

*My eyes prevented the watches : I was troubled, and I spoke not. I had in my mind the eternal years. Lo ! I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness.*(1) This constant meditation on eternity often broke his rest, and made sleep to flee from his eyes ; this animated him with fervour in his retirement, and perpetual penance, and made him watch whole nights in sighs and tears to implore the divine mercy. In this solitude his employment was sometimes to pour forth his soul in songs of praise, and to entertain himself on the sweet motives of the divine love ; sometimes the remembrance of eternal joys comforted his soul, and gave him already a kind of foretaste of them ; and he often considered the terrors of the divine judgments, and the eternal torments prepared for sinners, being strongly affected with the dread of that which is of all others the most grievous, the pain of loss, or the everlasting privation of God. In a feeling meditation on this subject, he puts the following words in the mouth of a damned soul : " Add new tortures to the racks which I endure : may a million of fresh executioners tear me for all eternity, provided I be not totally deprived of my God. The most piercing flames will be to me soft roses ; the fury of devils agreeable embraces ; the horrible shrieks of these dungeons a pleasant harmony ; these frightful prisons delightful palaces, could I but be freed from what I feel by the loss of God."(2)

#### ST. FAITH OR FIDES, V. AND COMPANIONS, MM.

AMONG those Christians whose invincible constancy triumphed over the malice of Dacian, prefect of Gaul under Dioclesian and Maximian, none was more illustrious than St. Faith. She was born at Agen in Aquitain, and, though of exquisite beauty, was insensible to all the allurements of the world. When she was apprehended and brought before Dacian, making the sign of the cross on different parts of her body, she uttered this prayer : " Lord Jesus, who art always ready to assist thy servants, fortify me at this hour, and enable me to answer in a manner worthy of you." The tyrant, assuming an air of mildness, asked her : " What is your name ?" she answered : " My name is Faith, and I endeavour to support in reality what that

(1) Ps. liv. 8.

(2) S. Bruno, op. p. 511.

name signifies." Dacian: "What is your religion?" Faith: "I have from my infancy served Christ, and to him I have consecrated my whole soul." Dacian: "Come, child, have some regard for your youth and beauty; renounce the religion you profess, and sacrifice to Diana who is a divinity of your own sex, and who will bestow on you the most precious gifts." Faith: "The divinities of the Gentiles are devils: how then can you advise me to sacrifice to them?" Dacian in a rage, said: "What! do you presume to call our gods devils; you must resolve instantly to offer sacrifice, or expire under torments." The saint calling to mind the courage of the martyrs and the glorious crown promised to those who persevered to the end, far from being terrified at the menaces of the tyrant, felt herself inflamed with a new desire to die for her Lord: "No," cried she, "I not only am prepared to suffer every torment for Christ, but I burn with impatience to die for him." Dacian, more enraged than ever, ordered a brazen bed to be produced, and the saint to be bound on it with iron chains. A great fire was kindled under it, the heat of which was rendered still more intolerable by the addition of oil, and other inflammable matter. The spectators, struck with pity and horror, exclaimed: "How can the tyrant thus torment an innocent young virgin only for worshipping God!" Hereupon Dacian apprehended numbers of them; and as these refused to sacrifice, they were beheaded with St. Faith. See the genuine acts of the saint, which are very short. Surius and Labbe give other acts which are longer, but in these there are interpolations, and an account of miracles not sufficiently warranted. See also the commentaries of F. Ghesquier, one of the continuators of Bolandus, 6 Oct. t. 3, p. 263.\*

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\* Some Martyrologies put St. Caprais among the companions of St. Faith; but, according to the best MSS. of the Martyrology attributed to St. Jerom, and according to Ado, Usuard, Wandelbert, and the modern Roman Martyrology, he did not suffer till the 20th of October. The acts of St. Faith, given by Surius, mention St. Primus and St. Felician as her companions, but the genuine acts neither mention them, nor St. Caprais. A St. Primus and a St. Felician who suffered at Rome, and whose relics were discovered in 648, on the Nomentan way, according to Anastasius in the life of Pope Theodore, are honoured on the 9th of June. Two martyrs of the same name are honoured at Agen, and a portion of their relics, with those of St. Faith, are preserved in that city. Her acts in

St. Dulcitius, bishop of Agen, about the middle of the fifth century, deposited the relics of St. Faith in a church which he built at Agen, and translated those of her companions, and St. Caprais, to another church in that city. The history of this translation, which seems to have been written by an eye-witness, may be seen in the acts of St. Faith, published by Surius and Labbe. The place where the bodies of these holy martyrs were concealed for fear of the persecutors, is still held in veneration. About the year 886, the relics of St. Vincent of Agen, martyr, and of St. Faith were removed to the abbey of Conques in Rouergue, and thence to the new church of that abbey in 1050: a portion of those of St. Faith was given by Pope Urban V., to the monks of Cucufat in Catalonia, in 1365, and an arm of the saint was formerly kept at Glastenbury. St. Faith is titular saint of several churches in France, particularly that of Longueville in Normandy, which was enriched by Walter Gifford, earl of Buckingham in England. She was also patroness of the priory of Horsham in the county of Norfolk, founded by Robert Fitzwalter and his wife Sybila, and endowed with great privileges by Henry I. The subterraneous chapel of St. Faith, built under St. Paul's in London, was also very famous, as Dugdale remarks in his history of this church.

Good example is one of the strongest incentives to virtue. Woe to us, if we harden our hearts against the salutary impressions, which the heroic virtue and examples of so many saints ought to make upon us. The companions of the martyrdom of St. Faith, fired by seeing the glorious conflict and trophies of the holy virgin, arrived themselves at an equal crown. And can we read the lives of so many illustrious saints, without reproaching ourselves for our base ingratitude to God, and repeated abuse of divine grace, and without aspiring to an imitation of their zeal, devotion, charity, humility, compunction, and fervour?

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Surius are of the fifth or sixth age, (*Hist. Lit. de la Fr.*) The body of St. Primus, and a principal part of the relics of St. Felician of Rome, were kept in that city in 846. (*Ghesquier, loc. cit. p. 270.*) It is not therefore improbable that SS. Primus and Felician of Agen suffered with St. Faith, or very soon after.