

dome, St. Bennet's, &c. under their own general. The strictest union has always subsisted between the sister congregations of St. Vanne and St. Maur, and both adopt almost the same constitutions.

ST. BENIGNUS, OR BINEN, BISHOP.

HE was a disciple of St. Patrick by whom he was appointed to the see of Armagh, after that apostle had resigned it. He was eminent for piety and virtue, and for the gentleness of his disposition; and resigned his see three years before his death, which happened in 468. See Colgan and Ware.

NOVEMBER. X.

ST. ANDREW AVELLINO, C.

See his life, written five years after his death, by F. John Baptist Castaldo, Pr. of his Order, printed at Naples, 1613.

A. D. 1608.

ST. ANDREW AVELLINO was a native of Castro Nuovo, a small town in the kingdom of Naples, and born in 1520. In his infancy he gave early tokens of the most happy dispositions to virtue. At school he had the fear of God always before his eyes, and dreaded the very shadow of the least sin. A beautiful complexion exposed his chastity to several snares and dangers: which he escaped by assiduous prayer, mortification, watchfulness over himself, and care in shunning all dangerous company. To pretend a desire to serve God, and resist the world and vice, without a strenuous application to all the exercises of virtue, especially penance and prayer, he called a

vain and foolish illusion. In the strait passage which leads to life we are sure to meet with many temptations and persecutions, which the world and the devil will not fail to raise against us. And, as watermen, who row against the wind and tide, exert their whole strength in plying their oars, so must we strive with all our might to maintain and daily gain ground against our malicious enemies, and the unruly sway of our passions. If any one lets go his hold, his soul, like a boat driven with the tide, will speedily be hurried into the gulf from which he may never be recovered. Andrew never looked back, and never lost sight of the goal to which he strove happily to arrive. After mature deliberation he took the ecclesiastical tonsure, and was sent to Naples to study the civil and canon law. Being there promoted to the degree of doctor in laws, and to the dignity of the priesthood, he began to plead such cases in the ecclesiastical court, as the canons allow clergymen to undertake. This employment, however, engrossed his thoughts, too much dissipated his mind, and insensibly weakened his affections for holy meditation and prayer. A fault into which he fell opened his eyes, and made him see the precipice which lay before him. Once in pleading a cause in a matter indeed which was of no weight, a lie escaped him; for which, upon reading these words of holy scripture, *The mouth that lieth killeth the soul*, he was struck with so great remorse and deep compunction, that he resolved immediately to renounce his profession, and to give himself up entirely to a penitential life, and to the spiritual care of souls. This he did with so great ardour, that his whole conduct was a model of perfect virtue.

The archbishop judging no one more proper than Andrew to be the director of souls that were engaged by the obligations of their state in

the career of evangelical perfection, committed to him the care of a certain nunnery in that city. The holy man's zeal for removing all obstacles to the recollection of those spouses of Christ, in which consists the very essence of their state and virtue, stirred up the malice and rage of certain wicked men in the city, whom he had forbid being ever admitted to the grate to speak to any of the nuns. He once narrowly escaped death, with which they threatened him, and another time received three wounds in his face. These injuries he bore with invincible meekness, being ready with joy to lay down his life for the spiritual interest of souls, and for the defence of justice and virtue. Out of an earnest desire of more readily attaining to a perfect disengagement of his heart from all earthly things, in 1556 he embraced at Naples the rule of the Regular Clerks, called Theatins, in whom flourished at that time, to the great edification of the whole city, the religious spirit and fervour which they had inherited of St. Cajetan, who died there in the convent of St. Paul, in 1547. Our saint, out of the love he bore to the cross, on this occasion changed his name of Lancelot into that of Andrew. By the humiliations and persecutions which he had met with even amongst his dearest friends, (which trials are always the most severe to flesh and blood,) he learned what incomparable sweetness and spiritual advantages are found in suffering with patience and joy, and in studying in that state to conform ourselves to the holy spirit and sentiments of Christ crucified for us. Nor can it be conceived what improvement a soul makes by this means in experimental perfect meekness, in patience, humility, and the crucifixion of self-love, and all her passions, by which Christ (or his Spirit) begins to live in her, and to establish the reign of his pure love in all her affections. Of this St. Andrew was an example.

To bind himself the more strictly to the most fervent pursuit of perfect virtue in all his actions, he made two private vows which only an extraordinary impulse of fervour could suggest, or, even according to the necessary rules of Christian prudence, make allowable or lawful, for fear of sacrilegious transgressions, or scrupulous anxious fears. The first was, perpetually to fight against his own will: the second, always to advance to the utmost of his power in Christian perfection. Wonderful were his abstinence and exterior mortifications, and the indifference with which he treated his body: but much more his love of abjection and hatred of himself, that is, of his flesh and his own will. He bore without the least disturbance of mind the barbarous murder of his nephew; and, not content to withdraw all his friends from prosecuting the assassin, became himself an earnest suppliant to the judges for his pardon. His exactitude in the observance of regular discipline in every point, and his care to promote the same in others, especially whilst he was superior in his Order, were equal to the ardour of his zeal for the divine honour in all things. All the hours that were free from exterior employments of duty or charity, were by him devoted to prayer and contemplation; and these were the source of his interior eminent spirit of piety and charity, by which his labours in the conversion and direction of innumerable souls were miraculously successful. By the eminent sanctity of many of both religious and secular persons who had the happiness to be his penitents, it appeared visible that saints possess the art of forming saints.¹

¹ Amongst his disciples, F. Laurence Scupoli deserves to be mentioned. This holy man was a native of Otranto, and, having gone through the course of his studies, lived with his parents till he was forty years of age, when he addressed himself to St. Andrew Avellino, by whom he was ad-

Cardinal Paul Aresi, bishop of Tortona, the author of many works of piety and ecclesiastical learning, and the Mæcenas, of his age, had a particular esteem for our saint, and often made

mitted to the religious habit in the convent of St. Paul's at Naples, on the 25th of January, in 1570. After some time spent in retirement and holy meditation, by order of his superiors he displayed his extraordinary talents in preaching and in the care of souls at Placentia, Milan, Genoa, Venice, and Naples. This ministry he continued to the great profit and comfort of many for a considerable time. But the trial of the just was yet wanting to perfect his sanctification. God, therefore, permitted him to fall into violent persecutions, through slanders and jealousies, by which he was removed from serving the public. He bore all injuries and all calumnies, even against his angelic purity, with silence, interior joy, and perfect tranquillity of mind, and, shutting himself up in his cell, lived rather in heaven than on earth, dead to the world and to himself, and entirely absorbed in the contemplation of divine things. His love of poverty and humility appeared in the meanness of his habit, cell, and whatever he made use of; and, by the perfect crucifixion of his affections he was so disentangled from all earthly things as to seem scarce to live any longer in a mortal body. The fruit of his retirement was the incomparable book entitled, *The Spiritual Combat*; wherein he lays down the best remedies against all vices, and the most perfect maxims of an interior life in a clear concise style, which, in the original Italian, breathes the most affecting sincere simplicity, humility and piety. A spiritual life he shows to be founded in perfect self-denial, and the most sincere sentiments of humility and distrust in ourselves on one side, and, on the other, in an entire confidence in God, and profound sense of his goodness, love, and mercy. By reading this golden little book St. Francis of Sales conceived the most ardent desire of Christian perfection, carried it fifteen years in his pocket, and read something in it every day, always with fresh profit, as he assures us: he strongly recommends it to others in several of his letters. Scupoli concealed his name in this work, but it was prefixed to it by his superiors after his happy death, which happened in the convent of St. Paul on the 28th of November, in the year 1610, the eightieth of his age. See *Hist. de Clercs Reguliers*, l. 6. part 2.

The *Spiritual Combat* was first printed at Venice in 1589,

use of his advice and assistance in the most important affairs. St. Charles Borromeo did the same, and obtained of him some religious men formed by his hand, and animated with his spirit, for the foundation of a convent of his Order, at Milan. That great saint had nothing so much at heart as such a reformation of the clergy, that all amongst them might be replenished with the spirit of the apostles. For this end so many Orders of regular canons and clerks have been instituted, from St. Austin down to our time. Yet into their houses, through the negligence of superiors, and the propensity of the human heart

It ran through near fifty editions before the death of the author: in the first edition it had only twenty-four chapters, but these the author had increased to sixty in the edition of 1608, two years before his death. The first French translations have only thirty-three chapters: but that printed at Paris in 1608 contains sixty chapters, and is dedicated to St. Francis of Sales, who died only in 1622. F. Scupoli made still some additions, so that at his death it contained sixty-six chapters. It is translated into Latin, French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Flemish, Greek, and Armenian. See the dates of these editions in the preface to the Latin edition given by F. Contini at Verona in 1747. We have three Latin translations: 1st, of F. Meazza, Theatin of Verona: 2d, of Lorichius, professor at Fribourg, afterward a Carthusian monk: 3d, of F. Mazotti, Theatin of Verona. This father lived afterward at Paris, and there corrected the beautiful Italian edition of this work in folio, at the royal press at the Louvre, in 1659. The best French translations were those of Mazotti and du Bue, Theatins, and that of F. Brignon, Jesuit, which, from the year 1688, in which it first appeared, to this day, has the preference. F. Scupoli also wrote a little treatise, entitled, *The Peace of the Soul; or, The Path of Paradise*, often translated with the *Spiritual Combat*. Likewise three other treatises which are still only extant in the original Italian; 1. *The Manner of assisting the Sick*. 2. *On the the manner of reciting the Rosary*. 3. *A little addition to The Spiritual Combat*, in thirty-eight short chapters, never finished. *The Meditations on the Passion, Thoughts on Death, and Prayers*, added in some editions, are not Scupoli's; those on the Passion were writ by Verana, a pious Italian.

to the gratification of its passions, the spirit of the world has too often found admittance to the aggravation of the scandal. For the same purpose have congregations of secular clergy, living in common without vows, been sometimes erected: amongst which scarcely any was more famous than that of Windesheim, established by Gerard the Great, or Groot, in Holland, who died in the odour of sanctity in 1384, leaving his plan to be finished by his worthy successor, Dr. Florentius: it was continued in the same spirit by John Cacabus or Kettel.¹ St. Charles Bor-

¹ See the lives of these three holy men, written by Thomas-à-Kempis, that great comtemplative and pious canon regular in the convent of Mount St. Agnes, near Zwoll in Overysell, where he made his profession in 1400, and died in 1471, in the ninety-first year of his age. In his youth he studied in the school of these secular clerks, who lived in community. Whether he composed or only copied the incomparable book, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, is a question of small importance, though it has produced so many prolix and elaborate dissertations, and so many warm contests; of which an account is given by Thuillier, in an express dissertation, prefixed to the posthumous works of Mabillon and Ruinart. That the author was a monk, or at least a religious man, consequently not the learned and pious John Gerson, the chancellor of Paris, as Du-Pin and some others pretended, is clear from the author's own words. Abbé Valart, in a French dissertation inserted in his neat and correct edition of the *Imitation of Christ*, published at Paris in 1758, enforces the proofs of the Benedictins and their partisans, that the author was not Thomas-à-Kempis, that he lived in the thirteenth century, and that he was a Benedictin abbot at Vercelli, named John Gessen or Gersen. A Canon Regular of St. Genevieve, published a neat and methodical reply under this title: "*Dissertation sur le Vêritable Auteur du Livre de l'Imitation, &c. pour servir de reponse à celle de M. l'Abbe Valart,*" in which he demonstrates that no Benedictin abbot or John Gersen was St. Antony of Padua's master at Vercelli (as Sedulius and Valart advance) but one Thomas, a canon regular of St. Victor's at Paris, then abbot of St. Andrew's at Vercelli, and a famous professor in theology; he questions the authority of those who say that Ludolf of Saxony translated *The Imitation of Christ* into German about the year 1330. But his arguments to disprove the claim which is made in

romeo had a design of engaging his canon to live in this manner in common without vows; but the execution was prevented by his death. He had, soon after he was made archbishop, pitched upon the Theatins, whom St. Andrew had formed to a perfect ecclesiastical spirit, to set before the eyes of his clergy a model and living example from which they might learn the apostolic spirit of the most perfect disengagement from the world. Our saint founded new convents of his Order at Placentia, and in some other places; and was honoured by God with the gifts of prophecy and miracles. After having given the world an example of the most heroic virtues, being broken with labours and old age, he was seized with an apoplexy at the altar as he was beginning mass, at those words, *Introibi ad altare Dei*; which he repeated thrice, and was not able to proceed. He was prepared for his passage by the holy sacraments, and calmly resigned his soul into the hands of his Creator, on the 16th

favour of the unknown abbot Gersen, are more solid than those by which he endeavours to vindicate Kempis's title to this work. Kempis's other works bear evident testimony to his extraordinary sanctity, and spirit of prayer and contemplation; whether the style has any affinity with that of The Imitation of Christ, let others judge. The Flandrican idiotisms on which Sanders, Foppens, &c., lay great stress, seem not clearer than several Italicisms. It is to conform to the opinion which has been most common, and because no other's claim is made out, that this book is quoted in this work under the name of Kempis, who was at least a copier. The author was doubtless a saint, and the more happy in his holy retirement and constant conversation with heaven, as he found the art of living entirely concealed from the world. It is the privilege of this book to make saints, and to be the pocket companion of all devout persons; this book being the genuine effusion of a perfect Christian spirit. It is, says Fontenelle, the most excellent book that ever came from the hand of man, the holy scriptures being of divine original. The Spiritual Combat may be called its key or introduction.

of November, 1608. His body is kept with honour in the church of his convent of St. Paul at Naples; and he was canonized by Clement XI.

This saint was a fit instrument of the Holy Ghost, in directing others in the path of perfect virtue, because dead to himself, and a man of prayer. He never spoke of himself, never thought of his own actions except of his weaknesses, which he had always before his eyes in the most profound sense of his own nothingness, baseness, total insufficiency, and weakness. Those who talk often of themselves, discover that they are deeply infected with the disease of the devil, which is pride, or with the poison of vanity, its eldest daughter. They have no other reward to expect, but what they now receive, the empty breath of sinners. Even this incense is only affected hypocrisy. For men, by that base passion which they betray, become justly contemptible and odious to those very persons whose vain applause they seem to court. St. Teresa advises all persons to shun such directors, as pernicious to souls, both by the contagion of self-conceit and vain-glory which they spread, and by banishing the Holy Ghost with his light and blessing; for nothing is more contrary to him than a spirit of vanity and pride. The most perfect disinterestedness, contempt of the world, self-denial, obedience, and charity, are no less essential ingredients of a Christian, and especially an ecclesiastical spirit, than meekness and humility. The vows of Regular Canons, and their strictest rules only point out what are the duties, and what ought essentially to be the spirit of every clergyman by the obligation of his state, without the tie of particular vows, as the example of Christ and his apostle shows.