

God alone, to arrive at his pure love, and to do his will in all things, is that simplicity or singleness of heart of which we speak, and which banishes all inordinate affections of the heart, from which arise the most dangerous errors of the understanding. This is the essential disposition of every one who sincerely desires to live by the spirit of Christ. That divine spouse of souls, loves to communicate himself to such. (1) His conversation (or as another version has it, his secret) is with the simple. (2) His delight is in those who walk with simplicity. (3) This is the characteristic of all the saints; (4) whence the Holy Ghost cries out, "Approach him not with a double heart." (5) That worldly wisdom is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be. (6) Its intoxication blinds men, and shuts their eyes to the light of divine revelation. They arrogate to themselves the exclusive privilege of learning and clear understanding: but the scepticism, the pitiful inconsistencies, and monstrous extravagancies which characterise their writings and discourses, make us blush to see so strong an alliance of ignorance and presumption; and lament that the human mind should be capable of falling into a state of so deplorable degeneracy. Among the fathers of the church we admire men the most learned of their age, the most penetrating and most judicious, and at the same time, the most holy and sincere; who, being endowed with true simplicity of heart, discovered in the mysteries of the cross the secrets of infinite wisdom, which they made their study, and the rule of their actions.

ST. FELIX OF NOLA, P. AND C.

It is observed by the judicious Tillemont, with regard to the life of this saint, that we might doubt of its wonderful circumstances, were they not supported by the authority of a Paulinus; but that great miracles ought to be received with the greater veneration, when authorized by incontestable vouchers.

St. Felix was a native of Nola, a Roman colony in Campania, fourteen miles from Naples, where his father Hermias, who was by birth a Syrian, and had served in the army, had purchased an estate and settled himself. He had two sons, Felix and Hermias, to whom at his death he left his patrimony. The younger sought preferment in the world among the lovers of

(1) 1 Par. xxix. 17.

(2) Prov. iii. 32.

(3) Prov. xi. 20.

(4) 2 Cor. i. 12.

(5) Eccles. i. 39.

(6) Rom. viii. 7.

vanity, by following the profession of arms, which at that time was the surest road to riches and honours. Felix, to become in effect what his name in Latin imported, that is *happy*, resolved to follow no other standard than that of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. For this purpose, despising all earthly things, lest the love of them might entangle his soul, he distributed the better part of his substance among the poor, and was ordained. Reader Exorcist, and, lastly, priest, by Maximus, the holy bishop of Nola; who, charmed with his sanctity and prudence, made him his principal support in those times of trouble, and designed him for his successor.(1)

In the year 250, the Emperor Decius raised a bloody persecution against the church. Maximus, seeing himself principally aimed at, retired into the desert, not through the fear of death, which he desired, but rather not to tempt God by seeking it, and to preserve himself for the service of his flock. The persecutors not finding him, seized on Felix, who in his absence was very vigilant in the discharge of all his pastoral duties. The governor caused him to be scourged; then loaded with bolts and chains about his neck, hands, and legs, and cast into a dungeon, in which, as St. Prudentius informs us,(2) the floor was spread all over with potsherds and pieces of broken glass, so that there was no place free from them, on which the saint could either stand or lie. One night an angel appearing in great glory, filled the prison with a bright light, and bade St. Felix go and assist his bishop, who was in great distress. The confessor seeing his chains fall off, and the doors open, followed his guide, and was conducted by heaven to the place where Maximus lay, almost perished with hunger and cold, speechless, and without sense: for, through anxiety for his flock, and the hardships of his solitary retreat, he had suffered more than a martyrdom. Felix, not being able to bring him to himself, had recourse to prayer; and discovering thereupon a bunch of grapes within reach, he squeezed some of the juice into his mouth, which had the desired effect. The good bishop no sooner beheld his friend Felix, but he embraced him, and begged to be conveyed back to his church. The saint taking him on his shoulders, carried him to his episcopal house in the city, before day appeared, where a pious ancient woman took care of him.(3)

(1) St. Paulin. Carm. 19, 20. See Natali. 4.

(2) De Cor. hymn. 5.

3) Paulin. Carm. 19

Felix, with the blessing of his pastor, repaired secretly to his own lodgings, and there kept himself concealed, praying for the church without ceasing, till peace was restored to it by the death of Decius, in the year 251. He no sooner appeared again in public, but his zeal so exasperated the pagans, that they came armed to apprehend him; but though they met him, they knew him not; they even asked him where Felix was, a question he did not think proper to give a direct answer to. The persecutors going a little further, perceived their mistake, and returned; but the saint in the mean time had stept a little out of the way, and crept through a hole in a ruinous old wall, which was instantly closed up by spiders' webs. His enemies never imagining any thing could have lately passed where they saw so close a spiders' web, after a fruitless search elsewhere, returned in the evening without their prey. Felix finding among the ruins, between two houses, an old well half dry, hid himself in it for six months; and received during that time wherewithal to subsist by means of a devout Christian woman. Peace being restored to the church by the death of the emperor, the saint quitted his retreat, and was received in the city as an angel sent from heaven.

Soon after, St. Maximus dying, all were unanimous for electing Felix bishop; but he persuaded the people to make choice of Quintus, because the older priest of the two, having been ordained seven days before him. Quintus, when bishop, always respected St. Felix as his father, and followed his advice in every particular. The remainder of the saint's estate having been confiscated in the persecution, he was advised to lay claim to it, as others had done, who thereby recovered what had been taken from them. His answer was, that in poverty he should be the more secure of possessing Christ.⁽¹⁾ He could not even be prevailed upon to accept what the rich offered him. He rented a little spot of barren land, not exceeding three acres, which he tilled with his own hands, in such manner as to receive his subsistence from it, and to have something left for alms. Whatever was bestowed on him, he gave immediately to the poor. If he had two coats, he was sure to give them the better; and often exchanged his only one for the rags of some beggar. He died in a good old age, on the fourteenth of January, on which day the Martyrology, under

(1) *Dives egebo Deo; nam Christum pauper habebo.* Paulin. Carm. 20 Natali S. Felicis 5.

the name of St. Jerom, and all others of later date mention him. Five churches have been built at, or near the place, where he was first interred, which was without the precincts of the city of Nola. His precious remains are at present kept in the cathedral; but certain portions are at Rome, Benevento, and some other places. Pope Damasus, in a pilgrimage which he made from Rome to Nola, to the shrine of this saint, professes, in a short poem which he composed in acknowledgment, that he was miraculously cured of a distemper through his intercession.

St. Paulinus, a Roman senator in the fifth age, forty-six years after the death of St. Damasus, came from Spain to Nola, desirous of being porter in the church of St. Felix. He testifies, that crowds of pilgrims came from Rome, from all other parts of Italy, and more distant countries, to visit his sepulchre on his festival: he adds, that all brought some present or other to his church, as wax candles to burn at his tomb, precious ointments, costly ornaments, and such like; but that for his part, he offered to him the homage of his tongue, and himself, though an unworthy victim.(1) He everywhere expresses his devotion to this saint in the warmest and strongest terms, and believes that all the graces he received from heaven were conferred on him through the intercession of St. Felix. To him he addressed himself in all his necessities; by his prayers he begged grace in this life, and glory after death.(2) He describes at large the holy pictures of the whole history of the Old Testament, which were hung up in the church of St. Felix, and which inflamed all who beheld them, and were as so many books that instructed the ignorant. We may read with pleasure the pious sentiments the sight of each gave St. Paulinus.(3) He relates a great number of miracles that were wrought at his tomb, as of persons cured of various distempers and delivered from dangers by his intercession, to several of which he was an eye-witness. He testifies, that he himself had frequently experienced the most sensible effects of his patronage, and, by having recourse to him, had been speedily succoured.(4) St. Austin also has given an account of many miracles performed at his shrine.(5) It was

(1) ——— *Ego munere linguæ.
Nudus opum, famulor, de me mea debita solvens,
Meque ipsum pro me, vilis licet hostia, pendam.* Natal 6.

(2) Nat. 1, 2, &c. (3) Nat. 9, 10.

(4) St. Paulin. Ep. 28 and 36. Carm. 13. 18. 21, 22, 23. 29. &c.

(5) St. August. Ep. 78. olim 137. and lib. De curâ pro mortuis, c. 16.

not formerly allowed to bury any corpse within the walls of cities. The church of St. Felix, out of the walls of Nola, not being comprised under this prohibition, many devout Christians sought to be buried in it, that their faith and devotion might recommend them after death to the patronage of this holy confessor, upon which head St. Paulinus consulted St. Austin. The holy doctor answered him by his book, *On the Care for the Dead*: in which he shows, that the faith and devotion of such persons would be available to them after death, as the suffrages and good works of the living in behalf of the faithful departed are profitable to the latter. See the poems of St. Paulinus on his life, confirmed by other authentic ancient records, quoted by Tillemont, t. 4. p. 226. and Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*, p. 256. Muratori, *Anecd. Lat.*

SS. ISAIAS, SABBAS,

AND thirty-eight other holy solitaries on mount Sinai, martyred by a troop of Arabians, in 273; likewise Paul, the abbot; Moses, who by his preaching and miracles had converted to the faith the Ishmaelites of Pharan; Psaes, a prodigy of austerity, and many other hermits in the desert of Raithe, two days' journey from Sinai, near the Red Sea, were massacred the same year by the Blemmyans, a savage infidel nation of Ethiopia. All these anchorets lived on dates, or other fruits, never tasted bread, worked at making baskets in cells at a considerable distance from each other, and met on Saturdays, in the evening, in one common church, where they watched and said the night office, and on the Sunday received together the Holy Eucharist. They were remarkable for their assiduity in prayer and fasting. See their acts by Ammonius, an eye witness, published by F. Combefis; also Bulteau, *Hist. Mon. d'Orient*, l. 2. c. 1. p. 209.

Also, many holy anchorets on mount Sinai, whose lives were faithful copies of Christian perfection, and who met on Sundays to receive the Holy Eucharist, were martyred by a band of Saracens in the fifth century. A boy of fourteen years of age led among them an ascetic life of great perfection. The Saracens threatened to kill him, if he did not discover where the ancient monks had concealed themselves. He answered, that death did not terrify him, and that he could not ransom his life by a sin in betraying his fathers. They bade him put off his clothes: "After you have killed me," said the modest youth, "take my