

# **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 Two

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# February

February 1

## St. Ignatius Bishop of Antioch

Martyr

*From his genuine epistles; also from the acts of his martyrdom, St. Chrys. Hom. in St. Ignat. M. t. 2, p. 592, Ed. Nov. Eusebius. See Tillemont, t. 2, p. 191. Cave, t. 1, p. 100.*

*Dom Ceillier, Dom Marechal, Concordance des Peres Grecs et Latins, t. 1, p. 58.*

*A. D. 107*

St. Ignatius, surnamed Theophorus,<sup>1</sup> a word implying a divine or heavenly person, was a zealous convert and an intimate disciple of St. John the Evangelist, as his acts assure us; also the apostles SS. Peter and Paul, who united their labors in planting the faith at Antioch.<sup>2</sup> It was by their

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1 The accent placed on the penultima of  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\phi\omicron\rho\omicron\varsigma$ , as the word is written in the saint's acts, denotes it of an active signification, one that carrieth God; but of the passive, carried of God, if placed on the antepenultima.

2 St. Gregory tells us, (0. 4, ep. 37,) that he was a disciple of St. Peter. The apostolic constitutions add, also of St. Paul, (1. 7, c. 46.) We are assured by St. Chrysostom (Hom., in St. Ignat.) and Theodoret, (Dial. 1, p. 33,) that he was made bishop by the direction of the apostles, and by the imposition of their hands. St. Chrysostom says, that St. Peter appointed him bishop to govern the see of Antioch, when he quitted it himself; which seems also to be affirmed by Origen, (in Luc. Hom.. 6,) St. Athanasius, (de Syn. p. 922,) Facundus, etc. Baronius thinks he was left by St. Peter, bishop of the Jewish converts, and became bishop also of the Gentiles in 68: for Eusebius (Hist. 1. 3, c. 22, 36.) says, that St. Evodius succeeded St. Peter at Antioch; he adds in his chronicle, in the year 43, that he died in 68, and was succeeded by St. Ignatius. Some think there is a mistake in the chronicle of Eusebius, as to the year of the death of Evodius, and that this happened before the martyrdom of St. Peter, who appointed St. Ignatius his successor. See Cotelier, not. p. 299. Tillem. not. t. 2, p. 619. The Greek



direction that he succeeded Evodius in the government of that important see, as we are told by St. Chrysostom,<sup>3</sup> who represents him as a perfect model of virtue in that station, in which he continued upwards of forty years. During the persecution of Domitian, St. Ignatius defended his flock by prayer, fasting, and daily preaching the word of God. He rejoiced to see peace restored to the church on the death of that emperor, so far as this calm might be beneficial to those committed to his charge: but was apprehensive that he had not attained to the perfect love of Christ, nor the

dignity of a true disciple, because he had not as yet been called to seal the truth of his religion with his blood, an honor he somewhat impatiently longed for. The peaceable reign of Nerva lasted only fifteen months. The governors of several provinces renewed the persecution under Trajan his successor: and it appears from Trajan's letter to Pliny the younger, governor of Bithynia, that the Christians were ordered to be put to death, if accused; but it was forbid to make any inquiry after them. That emperor sullied his clemency and bounty, and his other pagan virtues, by incest with his sister, by an excessive vanity, which procured him the surname of *Parietum*, (or dauber of every wall with the inscriptions of his name and

Menaea mentions Evodius on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September.

<sup>3</sup> Hom, in St. Ignat, t. 2, p. 592. See also Theodoret, Dial. 1, p. 33.

actions,) and by blind superstition, which rendered him a persecutor of the true followers of virtue, out of a notion of gratitude to his imaginary deities, especially after his victories over the Daci and Scythians in 101 and 105. In the year 106, which was the ninth of his reign, he set out for the East on an expedition against the Parthians, and made his entry into Antioch on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 107, with the pomp of a triumph. His first concern was about the affair of religion and worship of the gods, and for this reason he resolved to compel the Christians either to acknowledge their divinity and sacrifice to them, or suffer death in case of refusal.

Ignatius, as a courageous soldier, being concerned only for his flock, willingly suffered himself to be taken, and carried before Trajan, who thus accosted him: "Who art thou, wicked demon, that durst transgress my commands, and persuade others to perish?" The saint answered: "No one calls Theophorus a wicked demon." Trajan said: "Who is Theophorus?" Ignatius answered: "He who carrieth Christ in his breast." Trajan replied: "And do not we seem to thee to bear the gods in our breasts, whom we have assisting us against our enemies?" Ignatius said: "You err in calling those gods who are no better than devils: for there is only one God, who made heaven and earth, and all things that are in

them: and one Jesus Christ his only Son, into whose kingdom I earnestly desire to be admitted." Trajan said: "Do not you mean him that was crucified under Pontius Pilate?" Ignatius answered: "The very same, who by his death has crucified with sin its author, who overcame the malice of the devils, and has enabled those, who bear him in their heart, to trample on them." Trajan said: "Dost thou carry about Christ within thee?" Ignatius replied, "Yes; for it is written: I will dwell and walk in them."<sup>4</sup> Then Trajan dictated the following sentence: "It is our will that Ignatius, who saith that he carrieth the crucified man within himself, be bound and conducted to Rome, to be devoured there by wild beasts, for the entertainment of the people." The holy martyr, hearing this sentence, cried out with joy: "I thank thee, O Lord, for vouchsafing to honor me with this token of perfect love for thee, and to be bound with chains of iron, in imitation of thy apostle Paul, for thy sake." Having said this, and prayed for the church, and recommended it with tears to God, he joyfully put on the chains, and was hurried away by a savage troop of soldiers to be conveyed to Rome. His inflamed desire of laying down his life for Christ, made him embrace his sufferings with great joy.

On his arrival at Seleucia, a seaport, about sixteen miles from Antioch, he was put on board a ship which was to coast the southern and western parts of Asia Minor. Why this route was pitched upon, consisting of so many windings, preferably to a more direct passage from Seleucia to Rome, is not known; probably to render the terror of his punishment the more extensive, and of the greater force, to deter men from embracing and persevering in the faith: but providence seems to have ordained it for the comfort and edification of many churches. Several Christians of Antioch, taking a shorter way, got to Rome before him, where they waited his arrival. He was accompanied thither from Syria by Reus, Philo, a deacon, and Agathopodus, who seem to have written these acts of his martyrdom. He was guarded night and day, both by sea and land, by ten soldiers, whom he calls ten leopards, on account of their inhumanity and merciless usage: who, the kinder he was to them, were the more fierce and cruel to him. This voyage, however, gave him the opportunity of confirming in faith and piety the several churches he saw on his route; giving them the strictest caution against heresies and schism, and recommending to them an inviolable attachment to the tradition of the apostles. St. Chrysostom adds, that he taught them admirably to

despise the present life, to love only the good things to come, and never to fear any temporal evils whatever. The faithful flocked from the several churches he came near, to see him, and to render him all the service in their power, hoping to receive benefit from the plenitude of his benediction. The cities of Asia, besides deputing to him their bishops and priests, to express their veneration for him, sent also deputies in their name to bear him company the remainder of his journey; so that he says he had many churches with him. So great was his fervor and desire of suffering, that by the fatigues and length of the voyage, which was a very bad one, he appeared the stronger and more courageous. On their reaching Smyrna, he was suffered to go ashore, which he did with great joy, to salute St. Polycarp, who had been his fellow disciple under St. John the Evangelist. Their conversation was upon topics suitable to their character, and St. Polycarp felicitated him on his chains and sufferings in so good a cause. At Smyrna he was met by deputies of several churches, who were sent to salute him. Those from Ephesus were Onesimus, the bishop; Burrhus, the deacon; Crocus, Euplus, and Pronto. From Magnesia in Lydia, Damas the bishop, Bassus and Apollo, priests, and Sotio, deacon. From Tralles, also in Lydia, Polybius the bishop. From Smyrna, St.

Ignatius wrote four letters: in that to the church of Ephesus, he commends the bishop Onesimus, and the piety and concord of the people, and their zeal against all heresies, and exhorts them to glorify God all manner of ways: to be subject, in unanimity, to their bishop and priests; to assemble, as often as possible, with them in public prayer, by which the power of Satan is weakened: to oppose only meekness to anger, humility to boasting, prayers to curses and reproaches, and to suffer all injuries without murmuring. He says, that because they are spiritual, and perform all they do in a spiritual manner, that all, even their ordinary actions, are spiritualized, because they do all in Jesus Christ. That he ought to have been admonished by them, but his charity would not suffer him to be silent: wherefore he prevents them, by admonishing first, that both might meet in the will of God. He bids them not be solicitous to speak, but to live well, and to edify others by their actions; and recommends himself and his widow-church of Antioch to their prayers. Himself he calls their out-cast, yet declares that he is ready to be immolated for their sake, and says they were persons who had found mercy, but he a condemned man: they were strengthening in grace, but he struggling in the midst of dangers. He calls them

fellow travelers in the road to God, which is charity, and says they bore God and Christ in their breasts, and were his temples, embellished with all virtues, and that he exulted exceedingly for the honor of being made worthy to write to them, and rejoice in God with them: for setting a true value on the life to come, they loved nothing but God alone. Speaking of heretics, he says, that he who corrupts the faith for which Christ died, will go into unquenchable fire, and also he who heareth him. It is observed by him, that God concealed from the devil three mysteries: the virginity of Mary, her bringing forth, and the death of the Lord: and he calls the eucharist the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, by which we always live in Christ. "Remember me, as I pray that Jesus Christ be mindful of you. Pray for the church of Syria, from whence I am carried in chains to Rome, being the last of the faithful who are there. Farewell in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, our common hope." The like instructions he repeats with a new and most moving turn of thought, in his letters to the churches of Magnesia, and of the Trallians; inculcates the greatest abhorrence of schism and heresy, and begs their prayers for himself and his church in Syria, of which he is not worthy to be called a member, being the

last of them.<sup>5</sup> His fourth letter was

5 In his letter to the Magnesians, after saluting them, he says, he rejoices exceedingly in their charity and faith, and adds: "Having the honor to bear a name of divine dignity, on account of the chains which I carry, I sing the glory of the churches, and wish them the union of the flesh and spirit of Jesus Christ our perpetual life, of faith, and of charity, than which nothing is more excellent; and what is chiefest, of Jesus and the Father, in whom, bearing with patience the whole power of the prince of this world, and escaping him, we shall possess God." The saint much commends their bishop Damas, and exhorts them to yield him perfect obedience, notwithstanding his youth. Setting death before their eyes as near at hand to everyone, he puts them in mind that we must bear the mark of Jesus Christ, (which is charity) not that of the world. "If we are not ready to die, in imitation of his sufferings, his life is not in us," says he. "I recommend to you that you do all things in the concord of God, the bishop presiding for God, the priests in the place of the college of the apostles, and my dearest deacons, to whom is the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before all ages, and has appeared in the end. Therefore, following the same conduct, respect one another, and let no one consider his neighbor according to the flesh, but ever love each other in Jesus Christ. As the Lord did nothing without the Father, so neither do you anything without the priests. Meeting together, have one prayer, one mind, one hope in charity, in holy joy. All of you meet as in one church of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who proceeds from one Father, exists in one, and returns to him in uni-

written to the Christians of Rome.

ty." He cautions them against admitting the Jewish ceremonies, and against the errors of the Docetes. Then adds: "I shall enjoy you in all things if I am worthy. For though I am in chains, I am not to be compared to any one of you who enjoy your liberty. I know there is in you no pride; for you have Jesus Christ within you. And when I commend you, I know that you are more confounded, as it is written: "The just man is his own accuser." (Prov. 18:18) He again tenderly exhorts them to concord, and to obedience to their bishop, and commends himself, that he may attain to God and his church, of which he is not worthy to be called one, to their prayers, adding: "I stand much in need of your united prayer and charity in God, that the church in Syria may deserve to be watered by your church."

The epistle to the Trallians he begins thus: "I know that your sentiments are pure, your hearts inseparable in patience and meekness, which is not passing, but as it were natural; as I learn from your bishop Polybius who congratulated with me in my chains in Christ Jesus, in such manner that in him I beheld your whole multitude. Receiving through him your good will in God, I gloried, finding you to be, as I knew, imitators of God. As you are subject to the bishop as to Christ, you seem not to live according to men, but according to Jesus Christ." He bids them respect the deacons (whom he calls the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ) as the precept of Christ; the priests as the senate of God, and the bishop as representing God. "Without these the very name of a church is not given," says he: "I know many things in God, but I measure myself, lest by glorying I perish. Now have reason more to fear:

The saint knew the all-powerful efficacy of the prayers of the saints, and feared lest they should obtain of God his deliverance from death. He therefore besought St. Polycarp and others at Smyrna, to join their prayers with his, that the cruelty of the wild beasts might quickly rid the world of him, that he might be presented before Jesus Christ. With this view he wrote to the faithful at

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nor must I listen to those who speak kindly to me; for they who speak to commend me, scourge me. I desire indeed to suffer: but I know not whether I am worthy. Though I am in chains, and understand heavenly things, the ranks of angels and principalities, things visible and invisible; am I on this account a disciple? for many things are wanting to us that were be not separated from God. I conjure you, not I, but the charity of Jesus Christ, to use Christian food, and to refrain from foreign weed, which is heresy. Heretics join Jesus Christ with what is defiled, giving a deadly poison in a mixture of wine and honey, which they who take, drink with pleasure their own death without knowing it. Refrain from such; which you will do if you remain united to God, Jesus Christ, and the bishop, and the precepts of the apostles. He who is within the altar is clean, but he who is without it, that is, without the bishop, priests, and deacons, is not clean." He adds his usual exhortations to union, and begs their prayers for himself and his church, of which he is not worthy to be called one, being the last of them, and yet fighting in danger. "May my spirit sanctify you, not only now, but also when I shall enjoy God."

Rome, to beg that they would not endeavor to obtain of God that the beasts might spare him, as they had several other martyrs; which might induce the people to release him, and so disappoint him of his crown.

The ardor of divine love which the saint breathes throughout this letter, is as inflamed as the subject is extraordinary. In it he writes: "I fear your charity, lest it prejudice me: for it is easy for you to do what you please; but it will be difficult for me to attain unto God if you spare me. I shall never have such an opportunity of enjoying God: nor can you, if ye shall now be silent, ever be entitled to the honor of a better work. For if ye be silent in my behalf, I shall be made partaker of God; but if ye love my body, I shall have my course to run again. Therefore, a greater kindness you cannot do me, than to suffer me to be sacrificed unto God, while the altar is now ready; that so becoming a choir in love, in your hymns ye may give thanks to the Father by Jesus Christ, that God has vouchsafed to bring me, the bishop of Syria, from the East unto the West, to pass out of the world unto God, that I may rise again unto him. Ye have never envied anyone. Ye have taught others. I desire, therefore, that you will firmly observe that which in your instructions you have prescribed to others. Only pray for me, that God would give me both inward



and outward strength, that I may not only say, but do: that I may not only be called a Christian, but be found one: for if I shall be found a Christian, I may then deservedly be called one; and bethought faithful, when I shall no longer appear to the world. Nothing is good that is seen. A Christian is not a work of opinion, but of greatness, when he is hated by the world. I write to the churches, and signify to them all, that I am willing to die for God, unless you hinder me. I beseech you that you show not an unseasonable good will towards me. Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, whereby I may attain unto God: I am the wheat of God, and I am to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the beasts to my sepulcher, that they may leave nothing of my body, that, being dead, I may not be troublesome to any. Then shall I be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not see so much as my body. Pray to Christ for me, that in this I may become a sacrifice to God. I do not, as Peter and Paul, command you; they were apostles, I am an inconsiderable person: they were free, I am even yet a slave. But if I suffer, I shall then become the freeman of Jesus Christ, and shall arise a freeman in him. Now I am in bonds for him, I learn to have no worldly or vain desires. From Syria even unto Rome, I fight

with wild beasts, both by sea and land, both night and day, bound to ten leopards, that is, to a band of soldiers; who are the worse for kind treatment. But I am the more instructed by their injuries; yet am I not thereby justified.<sup>6</sup> I earnestly wish for the wild beasts that are prepared for me, which I heartily desire may soon dispatch me; whom I will entice to devour me entirely and suddenly, and not serve me as they have done some whom they have been afraid to touch; but if they are unwilling to meddle with me, I will even compel them to it.<sup>7</sup> Pardon me this matter, I know what is good for me. Now I begin to be a disciple. So that I have no desire after anything visible or invisible, that I may attain to Jesus Christ. Let fire, or the cross, or the concourse of wild beasts, let cutting or tearing of the flesh, let breaking of bones and cutting off limbs, let the shattering in pieces of my whole body, and all the wicked torments of the devil come upon me, so I may but attain to Jesus Christ. All the compass of the earth, and the kingdoms of this world, will profit me nothing. It is better for me to die for the sake of Jesus Christ, than to rule unto the

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6 1 Cor. 4:4.

7 Not that he would really excite the beasts to dispatch him, without a special inspiration, because that would have been self-murder: but this expresses the courage and desire of his soul.

ends of the earth. Him I seek who died for us. Him I desire who rose again for us. He is my gain at hand. Pardon me, brethren: be not my hindrance in attaining to life, for Jesus Christ is the life of the faithful, while I desire to belong to God, do not ye yield me back to the world. Suffer me to partake of the pure light. When I shall be there, I shall be a man of God. Permit me to imitate the passion of Christ my God. If anyone has him within himself, let him consider what I desire, and let him have compassion on me, as knowing how I am straitened. The prince of this world endeavors to snatch me away, and to change the desire with which I burn of being united to God. Let none of you who are present attempt to succor me. Be rather on my side, that is, on God's. Entertain no desires of the world, having Jesus Christ in your mouths. Let no envy find place in your breasts. Even were I myself to entreat you when present, do not obey me; but rather believe what I now signify to you by letter. Though I am alive at the writing of this, yet my desire is to die. My love is crucified. The fire that is within me does not crave any water; but being alive and springing within, says: Come to the Father. I take no pleasure in the food of corruption, nor in the pleasure of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, and for drink,

his blood, which is incorruptible charity. I desire to live no longer according to men; and this will be, if you are willing. Be, then, willing, that you may be accepted by God. Pray for me that I may possess God. If I shall suffer, ye have loved me: if I shall be rejected, ye have hated me. Remember in your prayers the church of Syria, which now enjoys God for its shepherd instead of me. I am ashamed to be called of their number, for I am not worthy, being the last of them, and an abortive: but through mercy I have obtained that I shall be something, if I enjoy God." The martyr gloried in his sufferings as in the highest honor, and regarded his chains as most precious jewels. His soul was raised above either the love or fear of anything on earth; and, as St. Chrysostom says, he could lay down his life with as much ease and willingness as another man could put off his clothes. He even wished, every step of his journey, to meet with the wild beasts; and though that death was most shocking and barbarous, and presented the most frightful ideas, sufficient to startle the firmest resolution; yet it was incapable of making the least impression upon his courageous soul. The perfect mortification of his affections appears from his heavenly meekness; and he expressed how perfectly he was dead to himself and the world, living only to God in his heart, by

that admirable sentence: "My love is crucified."<sup>8</sup> To signify, as he explains himself afterwards, that his appetites and desires were crucified to the world, and to all the lusts and pleasures of it.

The guards pressed the saint to leave Smyrna, that they might arrive at Rome before the shows were over. He rejoiced exceedingly at their hurry, desiring impatiently to enjoy God by martyrdom. They sailed to Troas, where he was informed that God had restored peace to his church at Antioch: which freed him from the anxiety he had been under, fearing lest there should be some weak ones in his flock. At Troas he wrote three other letters, one to the church of Philadelphia, and a second to the Smyrnaeans, in which he calls the heretics who denied Christ to have assumed true flesh, and the eucharist to be his flesh, wild beasts in human shape; and forbids all communication with them, only allowing them to be prayed for, that they may be brought to repentance, which is very difficult. His last letter is addressed to St. Polycarp, whom he exhorts to labor for Christ without sparing himself; for the measure of his labor will be that of his reward.<sup>9</sup> The style of the martyr ev-

erywhere follows the impulses of a burning charity, rather than the rules of grammar, and his pen is never able to express the sublimity of his thoughts. In every word there is a fire and a beauty not to be paralleled: everything is full of a deep sense. He everywhere breathes the most profound humility and contempt of himself as an abortive, and the last of men; a great zeal for the church, and abhorrence of schisms; the most ardent love of God and his neighbor, and tenderness for his own flock: begging the prayers of all the churches in its behalf to whom he wrote, and entreating of several that they would send an embassy to his church at Antioch, to comfort and exhort them. The seven epistles of this apostolic father, the same which were quoted by St. Irenæus,

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us gives it at the head of his epistle. In directing his other letters, and saluting other churches, he only writes: "To the blessed church which is at Ephesus:" Τῇ Ἰῶση ἐν Εφεσῶ· "at Magnesia near the Meander: at Tralles: at Philadelphia: at Smyrna:" but in that to the Romans he changes his style, and addresses his letter: "To the beloved church which is enlightened, (by the will of him who ordaineth all things which are according to the charity of Jesus Christ our God,) which presides in the country of the Romans, ἡτις προκάθηται ἐν τοπῶ χόρον Ρωμαίων, worthy of God, most adorned, justly happy, most commended, fitly regulated and governed, most chaste, and presiding in charity, etc."

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8 Ο ἑμός ἐρωσ ἐστάνρωται.

9 See an account of these two last in the life of St. Polycarp. Orsi draws a proof in favor of the supremacy of the see of Rome, from the title which St. Ignati-

Origen, Eusebius, St. Athanasius, St. Chrysostom, Theodoret, Gildas, etc., are published genuine by Usher, Vossius, Cotelier, etc., and in English by archbishop Wake, in 1710.

St. Ignatius, not being allowed time to write to the other churches of Asia, commissioned St. Polycarp to do it for him. From Troas they sailed to Neapolis in Macedonia, and went thence to Philippi, from which place they crossed Macedonia and Epirus on foot; but took shipping again at Epidamnum in Dalmatia, and sailing by Rhegium and Puteoli, were carried by a strong gale into the Roman port, the great station of the navy near Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, sixteen miles from Rome. He would gladly have landed at Puteoli, to have traced St. Paul's steps, by going on foot from that place to Rome, but the wind rendered it impracticable. On landing, the authors of these acts, who were his companions, say they were seized with great grief, seeing they were soon to be separated from their dear master; but he rejoiced to find himself so near the end of his race. The soldiers hastened him on, because the public shows were drawing to an end. The faithful of Rome came out to meet him, rejoicing at the sight of him, but grieving that they were so soon to lose him by a barbarous death. They earnestly wished that he might be released at the request of the peo-

ple. The martyr knew in spirit their thoughts, and said much more to them than he had done in his letter on the subject of true charity, conjuring them not to obstruct his going to the Lord. Then kneeling with all the brethren, he prayed to the Son of God for the Church, for the ceasing of the persecution, and for perpetual charity and unanimity among the faithful. He arrived at Rome the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, the last day of the public entertainments, and was presented to the prefect of the city, to whom the emperor's letter was delivered at the same time. He was then hurried by the soldiers into the amphitheater. The saint hearing the lions roar, cried out: "I am the wheat of the Lord; I must be ground by the teeth of these beasts to be made the pure bread of Christ." Two fierce lions being let out upon him, they instantly devoured him, leaving nothing of his body but the larger bones: thus his prayer was heard. "After having been present at this sorrowful spectacle," say our authors, "which made us shed many tears, we spent the following night in our house in watching and prayer, begging of God to afford us some comfort by certifying us of his glory." They relate, that their prayer was heard, and that several of them in their slumber saw him in great bliss. They are exact in setting down the day of his death, that they might assemble yearly thereon to

honor his martyrdom.<sup>10</sup> They add, that his bones were taken up and carried to Antioch, and there laid in a chest as an inestimable treasure. St. Chrysostom says his relics were carried in triumph on the shoulders of all the cities from Rome to Antioch. They were first laid in the cemetery without the Daphnetic gate, but in the reign of Theodosius the younger were translated thence with great pomp to a church in the city, which had been a temple of Fortune, but from this time bore his name, as

Evagrius relates.<sup>11</sup> St. Chrysostom exhorts all people to visit them, assuring them they would receive thereby many advantages, spiritual and corporal, which he proves at length.<sup>12</sup> They are now at Rome, in the church of St. Clement, pope, whither they were brought about the time when Antioch fell into the hands of the Saracens in the reign of Heraclius, in 637.<sup>13</sup> The regular canons at Arouaise near Bapaume in Artois, the Benedictine monks at Liesse in Haynault, and some other churches, have obtained each some bone of this glorious martyr.<sup>14</sup> The Greeks keep his feast a holyday on the day of his death, the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. His martyrdom happened in 107.

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10 According to the common opinion, St. Ignatius was crowned with martyrdom in the year 107. The Greek copies of a homily of the sixth age, *On the False Prophets*, among the works of St. Chrysostom, say on the 20<sup>th</sup>; but Bede, in his *Martyrology*, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December. Antoni Pagi, convinced by the letter of Dr. Loyde, bishop of St. Asaph's, places his martyrdom about the end of the year 116: for John Malalas of Antioch tells us the great earthquake, in which Dion Cassius mentions that Trajan narrowly escaped at Antioch, happened in that journey of Trajan in which he condemned St. Ignatius. Now Trajan marching to the Parthian war, arrived at Antioch on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, in 113, the sixteenth year of his reign: and in his return from the East, above two years later, passed again through Antioch in 116, when this earthquake happened. St. Ignatius suffered at Rome towards the end of that year. Le Quien prefers this date, because it best agrees with the chronology of his successors to Theophilus. *Oriens Christ*, t. 2, p. 700.

The perfect spirit of humility, meekness, patience, charity, and all other Christian virtues, which the seven epistles of St. Ignatius breathe in every part, cannot fail deeply to affect all who attentively read them. Critics confess that they find in them a sublimity, an energy and beauty of thought and expression, which they cannot sufficiently admire. But the Christian is far more astonished at the saint's perfect disengagement of heart from the world, the ardor of his love for God, and the earnest-

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11 Evagr. *Hist. Eccl.* l. 1, c. 16, Ed. Vales.

12 Or. In S. Ignat. T. 3, p. 6000. Ed. Nov.

13 See Baron. *Annal.* Ad an. 637, and Not. Ad Martyr. Rom. ad 17 Dec.

14 See Henschenius, *Feb. t. 1*, p. 35.

ness of his desire of martyrdom. Every period in them is full of profound sense, which must be attentively meditated on before we can discover the divine sentiments of all virtues which are here expressed. Nor can we consider them without being inspired by some degree of the same, and being covered with confusion to find ourselves fall so far short of the humility and fervor of the primitive saints. Let us listen to the instructions which this true disciple of Christ gives in his letter to the Philadelphians, an abstract of his other six epistles being given above. He begins it by a strenuous recommendation of union with their bishop, priests, and deacons; and gives to their bishop (whom he does not name) great praises, especially for his humility and meekness, insomuch that he says his silence was more powerful than the vain discourses of others, and that conversing with an unchangeable serenity of mind, and in the sweetness of the living God, he was utterly a stranger to anger. He charges them to refrain from the pernicious weeds of heresy and schism, which are not planted by the Father, nor kept by Christ. "Whoever belong to God and Jesus Christ, these are with the bishop. If anyone follows him who maketh a schism, he obtains not the inheritance of the kingdom of God. He who walks in the simplicity of obedience is not

enslaved to his passion. Use one eucharist: for the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ is one, and the cup is one in the unity of his blood. There is one altar, as there is one bishop, with the college of the priesthood and the deacons, my fellow servants, that you may do all things according to God. My brethren, my heart is exceedingly dilated in the tender love which I bear you, and exulting beyond bounds, I render you secure and cautious; not I indeed, but Jesus Christ, in whom being bound I fear the more for myself, being yet imperfect. But your prayer with God will make me perfect, that I may obtain the portion which his mercy assigns me." Having cautioned them against adopting Jewish ceremonies, and against divisions and schisms, he mentions one that had lately happened among them, and speaks of a revelation which he had received of it as follows: "When I was among you, I cried out with a loud voice, with the voice of God, saying: Hearken to your bishop, and the priesthood, and the deacons. Some suspected that I said this from a foresight of the division which some afterwards made. But he for whom I am in chains is my witness, that I knew it not from man, but the Spirit declared it, saying: Do ye nothing without your bishop. Keep your body holy as the temple of God. Be lovers of unity; shun all divisions. Be ye imitators of

Jesus Christ, as he is of the Father. I therefore did what lay in me, as one framed to maintain union. Where disagreement or anger is found, there God never dwells. But God forgives all penitents." He charges them to send some person of honor from their church to congratulate with his church in Syria upon peace being restored to it, and calls him blessed who should be honored with this commission.

## St. Pionius

Martyr

He was priest of Smyrna, a true heir of the spirit of St. Polycarp, an apostolic man, who converted multitudes to the faith. He excelled in eloquence, and in the science of our holy religion. The paleness of his countenance bespoke the austerity of his life. In the persecution of Decius, in 250, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, he was apprehended with Sabina and Asclepiades, while they were celebrating the anniversary festival of St. Polycarp's martyrdom. Pionius, after having fasted the eve with his companions was forewarned thereof by a vision. On the morning after their solemn prayer, taking the holy bread (probably the eucharist) and water, they were surprised and seized by Polemon, the chief priest, and the guardian of the temple. In prolix interrogatories before him, they resisted all

solicitations to sacrifice; professed they were ready to suffer the worst of torments and deaths rather than consent to his impious proposals, and declaring that they worshipped one only God, and that they were of the Catholic church. Asclepiades being asked what God he adored, made answer: "Jesus Christ." At which Polemon said: "Is that another God?" Asclepiades replied: "No; he is the same they have just now confessed." A clear confession of the consubstantiality of God the Son, before the council of Nicea. Being all threatened to be burnt alive, Sabina smiled. The pagans said: "Dost thou laugh? thou shalt then be led to the public stews." She answered: "God will be my protector on that occasion." They were cast into prison, and preferred a lower dungeon, that they might be more at liberty to pray when alone. They were carried by force into the temple, and all manner of violence was used to compel them to sacrifice. Pionius tore the impious garlands which were put upon his head, and they resisted with all their might. Their constancy repaired the scandal given by Eudaemon, the bishop of Smyrna, there present, who had impiously apostatized and offered sacrifice. In the answers of St. Pionius to the judges, and in all the circumstances of his martyrdom, we admire the ardent piety and courage of one who had entirely devoted himself to God,