natale St. Mariæ; for which Dom Martenne would have us read St. Martinæ; but without ground. For, as pope Benedict XIV observes, (Comment, de Festis Domini, c. 1) the original unquestionably means a festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The word Natale, which was used originally for the birthday of the emperors, was afterwards taken for any annual feast.



preferably to all the nations of the earth to be the depository of his revealed truths. These were the descendants of Abraham, whom he had enjoined it, under the strictest penalties,² several hundred years before the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai; and this on two several accounts: First, as a distinguishing mark between them and the rest of mankind. Secondly, as a seal to a covenant between God and that patriarch: whereby it was stipulated on God's part to bless Abraham and his posterity; while on their part it implied a holy engagement to be his people, by a strict conformity to his laws. It was, therefore, a sacrament of initiation in the service of God,

and a promise and engagement to believe and act as he had revealed and directed. Circumcision is also looked upon by St. Austin, and by several eminent modern divines,³ to have been the expedient, in the male posterity of Abraham, for removing the guilt of original sin: which in those who did not belong to the covenant of Abraham, nor fall under this law, was remitted by other means, probably by some external act of faith.

This law of circumcision continued in force till the death of Christ: hence our Savior being born under the law, it became him, who came to teach mankind obedience to the laws of God, to fulfil all justice, and

² Gen. 17.

³ Grounding their opinion on Gen. 17:14, etc.

to submit to it. Therefore, he was made under the law, that is, was circumcised, that he might redeem them that were under the law, by freeing them from the servitude of it; and that those, who were in the condition of servants before, might be set at liberty, and receive the adoption of sons in baptism; which by Christ's institution, succeeded to circumcision. On the day he was circumcised he received the name of Jesus, the same which had been appointed him by the angel before he was conceived.⁴ The reason of his being called Jesus is mentioned in the gospel:⁵ For he shall save his people from their sins. This he effected by the greatest sufferings and humiliations; having humbled himself as St. Paul says,⁶ not only unto death, but even to the death of the cross; for which cause God hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow: agreeably to what Christ says of himself,⁷ "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."⁸

4 Lk. 1:31.

5 Mt. 1:21.

6 Phil. 2:8–10.

7 Mt. 28:18.

8 The Jews generally named their children on the day of their circumcision, but this was not of precept. There are several instances of children named on the day of their birth, (Gen. 30.) which could not be that

Christ being not only innocent, but incapable of sin, could stand in no need of circumcision, as an expedient then in use for the remission of sin. He was pleased, however, to subject himself to this humbling and painful rite of the Mosaic dispensation for several reasons: First, to put an end in an honorable manner to a divine, but temporary, institution, by taking it upon his own person. Secondly, to prove the reality of his human body; which, however evident from this and so many other actions and sufferings of his life, was denied by several ancient heretics. Thirdly, to prove himself not only the son of

of their circumcision by an express law requiring the interval of eight days from their birth; the child being presumed too weak and delicate to undergo the operation sooner, without danger of its life. It seems to have been the practice among the Jews for children to be circumcised at home; nor was a priest the necessary or ordinary minister, but the father, mother, or any other person could perform the ceremony, as we see in the time of Abraham, (Gen. 17; Acts 7.) and of the Maccabees, (1 Mac. 1) St. Epiphanius, (Haer. 20.) Whence F. Avala, in his curious work entitled *Pictor Christianus*, printed at Madrid in 1730, shows that it is a vulgar error of painters who represent Christ circumcised by a priest in the temple. The instrument was sometimes a sharp stone, (Exod. 4. Jos. 5.) but doubtless most frequently of iron or steel.

man, but of that man in particular of whose seed the Messiah was promised to come: thus precluding any future objection that might be raised by the Jews against his divine mission in quality of Messiah, under the pretence of his being an alien; and hereby qualifying himself for free conversation with them for their own spiritual advantage: setting us all a pattern of undergoing voluntarily several hardships and restraints, which, though not necessary on our own account, may be of great use to promote the good of others. Christ not being like other Jewish children, who could not know or fear the pain of circumcision, when they were going to suffer the operation, was perfectly sensible of it beforehand, and with calmness and intrepidity offered himself willingly to suffer the knife, and shed the first-fruits of his sacred blood in this painful manner. Under the smart this divine infant shed tears, but not as other children; for by them, with the most tender love and compassion, he bewailed chiefly our spiritual miseries, and at the same time presented with joy his blood as the price of our redemption to his Father. Fourthly, by thus humbling himself under this painful operation, he would give us an early pledge and earnest of his love for us, of his compassion for our miseries, and of his utter detestation of sin. The charity and zeal which glowed

in his divine breast, impatient, as it were, of delay, delighted themselves, in these first-fruits of humiliation and suffering for our sakes, till they could fully satiate their thirst by that superabundance of both, in his passion and death. With infinite zeal for his Father's honor, and charity for us sinners, with invincible patience, and the most profound humility, he now offered himself most cheerfully to his Father to undergo whatever he was pleased to enjoin him. Fifthly, he teaches us by the example of voluntary obedience to a law that could not oblige him, to submit with great punctuality and exactness to laws of divine appointment; and how very far we ought to be from sheltering our disobedience under lame excuses and frivolous pretexts. Sixthly, by this ceremony, he humbled himself to satisfy for our pride, and to teach us the sincere spirit of humility. What greater humiliation can be imagined than for Him who is the eternal Son of God, in all things equal to his Father, to conceal these glorious titles under the appearance of a sinner? What a subject of confusion to us, who, being abominable criminals, are ashamed to pass for what we are, and desire to appear and be esteemed what we are not! Shall we not learn from this example of Christ to love humiliations, especially as we cannot but acknowledge that we deserve every reproach and

all manner of contempt from all creatures? Seventhly, by beginning the great work of our salvation in the manner he was one day to finish it; suffering in his own person the punishment of sin, to deliver us from both sin and its punishment, he confounds the impenitence of sinners who will suffer nothing for their own sins; and inculcates the necessity of a spiritual circumcision, whereof the external was but the type and figure, as the apostle puts us in mind.⁹

It is manifest, beyond all contradiction, from several texts of the Old Testament,¹⁰ that men under that dispensation ought not to have rested in the external act alone, but should have aspired from the letter to the spirit, from the carnal to a spiritual circumcision. These texts, at the same time that they set forth its necessity, describe it as consisting in a readiness and willing disposition to conform to the will of God, and submit to it when known, in every particular. They in consequence require a retrenchment of all inordinate and superfluous desires of the soul, the keeping a strict guard and government over ourselves, a total abstinence from criminal, and a prudent reserve even in the lawful gratifications of sense and appetite. If such instanc-

es of spiritual circumcision were required of those under the Old Law, to qualify them for acceptance with God, can anything less than the same entitle us Christians to the claim of spiritual kindred with faithful Abraham, and to share of that redemption which Christ began this day to purchase for us at the expense of his blood? We must cut off whatever inordinate or superfluous desires of riches, honors, or pleasures reign in our hearts, and renounce whatever holds us wedded to, our senses or the world. Though this sacrifice required the last drop of our blood, we ought cheerfully to make it. The example of Christ powerfully excites us not to spare ourselves. A thousand irregular affections reign in our souls, and self-love is master there. This enemy is only to be expelled by compunction, watchfulness over ourselves, perfect obedience, humble submission to correction, voluntary self-denials, and patience under crosses. To these endeavors we must join earnest prayer for the necessary grace to discover, and courageously crucify whatever opposes the reign of the pure love of God in our affections. If we are conscious to ourselves of having taken a contrary course, and are of the unhappy number of the uncircumcised in heart; what more proper time to set about a thorough reformation, by cutting off whatever is inconsistent with or prejudicial to

⁹ Rom. 2:29.

¹⁰ Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4.

the true Christian spirit, than this very day, the first of the new year? that so it may be a new year to us in the most Christian and beneficial sense of the word.¹¹

11 The pagan Romans celebrated the *Saturnalia*, or feast of Saturn, from the 17th of December during seven days: at which time slaves dined with their masters, and were allowed an entire liberty of speech, in the superstitious remembrance of the golden age of the world, in which no distinction of ranks was yet known among men. (Macrobius, l. 1, c. 10. Herat. Ac.) The calends also of January were solemnized with licentious bows in honor of Janus and the goddess Strenia; and it is from those infamous diversions, that among Christians, are derived the profane riots of new year's day, twelfth-tide, and shrove-tide, by which many pervert these times into days of sin and intemperance. Several councils severely condemn these abuses; and the better to prevent them, some churches formerly kept the 1st of January a fast day, as it is mentioned by St. Isidore of Seville, (lib. 2, offic. c. 40) Alcuin, (lib. de div. offic.) etc. Dom Martenne observes, (lib. de antiquis ritibus in celebr. div. offic. c. 13) that on this account the second council of Tours in 567 ordered that on the calends of the circumcision the litany be sung, and high mass begun only at the eighth hour, that is, two in the afternoon, that it might be finished by three, the hour at which it was allowed to eat on the fasts of the stations. We have among the works of the fathers many severe invectives against the superstitions and excesses of this time. See St. Austin, (serm. 198, in hunc diem) St. Peter Chrysologus, (serm. in calendis) St. Maximus of Turin, (Hom. 5,

Wherefore, after having con-

apud Mabill. in Musæo Italico) Faustinus the Bishop, (apud Boland, haec die, p. 3) etc. The French name Etrennes is pagan, from *strenæ*, or new-year gifts, in honor of the goddess Strenia. The same in Poitou and Perche, anciently the country of the Druids, is derived from their rites. For the Poitevins for Etrennes use the word *Auguislanneut* and the Percherons, *Equilans*, from the ancient cry of the Druids, *Au guy l'an neuf*, i.e. *Ad viscum, annus novus*, or to the mistletoe the new-year, when on new-year's day the pagans went into the forests to seek the mistletoe on the oaks. See Chatelain, notes on the Martyr. Jan. 1, p. 7.

The ancients began the year, some from the autumnal, others from the vernal equinox. The primitive patriarchs from that of autumn, that is, from the month called by the Hebrews *Tisri*, which coincide with part of our September and October. Hence it seems probable, that the world was created about this season; the earth, as appears from Gen. 3:2, being then covered with trees, plants, fruits, seeds, and all other things in the state of their natural maturity and perfection. The Jews retained this commencement of the year as a date for contracts and other civil purposes; as also for their sabbatical year and jubilee. But God commanded them to begin their ecclesiastical year, or that by which their religious festivals were regulated, from the spring equinox, or the Hebrew month *Nisan*, the same with part of our March and April, Exod. 12:2. Christian nations commenced the year, some from the 25th of March, the feast of the Annunciation, and bordering upon the spring equinox; others from Christmas; others from its octave day, the first of January, in which our

secrated its first-fruits to God, by the most sincere and fervent homage of praise and adoration; after having paid him the just tribute of thanksgiving for all his benefits, and in particular for the mercy by which he vouchsafes us still time to appease his anger, and serve him;

ancestors have often varied their practice. Europe is now agreed in fixing the first of January for this epoch.

The Julian year, so called from Julius Cæsar, from whom the Roman calendar received its last reformation, consisted of 365 days and 6 hours, which exceed the true solar year by 11 minutes: for astronomers compute the yearly revolution of the sun not to exceed 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 37 seconds, according to Cassini, but according to Keil 57 seconds, or almost 49 minutes. This error, becoming daily more sensible, would have occasioned the autumnal equinox to have at length fallen on the day reckoned the solstice, and in process of time, on that held for the vernal equinox. The Golden number, or Grecian cycle of the lunar years, was likewise defective. To remedy both which, pope Gregory XIII, in 1582, established the new style. Scaliger, Tachet, and Cassini have demonstrated that cycles might be chosen still more exact by some few seconds: however, this adopted by pope Gregory, besides being the easiest in the execution, admits of no material error, or sensible inconveniency. This correction of the style was received by act of Parliament, in Great Britain, in 1752; for the promoting of which, great praise is due to the two illustrious ornaments of the republic of letters, the earls of Chesterfield and Macclesfield.

it becomes us to allot some part of this day to tears of compunction for our past offences, and to the diving into the source of our spiritual sloth and other irregularities, with a view to the amendment of our lives, and the preventing of relapses: not contenting ourselves with general purposes, which cost self-love so little, the insufficiency of which our own experience has convinced us of; we must lay the axe to the root, and seriously resolve to decline, to the best of our power, the particular occasions which have betrayed us into sin, and embrace the most effectual means of reformation of life and improvement in virtue. Every year ought to find us more fervent in charity; every day ought our soul to augment in strength, and be decked with new flowers of virtue and good works. If the plant ceases to grow, or the fruit to ripen, they decay of course, and are in danger of perishing. By a rule far more sacred, the soul, which makes not a daily progress in virtue, loses ground: a dreadful symptom in the spiritual life.

The more intense ought our fervor to be, as we draw the nearer to the end of our course: so much the more, says the apostle, as you perceive the day to approach,¹² the day of retribution to each according to his works, which will be that of our death, which may be much

¹² Heb. 10:25.

nearer than we are willing to imagine. Perhaps we may not live to the end of this very year: it will be the case of thousands, who at this time are as regardless of it as we can be. What security can we have against a surprise, the consequences whereof are infinite and irretrievable, except that of a sincere and speedy conversion, of being upon our guard against temptations, of dedicating effectually this ensuing year and the remainder of our short lives to God, our last end and only good, and frequently imploring his grace and mercy. It is our blessed Savior's advice and injunction: Watch ye therefore; praying at all times, ... that you may be accounted worthy...to stand before the Son of Man.¹³

The Christian's devotion on this day ought to consist, first, in the solemn consecration of the first-fruits of the year to God; and secondly, in honoring the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, particularly his birth and circumcision. The church invites us on this day to unite our homages with the seraphic ardors and transports of devotion with which the glorious Mother of God assisted at these wonderful mysteries which we commemorate, but in which she acted herself so great a part. With what sentiments did

Mary bear in her womb, bring forth, and serve her adorable son, who was also her God with what love and awe did she fix her eyes upon him? particularly at his circumcision, who can express in what manner she was affected when she saw him subjected to this painful and humbling ceremony? Filled with astonishment, and teeming affections of love and gratitude, by profound adorations and praise she endeavored to make him all the amends in her power, and the best return and acknowledgment she was able. In amorous complaints that he would begin, in the excess of his love, to suffer for us in so tender an age, and to give this earnest of our redemption, she might say to him: Truly thou art to me a spouse of blood.¹⁴ With the early sacrifice Christ here made of himself to his Father, she joined her own, offering her divine son, and with and through him herself, to be an eternal victim to his honor and love, with the most ardent desire to suffer all things, even to blood, for the accomplishment of his will. Under her mediation we ought to make him the tender of our homages, and with and through this holy Redeemer, consecrate ourselves to God without reserve.

¹³ Lk. 21:36.

¹⁴ Exod. 4:25.

The Life of St. Fulgentius

Bishop and Confessor

Extracted from his works; and from his life, accurately written by a disciple of great abilities, the companion of his exile: and dedicated to Felician, his successor in the see of Ruspa. The author declares himself a monk: consequently, was not the deacon Ferrandus, as some critics imagine.

A. D. 533

Fabius Claudius Gordianus Fulgentius was the descendant of a noble senatorian family of Carthage: but much decayed in its splendor by the invasion of the Vandals. His father Claudius, being unjustly deprived of his house in Carthage, which was made over to the Arian priests, settled at an estate belonging to him at Telepte, the capital city of the province of Byzacena. Our saint was born in 468, about thirty years after the barbarians had dismembered Africa from the Roman empire. He was educated in sentiments of piety with his younger brother, under the care of his mother Mariana, who was left a young widow. Being, by her particular direction, taught the Greek very young, he spoke it with as proper and exact an accent as if it had been his native language. He also applied himself to Latin, and all the useful parts of human literature, under masters distinguished

for consummate abilities: yet he knew how to mingle business with study; for he took upon himself the regulation of the family concerns, in order to ease his mother of the burden. His prudent circumspection in all the affairs he transacted, his virtuous conduct, his mild carriage to all, and more especially his deference for his mother, without whose express orders or approbation he never did anything, caused him to be beloved and admired wherever his name was known. He was chosen procurator, that is, lieutenant-governor, and general receiver of the taxes of Byzacena. But it was not long before he grew disgusted with the world; and being justly alarmed at its dangers, he armed himself against them by pious reading, assiduous prayer, and rigorous fasting. His visits to monasteries were frequent; and happening, among other books of spiritual entertainment, to read a sermon of St. Austin on the thirty-sixth psalm, in which that father treats of the world and the short duration of human life, he felt within him strong desires of embracing the monastic state.

Huneric, the Arian king, had driven most of the orthodox bishops from their sees. One of these, named Faustus, had erected a monastery in Byzacena. It was to him that the young nobleman addressed himself for admittance; but

Faustus immediately objecting the tenderness of his constitution, discouraged his desires with words of some harshness; "Go," said he, "and first learn to live in the world abstracted from its pleasures. Who can well suppose, that you on a sudden, relinquishing a life of softness and ease, can take up with our coarse diet and clothing, and can inure yourself to our watchings and fastings?" The saint, with downcast eyes, modestly replied: "He, who hath inspired me with the will to serve him, can also furnish me with courage and strength." This humble, yet resolute answer, induced Faustus to admit him on trial. The saint was then in the twenty-second year of his age. The news of so unthought of an event both surprised and edified the whole country; many even imitated the example of the governor. But Mariana his mother, in transports of grief, ran to the monastery, crying out at the gates: "Faustus! restore to me my son; to the people, their governor: the church always protects widows; why then rob you me, a desolate widow, of my son?" She persisted several days in the same tears and cries. Nothing that Faustus could urge was sufficient to calm her, or prevail with her to depart without her son. This was certainly as great a trial of Fulgentius's resolution as it could well be put to; but the love of God, having the ascendant in his

breast, gave him a complete victory over all the suggestions of nature: Faustus approved his vocation, and accordingly recommended him to the brethren. The saint having now obtained all he wished for in this world, made over his estate to his mother, to be discretionally disposed of by her in favor of his brother, as soon as he should be arrived at a proper age. He totally abstained from oil and everything savory; from wine also, drinking only water. His mortifications brought on him a dangerous illness; yet after recovery he abated nothing in them. The persecution breaking out anew, Faustus was obliged to withdraw; and our saint, with his consent, repaired to a neighboring monastery, of which Felix, the abbot, would fain resign to him the government. Fulgentius was much startled at the proposal, but at length was prevailed upon to consent that they should jointly execute the functions. It was admirable to observe with what harmony these two holy abbots for six years governed the house. No contradiction ever took place between them: each always contended to comply with the will of his colleague. Felix undertook the management of the temporal concerns; Fulgentius's province was to preach and instruct.

In the year 499, the country being ravaged by an irruption of the Numidians, the two abbots were

necessitated to fly to Sicca Veneria, a city of the proconsular province of Africa. Here it was, that an Arian priest ordered them to be apprehended and scourged on account of their preaching the consubstantiality of the Son of God. Felix, seeing the executioners seize first on Fulgentius, cried out: "Spare that poor brother of mine, whose delicate complexion cannot bear torments; let them rather be my portion, who am strong of body." They accordingly, at the instigation of this wicked priest, fell on Felix first, and the old man endured their stripes with the greatest alacrity. When it was Fulgentius's turn to experience the same rigorous treatment, he bore the lashes with great patience; but feeling the pain excessive, that he might gain a little respite and recruit his spirits, he requested his judge to give ear to something he had to impart to him. The executioners thereupon being commanded to desist; he began to entertain him with an account of his travels. This savage monster expected nothing more than some overtures to be proposed to him of an intention to yield; but finding himself disappointed, in the utmost rage, ordered his torments to be redoubled. At length having glutted his barbarity, the confessors were dismissed, their clothes rent, their bodies inhumanly torn, and their beards and hair plucked off. The very Arians were

ashamed of such cruelty, and their bishop offered to punish the priest, if Fulgentius would but undertake his prosecution. His answer was, that a Christian is never allowed to seek revenge; and for their parts it was incumbent on them not to lose the advantage of patience, and the blessings accruing from the forgiving of injuries. The two abbots, to avoid an additional effort of the fury of these heretics, travelled to Ididi, on the confines of Mauritania. Here Fulgentius went aboard a ship for Alexandria, being desirous, for the sake of greater perfection, to visit the deserts of Egypt, renowned for the sanctity of the solitaries who dwelt there. But the vessel touching at Sicily, St. Eulalius, abbot at Syracuse, diverted him from his intended voyage, on assuring him, that "a perfidious dissension had severed this country from the communion of Peter,"¹⁵ meaning that Egypt was full of heretics, with whom those that dwelt there were obliged either to join in communion, or be deprived of the sacraments. The liberality and hospitality of Fulgentius to the poor, out of the small pittance he received for his particular subsistence, made Eulalius condemn himself of remissness in those virtues, and for the future imitate so laudable an example.

15 A communione Petri perfida dissension separavit. Vit. S. Fulg. C. 12.

Our saint having laid aside the thoughts of pursuing his voyage to Alexandria, embarked for Rome, to offer up his prayers at the tombs of the apostles. One day, passing through a square called Palma Aurea, he saw Theodoric, the king of Italy, seated on an exalted throne, adorned with pompous state, surrounded by the senate, and his court, with all the grandeur of the city displayed in the greatest magnificence: "Ah!" said Fulgentius, "how beautiful must the heavenly Jerusalem be, if earthly Rome be so glorious! What honor, glory, and joy will God bestow on the saints in heaven, since here in this perishable life he clothes with such splendor the lovers and admirers of vanity!" This happened towards the latter part of the year 500, when that king made his first entry into Rome. Fulgentius returned home in a short time after, and was received with incredible joy. He built a spacious monastery in Byzacena, but retired to a cell himself, which was situate on the seashore. Here his time was employed in writing, reading, prayer, mortification, and the manual labor of making mats and umbrellas of palm tree leaves. Faustus, who was his bishop, obliged him to resume the government of his monastery; and many places at the same time sought him for their bishop. King Thrasimund having prohibited by edict the ordination of orthodox

bishops, several sees by this means had been long vacant and destitute of pastors. The orthodox prelates resolved to remedy this inconvenience, as they effectually did; but the king receiving intelligence of the matter, caused Victor, the primate of Carthage, to be apprehended. All this time our saint lay concealed, though sought after eagerly by many citizens for their bishop. Thinking the danger over, he appeared again: but Ruspa, now a little town called Alfaques, in the district of Tunis, still remained without a pastor; and by the consent of the primate, while detained in the custody of the king's messengers, Fulgentius was forcibly taken out of his cell, and consecrated bishop in 508.

His new dignity made no alteration in his manners. He never wore the orarium, a kind of stole then used by bishops, nor other clothes than his usual coarse garb, which was the same in winter and summer. He went sometimes barefoot: he never undressed to take rest, and always rose to prayer before the midnight office. His diet chiefly consisted of pulse and herbs, with which he contented himself, without consulting the palate's gratification by borrowed tastes: but in more advanced years, finding his sight impaired by such a regimen, he admitted the use of a little oil. It was only in very considerable bodily indispositions, that he suffered a drop or two of

wine to be mingled with the water which he drank; and he never could be prevailed upon in any seeming necessity to use the least quantity of flesh meat, from the time of his monastic profession till his death. His modesty, meekness, and humility, gained him the affection of all, even of the ambitious deacon Felix, who had opposed his election, and whom the saint received and treated with the most cordial charity. His great love for a recluse life induced him to build a monastery near his own house; at Ruspa, which he designed to put under the direction of his ancient friend Felix; but before the building could be completed, or he acquit himself to his wish of his episcopal duties, orders were issued from king Thrasimund, for his banishment to Sardinia, with others to the number of sixty orthodox bishops. Fulgentius, though the youngest of this venerable body, who were transported from Carthage to Sardinia, was notwithstanding their sole oracle in all doubts, and their tongue and pen upon all occasions; and not only of them, but even of the whole church of Africa. What spread a brighter lustre on these amiable qualities, were the humility and modesty with which he always declared his sentiments: he never preferred his counsel to that of another, his opinion he never intruded. Pope Symmachus, out of his pastoral care and charity, sent every year

provisions in money and clothes to these champions of Christ.¹⁶ A letter of this pope to them is still extant,¹⁷ in which he encourages and comforts them; and it was at the same time that he sent them certain relics of SS. Nazarius and Romanus, “that the example and patronage,”¹⁸ as he expresses it, “of those generous soldiers of Christ, might animate the confessors to fight valiantly the battles of the Lord.” Saint Fulgentius, with some companions, converted his house at Cagliari into a monastery; which immediately became the comfort of all in affliction, the refuge of the poor, and the oracle to which the whole country resorted for deciding their controversies without appeal. In this retirement the saint composed many learned treatises for confirming and instructing the faithful in Africa. King Thrasimund, hearing that he was their principal support, and their invincible advocate, was desirous of seeing him; and having accordingly sent for him, appointed him lodgings in Carthage. The king then drew up a set of objections, to which he required his immediate answer: the saint without hesitation complied with, and discharged the injunction; and this is supposed to

¹⁶ Anastas in Symmacho. Bar. Ad ann. 504. Fleury, Liv. 31.

¹⁷ Inter opera Ennodii. T. 4. Conc. Labb. Col. 1300.

¹⁸ Patrocina.

be his book, entitled, *An Answer to Ten Objections*. The king equally admired his humility and learning, and the orthodox triumphed exceedingly in the advantage their cause gained by this piece. To prevent a second time, the same effect, the king, when he sent him new objections, ordered them to be only read to him. Fulgentius refused to give an answer in writing, unless he was allowed to take a copy of them. He addressed, however, to the king an ample and modest confutation of Arianism, which we have under the title of his *Three Books to King Thrasimund*. The prince was pleased with the work, and granted him permission to reside at Carthage; till upon repeated complaints from the Arian bishops of the success of his preaching, which threatened, they said, a total extinction of their sect in Carthage, he was sent back to Sardinia in 520. Being ready to go aboard the ship, he said to a Catholic, whom he saw weeping: "Grieve not, Juliatus!" for that was his name, "I shall shortly return, and we shall see the true faith of Christ flourish again in this kingdom, with full liberty to profess it; but divulge not this secret to any." The event confirmed the truth of the prediction. His humility concealed the multiplicity of miracles which he wrought, and he was wont to say: "A person may be endowed with the gift of miracles, and yet may lose his soul: miracles ensure

not salvation; they may indeed procure esteem and applause; but what will it avail a man to be esteemed on earth, and afterwards be delivered up to hell torments?" If the sick, for whom he prayed, recovered, to avoid being puffed up with vain-glory, he ascribed it wholly to the divine mercy. Being returned to Cagliari, he erected a new monastery near that city, and was exceedingly careful to supply his monks with all necessaries, especially in sickness; but would not suffer them to ask for anything, alleging, "That we ought to receive all things as from the hand of God, with resignation and gratitude." Thus he was sensible how conducive the unreserved denial of the will is for perfecting ourselves in the paths of virtue.

King Thrasimund died in 523, having nominated Hilderic his successor. Knowing him inclined to favor the orthodox, he exacted from him an oath, that he would never restore their profession. To evade this, Hilderic, before the death of his predecessor, signed an order for the liberty of the orthodox churches, but never had the courage to declare himself of the same belief; his lenity having quite degenerated into softness and indolence. However, the professors of the true faith called home their pastors. The ship which brought them back, was received at Carthage with the greatest demonstrations of joy: the shore

echoed far and near with repeated: acclamations, more particularly when Fulgentius appeared on the upper deck of the vessel. The confessors went straight to the church of St. Agileus, to return thanks to God, and were accompanied by thousands; but on their way, being surprised with a sudden storm, the people, to show their singular regard for Fulgentius, made a kind of umbrella over his head with their cloaks to defend him from the inclemency of the storm. The saint hastened to his own church, and immediately set about the reformation of the abuses that had crept in during the persecution, which had now continued seventy years; but this reformation was carried on with a sweetness that won, sooner or later, the hearts of the most vicious. In a council held at Junque, in 524, a certain bishop, named Quodvultdeus, disputed the precedence with our saint, who made no reply, though he would not oppose the council, which ordered him to take the first place. The other resented this as an injury offered to the dignity of his see; and St. Fulgentius, in another council soon after, publicly requested that Quodvultdeus might be allowed the precedence. His talents for preaching were singular; and Boniface, the archbishop of Carthage, never heard him without watering, all the time, the ground with his

tears, thanking God for having given so great a pastor to his church.¹⁹

19 St. Fulgentius, in his first letter, to a gentleman whose wife in a violent sickness had made a vow of continency, proves that a vow of chastity ought not to be made by a person engaged in a married state, without the free consent of the husband. In his second, to Galla, a most virtuous Roman lady, he comforts her upon the death of her husband, who, he says, was only gone a little before her to glory; and he sets before her the divine mercy, which by this means calls her to a more heroic practice of all virtues in the state of widowhood, especially continence, plainness in dress, furniture, and diet, profuse alms-deeds, holy prayer, the exercise whereof ought to be her most assiduous employment. Herein he warns her vanity and pride are our most dangerous enemies, against which we must diligently watch and arm ourselves. In his third letter, addressed to the holy lady Proba, sister to Galla, consecrated to God by a vow of virginity, he shows the excellency of that virtue, and recommends, at length, temperance, penance, perfect humility, as its essential attendants, without which it cannot render a soul the spouse of Christ, who chose her poor, and bestowed on her all she had. In his fourth letter, to the same lady, he puts her in mind of the extreme danger of pride and vainglory, and lays down excellent precepts concerning the necessity of assiduous prayer and compunction; in which spirit we are bound to weep continually before God, imploring his mercy and succor under the weight of our miseries, and to pay him the constant tribute of praise and thanksgiving.

About a year before his death, he secretly retired from all business

ing for all his benefits and gratuitous favors. His letter to the Abbot Eugypius, is a commendation of fraternal charity, a principal fruit of which is, to pray for one another. In the sixth letter, he congratulates with Theodorus, a senator, upon his conversion from the world, promising himself that such an example would have great influence over many: for "those who raised above others by their rank in the world, either draw many with themselves into eternal damnation, or are to many an occasion of salvation." The saint strenuously exhorts him to the study of the most profound humility, which is the only greatness of a Christian, and is always attended with its sister virtue, meekness. The seventh letter of this father is addressed to the illustrious and venerable lady Vennantia, and contains a strong exhortation to the spirit and practice of penance, with advice against despair. The sermons and homilies of St. Fulgentius are usually short: we have near one hundred existing which bear his name, but some of these belong to St. Austin. The danger and evil of presumption and pride, are points which he takes every occasion to inculcate: he teaches that it is impossible to know God, and his benefits and goodness, unless we have a true knowledge of ourselves, and our own frailty and miseries. (Hom. 14, p. 123. Bibl. Patr. Lugdun. T. 9, part 1.) In his sermons and letters, he frequently enforces the obligation of alms-deeds. His other works are chiefly polemical, against the Arians, Pelagians, and Nestorians. In his books against the Sermon of Fastidiosus, (an Arian priest) to Felix the Notary; On the Orthodox Faith, to Donatus, against Fabian; Three

Books to King Thrasimund; Ten answers to Ten Objections of the Arians, etc., he explains the trinity of persons in one divine nature, mildly answers the objections of the Arians, and frequently shows that prayers which are addressed to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost, are addressed to the whole Blessed Trinity. (Lib. 9, contra Fabium, p. 620, etc.) Showing that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are equally to be adored, he distinguishes the worship of *Latria*, or adoration, which is due to God alone, and that of *Dulia*, which is given to creatures, (Ibid. lib. 4, p. 592.) Pinta, an Arian bishop, having published a treatise against our saint's books to king Thrasimund, St. Fulgentius answered him by a work which is lost. For that which we have among his writings, is the performance of some other Catholic controvertists of the same age, as the learned agree. This author's style falls short of St. Fulgentius. He quotes the Scripture according to the Old Italic Version; our saint always makes use of the Vulgate. He understood not the Greek tongue, in which St. Fulgentius was well skilled. And the author of our saint's life mentions, that in his book against Pinta he referred to his books to king Thrasimund, which is not found in this work.

One of the most famous among the writings of St. Fulgentius, is that entitled, On the Two-fold Predestination, to Monimus, in answer to certain difficulties proposed to him by a friend of that name. In the first book he shows, that though God foresees sin, he predestinates no one to evil, but only to good, or to grace and glory. In the second book he proves, that the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood is offered

into a monastery on the little

not to the Father alone, as the Arians pretended, but to the whole Blessed Trinity. In this and the third book he answers certain other difficulties. In his two books, *On the Remission of Sins*, to Euthymius, he proves that sins can never be forgiven without sincere repentance, or out of the pale of the true church. When Peter, a deacon, and three other deputies from the Scythian monks in the East, arrived at Rome, to be informed of the sentiments of the western churches concerning the late errors advanced in the East, against the mystery of the Incarnation, and in the West, by the Semi-pelagians, against the necessity of divine grace, they consulted the sixty African bishops who were at that time in banishment, in Sardinia. St. Fulgentius was pitched upon to send an answer in the name of this venerable company of Confessors. This produced his book, *On the Incarnation and Grace*, in the first part of which he confutes the Nestorians and Eutychians, and in the second the Semi-pelagians. His three books, *On the Truth of Predestination and Grace*, addressed to John the Archimandrite, and Venerius, deacon of Constantinople, are another fruit of the leisure which his exile gave him. In the first part he shows, that grace is the pure effect of the divine goodness and mercy; in the second, that it destroys not free-will; and in the third, that the divine election both to grace and glory is purely gratuitous. In another treatise or letter, to the same John and Venerius, who had consulted the Confessors in Sardinia about the doctrine of Faustus of Riez, he confutes Semi-pelagianism. In the treatise, *On the Incarnation*, to Scarilas, he explains that mystery, showing that the Son became man,

island, or rock, called Circinia, in

not the Father, or the Holy Ghost; and that in God the Trinity destroys not the unity of the nature. Ferrand, the learned deacon of Carthage, consulted St. Fulgentius about the baptism of a certain Ethiopian, who had desired that sacrament, but was speechless and senseless when it was administered to him. Our saint, in a short treatise on this subject, demonstrates this baptism to have been both necessary and valid. By another treatise, addressed to this Ferrand, he answers five questions proposed by him, concerning the Trinity and Incarnation. Count Reginus consulted him, whether the body of Christ was corruptible, and begged certain rules for leading a Christian life in a military state. St. Fulgentius answered the first point, proving that Christ's mortal body was liable to hunger, thirst, pain, and corruption. The second part of moral instructions, which he lived not to finish, was added by Ferrand the deacon. St. Fulgentius's book, *On Faith*, to Peter, is concise and most useful. It was drawn up after the year 523, about the time of his return from Sardinia. One Peter, designing to go to Jerusalem, requested the saint to give him in writing a compendious rule of faith, by studying which he might be put upon his guard against the heresies of that age. St. Fulgentius executed this in forty articles, some copies add forty-one. In these he explains, under anathemas, the chief mysteries of our faith: especially the Trinity, Incarnation, sacrifice of the altar, (cap. 19, p. 475) absolute necessity of the true faith, and of living in the true church, to steadfastness, in which he strongly and pathetically exhorts all Christians in the close of the work, (c. 44, 45.) For if we owe fidelity to our temporal prince,

order to prepare himself for his passage to eternity, which he did with extraordinary fervor. The necessities and importunities of his flock recalled him to Ruspa a little before his exit. He bore the violent pains of his last illness for seventy days with admirable patience, having this prayer almost always in his mouth:²⁰ "Lord, grant me patience now, and hereafter mercy and pardon." The physicians advised him the use of baths; to whom he answered, "Can baths make a mortal man escape death, when his life is arrived at its final period?" He would abate nothing of his usual austerities without an absolute necessity. In his agony, calling for his clergy and monks, who were all in tears, he begged pardon if he had ever offended anyone of them; he

much more to Christ, who redeemed our souls, and whose anger we are bound to fear above all things, nay, as the only evil truly to be dreaded. The writings of this father discover a deep penetration and clear conception, with an admirable perspicuity in the diction; but, seeming apprehensive of not having sufficiently inculcated his matter, he is diffusive, and runs into repetitions. His reasoning is just and close, corroborated by Scripture and tradition. The accurate F. Sirmond published part of his writings, but the most complete edition of them was given at Paris, in 4to, 1684.

20 Domine, da mihi modo patientiam, et postea indulgentiam.

comforted them, gave them some short, moving instructions, and calmly breathed forth his pious soul in the year 533, and of his age the 65th, on the 1st of January, on which day his name occurs in many calendars soon after his death, and in the Roman; but in some few on the 16th of May, perhaps the day on which his relics were translated to Bourges, in France, about the year 714, where they still remain deposited.²¹ His disciple relates, that Pontian, a neighboring bishop, was assured in a vision of his glorious immortality. The veneration for his virtues was such, that he was interred within the church, contrary to the law and custom of that age, as is remarked by the author of his life. St. Fulgentius proposed to himself St. Austin for a model; and, as a true disciple, imitated him in his conduct, faithfully expounding his doctrine, and imbibing his spirit.

St. Odilo, or Olon,

21 See Gall. Christ. Nov. T. 1, p. 121, and Baillet, p. 16. The written relation of this translation is a production of the tenth century, and deserves no regard; but the constant tradition of the church and country proves the translation to have been made. (See Hist. Liter. De la France. T. 6, p. 265.) The church in which these relics are venerated at Bourges, is called St. Fulgenius's. The saint's head is in the church of the archbishop's seminary, which was anciently an abbey, and named Monte-mayen.