

may quote the Cypriot legend concerning St. Barnabas,<sup>1</sup> the notorious translation of St. Denis to Ratisbonne,<sup>2</sup> the life of St. Maurus by the so-called Faustus, who was no other than Odo of Glanfeuil,<sup>3</sup> and the Passion of St. Placidus by Peter the Deacon, under the name of Gordian.<sup>4</sup> The monk of Glastonbury, who recast the legend of St. Joseph of Arimathea<sup>5</sup> and the first authors of the apostolic legends of France can scarcely plead their good faith before the tribunal of history. One can only turn contemptuously away, even while marvelling at the simplicity of their dupes.

<sup>1</sup> *Acta SS.*, June, vol. ii., pp. 431-52. See also Duchesne, *St. Barnabé* in *Mélanges G. B. de Rossi*, pp. 45-49.

<sup>2</sup> *Neues Archiv für aeltere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, vol. xv., pp. 340-58.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. i., pp. 1039-50, 1051-52.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct., vol. iii., pp. 114-38.

<sup>5</sup> P. Paris, *De l'origine et du développement des romans de la Table ronde in Romania*, vol. i., 1872, pp. 457-82.

[The following appears in the 3d edition on page 104, at the place noted]

The Passion of St. Lawrence in that which concerns the torture of the *gril*, which it does not seem possible to bring into accord with the second edict of Valerian,<sup>1</sup> allows a strange inspiration to be seen. In the Orient another legend on other martyrs occurs which is too similar to allow for simple coincidence.<sup>2</sup> In the curious history of St. Cassian of Imola one recognizes more than one reminiscence<sup>3</sup>: that of the schoolmaster punished by Furius Camillus<sup>4</sup> and the feature (that of the stilettos) of the passion of St. Mark of Arethusa.<sup>5</sup>

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CLASSIFICATION OF HAGIOGRAPHIC TEXTS.

Defective System—Classification according to Subjects—According to Categories of Saints—System Adopted. Historical Point of View—Division into six classes—Application of System to Ruinart's *Acta sincera*—The "Supplements" of Le Blant.

It may be useful at this stage to summarise the preceding pages while attempting to draw up a system of classification by means of which it will be possible to arrange in groups the majority of what may be called hagiographic documents.

We may leave out of account purely external divisions founded on the subject of the narrative such as Passions, Biographies, Translations, Miracles, or even on the literary form, as Metrical, or Rhymed Lives and so on. This mechanical kind of classification scarcely affords any indication of the historical value of the documents. Thus it would be a mistake to conclude from the circumstance of a hagiographer writing in verse, that he has necessarily profited by the licence that we are agreed in according to poets. Mediæval poets are often as ingenious in turning their original text into hexameters as they are lacking in inspiration and poetic invention.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A curious example of this may be seen in the *Versus domni Bertharii abbatis de miraculis almi Patris Benedicti* (M.G., *Poet. Lat. aevi carol.*, vol. iii., pp. 394-98), in which book ii. of the Dialogues of St. Gregory is turned into verse, chapter by chapter.

Another system of classification, and at first sight more logical, would consist in grouping the documents under the various categories of saints. In point of fact, hagiographic literature treats of a large and varied assortment of personages who do not all possess equally valid claims on public veneration. There are, in the first place, those whose cultus has been canonically established by the Church and has received the sanction of centuries. St. Lawrence in the Church of Rome, St. Cyprian in that of Africa, and St. Martin in that of Gaul, belong incontestably to this class, and we possess the Acts of each one of them.

Next to them come those real personages devotion to whom was in the first instance irregularly established, whatever consecration it may have acquired through length of usage. We have already pointed out that the word "sanctus" did not always possess the very precise significance that it bears to-day, and that it has been the means of conferring the honours of a tardy canonisation on more than one bishop, known only for his orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> It may be remembered that all the pious personages of whom St. Gregory the Great recalled the virtues in his Dialogues ultimately took their places among the saints of the Latin Church,<sup>2</sup> just as the hermits of whom Theodoret wrote the biography suddenly found themselves during their very life-time incorporated in the annals of the Greek Church through some caprice of the hagiographers.<sup>3</sup> It has even happened that worthy individuals on whom their contemporaries had never conferred the aureole of sanctity, have been raised to the ranks of the martyrs or the

<sup>1</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xviii., pp. 406-11. [The subject has been taken up with great development in our work *Sanctus*, Brussels, 1927.]

<sup>2</sup> *Civiltà Cattolica*, series xv., vol. vi., 1894, pp. 292-305, 653-69.

<sup>3</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xiv., pp. 420-21.

Blessed as the result of some special circumstances. Such a one is Cassiodorus, who became, no one quite knows how, a martyr of the early centuries.<sup>1</sup> And how frequently has not the discovery of a tomb or of a group of bodies whose identity could not be definitely established given rise to some local devotion which has often enjoyed a lengthy popularity? The greater number of these saints, unauthentic in varying degrees, have none the less found hagiographers ready to do honour to them.

The long lists of the saints furnish us with yet a third category, relatively few in number, but not on that account to be neglected: the imaginary personages to whom a real existence has ultimately been attributed. Some of them have a purely literary origin. We have already referred to various heroes of romance and of hagiographic tales transformed into historical personages and gradually becoming a nucleus of devotion. The reader will remember the *chanson de geste* of Amis and Amile who were killed by Ogier the Dane near Mortara in the Montferrat district. Their history was transformed into a saint's life and they were honoured with a chapel at Novara, Milan, and possibly other places.<sup>2</sup> The poem of Flores and Blanche fleur would have given birth to a St. Rosana—whose life was even printed—had not the Roman authorities intervened.<sup>3</sup> Other fictitious saints owed their origin to some iconographic accident, as, for example, the celebrated St. Liberata or Wilgefortis (called in English St. Uncumber) who was represented as a bearded

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 21 and 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta SS.*, Oct., vol. vi., pp. 124-26.

<sup>3</sup> Al. d'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano*, 2nd edition, vol. i., p. 437; vol. ii., p. 60. See also H. Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher*, vol. ii., 1, 1885, p. 227.

woman nailed to a cross, and whose legend was inspired by one of those draped crucifixes of which the *Volto Santo* of Lucca offers the best-known example.<sup>1</sup>

We need not insist very strongly on the inconveniences of a classification of hagiographic documents in strict accordance with these various categories of saints. It is obvious that there need be no intimate relation between the subject of a narrative and its historical value. Thus it happens that saints as celebrated and as well-authenticated as St. Lawrence and St. Agnes are chiefly known to us by legendary Acts, while, on the other hand, various saints of the second category are provided with quite fairly authentic title-deeds. This common and most regrettable anomaly suggests a number of embarrassing problems that cannot always be solved. When historical records are lacking it is often possible to supplement their silence by the help of other documents, and to establish the fact of a traditional veneration by martyrologies, itineraries, monuments, etc.<sup>2</sup> When this means of identification fails it becomes impossible to decide in which of the three categories we should place a saint whose name legend has handed down to us. Thus if, in the case of St. Sebastian, we had nothing but his Acts on which to base our judgment, we might feel concerning him the same hesitation as about St. Martina, who appears to have been unknown to anti-

<sup>1</sup> *Acta SS.*, July, vol. v., pp. 50-70; A. Lutolf, *Sanct Kümerniss und die Kümernisse der Schweizer in Geschichtsfreund*, vol. xix., 1863, pp. 183-205; G. Schnürer, *Die Kümernissbilder als Kopien des Volto Santo von Lucca in the Jahresbericht der Görres-Gesellschaft*, 1901, pp. 43-50; *Id.*, *Der Kultus des Volto Santo und der hl. Wilgefortis in Freiburg in the Freiburger Geschichtsblätter*, vol. ix., 1902, pp. 74-105; *Id.*, *Ueber Alter und Herkunft des Volto Santo von Lucca, in Römische Quartalschrift*, vol. xxxiv, 1926, p. 271-306. Cf. *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxii, p. 482; vol. xxiii, p. 128.

[<sup>2</sup> Midway on this page, Delehayé "opened up" this paragraph to discuss the documentation of the lives of St. George and St. Theodore; much of this material is drawn from his own work, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires. Ed.*]

quity.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it likely that we shall ever obtain decisive evidence for placing St. Catherine or St. Barbara in either the first or the second category of the saints.

Under these circumstances we must have recourse to the one and only principle which allows of a strict classification of the Acts of the martyrs and of hagiographic documents in general; they must be classed by the degree of truth and historic value they possess. The following results have been arrived at by the application of this principle as far as the main divisions are concerned.

1. The *official reports* of the interrogatories of martyrs are entitled in theory to the first place in importance. The existence of records of this nature deposited in the archives of the proconsul has been attested by more than one witness. The question is whether any of these *procès-verbaux* have been preserved.

It might be objected that such official records do not come within the scope of any category of hagiographic documents, and that, strictly speaking, we ought not to take them into consideration. Such a protest would, however, be quite superfluous, for it does not require prolonged investigation to ascertain that no *procès-verbal* of the times of persecution has come down to us in a separate and unadulterated form; the documents which are honoured with the title of Proconsular Acts are, at best, compositions intended for the edification of the faithful, in which the official text of the interrogatory, scrupulously respected, forms the main portion of the narrative. Thus it happens that the most celebrated of all these documents, which has

<sup>1</sup> Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri, *S. Martina in the Römische Quartalschrift*, vol. xvii., 1903, pp. 222-36.

been held up to us as the most perfect model of Proconsular Acts, the *Passio Cypriani*, is, in reality, a composite record in which one must distinguish three separate documents strung together by a few phrases of their latest editor: first, the official text of an early interrogatory in 257, as the result of which Cyprian was sent into exile; then the official report of the arrest and the second interrogatory in 258; finally the account of the martyrdom. In the Passion of the Scillitan martyrs the hand of the hagiographer is less visible. One hears only the words of the martyrs and their persecutor, and one is present at the carrying out of the sentence. Was the interrogatory copied in the proconsular office, or did some Christian in the audience take it down in shorthand? It would be difficult to decide this point, but it is safe to affirm that the editor has introduced nothing of his own into the phrases he places on the lips of the martyrs.

These authentic interrogatories are always quite admirable, and even after so many centuries the emotions they excite have lost nothing of their intensity. If anything could spoil the impression they produce it would be the clumsy imitations which are to be found far too frequently in the passionaries. In the dramatic scenes devised by hagiographers to emphasise the heroism of his sacrifice, the martyr poses as though he were on the stage, and gives utterance to academic orations. In point of fact nothing is easier than to recognise authentic "consular acts". But we have reluctantly to admit that very few are in existence.

2. A second category of authentic Acts comprises the *accounts of eye-witnesses*, and others worthy of confidence, or of well-informed contemporaries recording the testimonies of other eye-witnesses. In these

narratives, which are of a literary character, considerable space is accorded to the subjective element, an element which is entirely absent from the purely official Acts. It follows that we may carry the analysis farther and subdivide this category under three headings:—

(a) Documents in which the witness alone speaks in his own name.

(b) Those in which a contemporary author restricts himself to chronicling the testimony of others.

(c) Those in which personal observation is added to the testimony, as in several chapters of Eusebius's *Martyrs of Palestine*, and in the life of Cyprian by the Deacon Pontius. But all these varieties have this in common, that they express directly, without the intervention of any written source, an oral and contemporary testimony.

3. The third category is composed of Acts of which the principal source is a written document belonging to one or other of the preceding categories. It includes every degree of remodelling from simple editorial corrections as regards the arrangement of the composition and details of development, up to the free recasting of the original which a fresh editor quarries from, amplifies, turns inside out, or even on occasion interpolates. In this way we possess seven different versions of the Passion of the Scillitan martyrs, and the historical records that have come down to us only in an amended form are extremely numerous. A certain number of the lives which compose the menology of Metaphrastes belong to the category of adaptations which have for their sole source an historic document that the editor has abridged or paraphrased, according to his own sweet will. We may naturally include in this class redactions at second or third hand, in other words,

those produced by authors at work not on an original document but on a composition which has already been recast.

4. The fourth category consists of Acts of which the source is not a written document, but the fantastic combination of a few real events in a framework of pure imagination, in other words, *historical romances*. This class is very numerous, and in particular we must include in it the whole series of cycles of the Roman *Legendarium*. In these compositions which consist frequently of a tissue of literary reminiscences, popular traditions and fictitious situations, the historic element is almost always reduced to an infinitesimal quantity. The name of the saint, the existence of his shrine, and the date of his feast are in many cases all that can be safely inferred from a species of composition in which fantasy has a free field.

Although their authors do not as a rule sin from excess of imagination, I would add to the above class those Acts which are simple adaptations. As a general rule the historic residue in these plagiarised compositions is of about the same value as that of the laboriously compiled romances of which mention has just been made; for the minimum of adaptation demanded to transform the history of one saint into that of another is necessarily concerned with his name, his feast and his shrine.

5. After the historical romances dealing with real personages, come the *imaginative romances*, in which the hero himself is the creation of the poet. The Passion of St. Nicephorus and the history of Barlaam and Joasaph are types of this class.

6. It is only proper to place in a separate category all *forgeries* properly so called, that is to say, all hagio-

graphic legends composed with the object of deceiving the reader. It is not always easy to ascertain the real author of the fraud, and it must frequently happen that the editor has merely registered a version which circulated before his day; in that case the work must be classified under one of the previous headings.<sup>1</sup>

We might refrain here from entering into fuller explanations, and might leave to the reader the task of applying the principles enunciated to the numerous examples before him. It would indeed require endless investigations, and the combined efforts of many workers to arrive at a strict classification, under the various headings enumerated, of all the hagiographic legends that have come down to us. We can, however, scarcely dispense ourselves from passing in rapid review, a justly celebrated collection which for a long period, in the eyes of most scholars, expressed the latest word in hagiographic criticism, and thanks to which the line of demarcation between fable and history had been drawn once and for all: we refer to Dom Ruinart's *Acta sincera*.

This fine work well-conceived, if somewhat summarily carried out, has rendered the greatest service, and it would be a grave injustice on our part to attempt to depreciate it. It is, however, only right to say that it fails to come up to modern requirements. Every one is to-day agreed in demanding better authenticated texts according to strict philological methods. The necessity for a process of weeding out, or to speak

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, vol. ii., Leipzig, 1904, pp. 464-65, quotes our classification with approval. He proposes to add a seventh category, that of a class of dummy Acts drawn up solely upon the model of celebrated Passions. From the historic standpoint which we have adopted this group would be included in our fourth category.

more precisely, for a re-classification of the documents selected by Ruinart seems not to be so keenly felt.

Let us admit also that, from our modern standpoint, the title of *Acta sincera* lends itself easily to misconceptions. I feel no difficulty in allowing that all the Acts collected by the learned Benedictine are "sincere" in the sense that he set himself to exclude from his collection all the fabrications of forgers. But his selections are not all sincere in the sense that we can accept them as pure historic sources without any alloy of fiction or fantasy. Prudentius, like many other poets, is sincere, but who would ever dream of accepting his poems as though they were an historic text? The candid and loyal soul of St. John Chrysostom is reflected in his panegyrics no less than in his homilies, but ought we therefore to neglect to take into account the oratorical temperament and must we give to his sermons the same value as to a legal report? Clearly not. But what every one would freely admit in regard to a poem or an oratorical passage is too often forgotten when we are dealing with narratives by unknown authors, of which the historic value can only be determined by internal criteria.

It has been customary to place all Ruinart's texts on the same level, and, taking them in the mass, to attribute to them an absolute authority. It would be easy to quote a whole series of writings on the history of the primitive Church, or on various points of discipline in which the *Acta sincera* are cited promiscuously without any one having realised the necessity of some sifting process with a view to the special use that was to be made of them. Save for the recent revision by Harnack,<sup>1</sup> it may be said that the lists of authentic records

<sup>1</sup> *Die Chronologie*, vol. ii., pp. 463-82. See also *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxiii., pp. 476-80. [We may also refer to the chapter 'Les Passion historiques,' in *Les Passion des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, p. 11-182.]

drawn up of late years give evidence of very little serious labour. Except for a few insignificant corrections they are simply the reproduction of Ruinart's tables.<sup>1</sup> It has not been sufficiently noted that the learned Benedictine had somewhat vague ideas concerning the classification of hagiographic texts. Nowhere does he lay down any criteria for distinguishing between them, and his solitary rule appears to have been to give concerning every martyr the most ancient and most respectable record he could find.

The *Acta sincera* are composed of one hundred and seventeen documents<sup>2</sup> of a very unequal value which it is manifestly impossible to subject to a uniform critical examination, and which, therefore, must be considered in groups.

Concerning a small number of saints (Irenæus, Alexander Bishop of Jerusalem, Priscus, Malchus and Alexander, Mamas, Soteris) Ruinart has been compelled to restrict himself to putting together a few scattered fragments with which to make compilations of the kind entitled by the Bollandists *Sylloge*.

In the case of others he has availed himself of authors, whether historians, orators or poets, whose writings are sufficiently well known and whose credibility is recognised. Thus he quotes Eusebius for Jacob, Bishop of Jerusalem, Simeon, Bishop of Jerusalem, Ptolemæus and Lucius, Apollonius, Leonides and companions, Dionysius, Alexandrinus, Maximus, the martyrs under Diocletian, the Palestinian martyrs and Romanus. He

<sup>1</sup> Preuschen in Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, vol. i., pp. 807-34; G. Krüger, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, pp. 237-45; *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*, vol. i., pp. 320-34; *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, vol. i., pp. 409-10.

<sup>2</sup> The *Acta Firmi et Rustici* were added by the Verona editor.

quotes Prudentius for Hippolytus, Laurentius, Romanus, Vincentius, Eulalia, Agnes, the martyrs of Saragossa, Quirinus and Cassianus; St. John Chrysostom for Domnina and companions, Lucianus, Pelagia, Drosis and Julianus; St. Gregory of Nyssa for Theodorus, martyr; St. Basil for Barlaam,<sup>1</sup> Gordius, Julitta and the Forty Martyrs; St. Asterius of Amasea for Euphemia and Phocas; St. Ambrose for Laurentius, Vitalis and Agricola, Agnes, Theodora and Didymus; Rufinus for Apollonius and Theodorus, confessor; Paulinus of Nola for Felix; Socrates for Macedonius and companions; Sozomen for Eusebius and companions and Basil of Ancyra; Theodoret for Cyrillus and companions, Juventinus and Maximinus; Palladius for Potamiæna; St. Augustine for the twenty African martyrs; and finally St. Vigilus for Sisinnius and companions.

There remain the separate Passions to the number of seventy-four, upon which the future efforts of criticism will have to be directed. Already a certain number of these have been definitely classed. Others have received provisional recognition, while it is to be feared that not a few will have to remain in the limbo to which critics have been forced to relegate them from lack of information by which to judge of their merits or demerits.

Scholars are generally agreed in giving the place of honour—corresponding to the two first categories in our classification—to certain celebrated documents of which unhappily the list is far from long: Polycarp, Justinus, the Martyrs of Lyons, the Scillitan Martyrs,<sup>2</sup> Perpetua<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The attribution to St. Basil is erroneous. See *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxii., p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> The recension given by Ruinart, *Bibl. hag. lat.*, n. 7531, ought to be replaced by *Bibl. hag. lat.*, n. 7527.

[<sup>3</sup> See p. 24 above.]

Cyprianus, Fructuosus, Jacob and Marianus, Maximilianus, Marcellus and Cassianus Tingitanus.\* If one puts the setting out of the question, and simply retains the Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans which belongs to them it is evident that the Acts of St. Ignatius of Antioch should be classed among the pearls of the collection.<sup>1</sup> Nor must we forget the Passion of St. Procopius of which the great importance was not at first discerned, as it was not recognised as being a fragment of the book of the martyrs of Palestine,<sup>2</sup> an authentic work by Eusebius.

Let us pass at once to the other extreme. The *Passio Nicephori* and the *Passio Bonifatii* belong to the category of imaginative romance. We may add to them the Acts of Didymus and Theodora<sup>3</sup> of Genesius the Comedian, as well as the Acts of Theodotus of Ancyra of which the kernel is a tale related by Herodotus,<sup>4</sup> while the existence of the hero of the narrative is not vouched for by any historical document.<sup>5</sup>

The historical romance category, that is to say the fourth variety of hagiographic texts, is by no means slenderly represented in Ruinart. No one will resent our placing on the list Symphorosa, Felicitas and her seven sons, Afra, Cyricus and Julitta, Petrus Bal-

[\* This last name is omitted in 3d ed. and the following reference added for Marcellus: *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xli, p. 257-87. Then the following sentence is inserted: It is necessary to add Felix, relieved of the serious interpolations which have made him suspect — *ibid.*, vol. xxxix, p. 241-76 — Pionius, Montanus and Lucius, Sabas Gothus — See our *Saints de Thrace et de Mésie*, p. 288-91 — Phileas and Philoromus — See our *Martyrs d'Egypte*, p. 161-68.]

<sup>1</sup> Vain efforts have been made to rehabilitate the Ignatian Acts in their entirety. See *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvii., p. 362; vol. xix., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> To be compared with the Acts of Alexander and Antonina, *Acta SS.*, May, vol. i., pp. 744-46.

<sup>4</sup> Concerning this tale see A. Schiefner, *De quelques versions orientales du conte du trésor de Rhampsinite* in the *Bulletin de l'Académie de Saint-Petersbourg*, vol. xiv., 1869, pp. 299-316.

<sup>5</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxii., pp. 320-28; vol. xxiii., p. 478.

samus, Vincentius, Firmus and Rusticus, Lucianus and Marianus. I can see no sufficient reason for according a higher place to the Martyrs of Agaunum, to Donatianus and Rogatianus, Victor, Tarachus and Probus, Ferreolus, Arcadius or to Leo and Paregorius.\*

The remaining documents of the collection must remain for the time being in the third category, *i.e.*, among the Passions which have as their principal source an historic document of the first or the second rank. Is it necessary to add that this class subdivides itself into numerous varieties determined both by the quality of the primitive document and the capacity of the editor? Nor must it be forgotten that in the case of the majority of these documents critics have not yet been able to arrive at a unanimous conclusion, owing to their not having been submitted to any searching study; let us add that some of them, by reason of their mixed character, lend themselves with difficulty to a strict classification.

The most important of the contents of the third class are undoubtedly the Passions of Pionius, Montanus and Lucius, Maximus and Crispina.† Possibly it may be thought that they have not been placed in sufficiently good company. I do not think it would be justifiable to show them greater honour. It is scarcely possible to hesitate as to adding to them the following Passions: Achatius, Petrus, Andreas and his companions, Felix,<sup>1</sup> Saturninus, Dativus and his companions, Agape and Chionia,<sup>2</sup> Irenæus, Pollio, Euplus,

[\* To this list the 3d ed. adds Trypho and Respicius. In the preceding sentence the name of *Afra* was deleted in the 3d ed.]

[† The first three names deleted in 3d ed.]

<sup>1</sup> The Acts of St. Felix no longer exist in their primitive form. The portion concerning the journey to Italy is an interpolation. See *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., pp. 27-28; vol. xxii., p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> P. Franchi, *Nuove note agiografiche in Studi e Testi*, vol. ix., pp. 3-19. [The list is considerably changed in the 3d ed.]

Philippus,<sup>1</sup> Phileas and Philoromus,<sup>2</sup> Quirinus, Julius, Marcianus and Nicander<sup>3</sup> and Sabas Gothus.<sup>4</sup>

To these may be added the following Acts which have been much less studied: Epipodius and Alexander, Trypho and Respicius, Cyrillus, Claudius, Astorius and his companions, Serenus, Faustus and Januarius, Genesius Arelatensis, Patricius Bishop of Prusa, and the Egyptian martyrs. It is not impossible that a thorough study of their origin and composition might result in the deposition of some of them from the rank that has so far been assigned to them.<sup>5</sup>

The Acts concerning the Persian martyrs (Symeon, Pherbute, Sadoth and Bademus) constitute a separate group which might be included in the class under discussion.<sup>6</sup> Previous to the publication of their various recensions (so far unprinted) both in Armenian and Syriac it would be premature to pronounce on the original form and consequently also on the documentary value of these narratives.

One can scarcely discuss Dom Ruinart's collection without mentioning the enterprise of Le Blant, to whom

<sup>1</sup> J. Fuehrer in the *Mittheilungen des k. deutschen archæologischen Instituts*, Roman section, vol. vii., 1892, pp. 158-65; Harnack, *Die Chronologie*, p. 478.

<sup>2</sup> C. Schmidt in *Fragmente einer Schrift des Märtyrerbischofs Petrus von Alexandrien in Texte und Untersuchungen*, N.F., vol. v., p. 22, rejects these Acts. The judgment of Harnack in *Die Chronologie* is far more favourable.

<sup>3</sup> P. Franchi in *Nuovo bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, vol. x., 1904, pp. 22-26.

<sup>4</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxiii., pp. 96-98. [This is one of the names not included in the 3d ed. list, which concludes with this statement: The *Acta disputationis* of Achatius remain an enigma — *Les Passions des martyrs*, p. 344-364.]

<sup>5</sup> P. Franchi in *Nuovo bullettino*, vol. x., p. 17. [From this list of names the 3d ed. deletes those of Trypho and Respicius.]

<sup>6</sup> J. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide*, 224-632, Paris, 1904, pp. 63-82; H. Delehaye, *Les versions grecques des actes des martyrs persans sous Sapor II.*, Paris, 1905, pp. 5-19.



we owe a "Supplement to the *Acta Sincera*".<sup>1</sup> This learned scholar did not propose in any sense to enlarge Ruinart's volume by introducing into it historical texts that the erudite Benedictine had overlooked, or that had been brought to light by recent discoveries. He tried to show that various narratives not included in the *Acta sincera* "have retained—although re-cast and added to in varying degrees—certain genuine portions derived from original documents".<sup>2</sup> He calls these "interpolated Acts," possessing a certain value as containing fragments of the truth,<sup>3</sup> and the following is the method by which he proposes to identify them: "A systematic collating of these pieces with the information furnished by civil and criminal law, with the text of the most authentic Acts and with the data solidly established by witnesses from the past, such is, in my opinion, a clear means of establishing the degree of credibility to which hagiographic narratives may be entitled; such is the method I propose to follow in seeking out those grains of truth scattered through certain documents which, in accordance with the opinion of Tillemont cannot be wholly rejected even though they may offer some disquieting features".<sup>4</sup>

I admire as highly as any one the vast erudition of Le Blant and the exemplary patience with which he has pursued the vestiges of antiquity, often so hard to recognise, through a mass of insipid literature. Yet it must needs be said that the very conception underlying his work has been a false one, and likely to mis-

<sup>1</sup> *Les Actes des martyrs. Supplément aux Acta sincera de Dom Ruinart. Extrait des Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles lettres*, vol. xxx., 2nd part, Paris, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> *Les persécuteurs et les martyrs aux premiers siècles de notre ère*, Paris, 1893, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Actes des martyrs*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

lead investigators. For, in point of fact, in order that an interpolated or paraphrased narrative should possess any value it must be derived from some historical source the pedigree of which can be clearly ascertained. Purely literary accretions may go back very far without imparting the least credit to the stock on which they are grafted. In all ages centos from Virgil have been composed. Observe to what conclusions one might be drawn if one wished to make capital out of the antiquity of their various parts. From the correct legal phraseology to be met with in certain Passions we may sometimes, no doubt, conclude that the author lived at a time when the ancient formulæ had not yet fallen into disuse, but more often it would be truer to infer that he had studied a classical model which had supplied him with felicitous expressions and technical phrases. It would be entirely a mistake to deduce from this solitary fact that he had worked on a historic record, and that his narrative was derived from a contemporary chronicle of events.

In point of fact Le Blant has frequently succeeded in discovering in documents of a debased period or devoid of historic value details which reveal a condition of things going back to classical antiquity; but he has been mistaken in concluding that "these writings have been preserved, in more points than one, features of the lost originals".<sup>1</sup> If we followed him on these lines, we ought to infer from certain superficial indications that the Acts of St. Agnes, St. Agatha, St. Urban, SS. Cosmas and Damian, St. Cecilia, etc., as we possess them to-day, are all versions of earlier Acts which have undergone, as he expresses it, "des retouches évidentes".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Les Actes des martyrs*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Les persécuteurs et les martyrs*, p. 1.

I might quote more than one contemporary of our own, who in his novels has affected the knowledge of a specialist in certain technical details. Will posterity be forced to conclude that his stories possess a foundation of truth and that he has merely made a free use of original documents?

No doubt Le Blant has done good service by showing "that frequently the information furnished by secondary texts is in agreement with that supplied by classic documents,"<sup>1</sup> but he was mistaken in supposing that "if these latter had not come into our hands we should have obtained much useful information from the rest concerning the principal features in the history of the persecutions". On the contrary, it must be obvious to all that if we had not the check provided by the classic texts, we should have no means of discerning the really primitive elements in documents without intrinsic value, and that we should be building up the history of the persecutions upon a foundation of sand.

This, however, is no reason for giving up the idea of supplementing Ruinart, after having taken much away from him. But, as we have seen, the first thing to be done is to realise clearly the place to be given to every document in the hierarchy of hagiographic records. The new Ruinart which we should like to compile would only contain the historical records belonging to the first three categories set out at the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> *Les Actes des martyrs*. p. 279.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE "DOSSIER" OF A SAINT.

Documents concerning St. Procopius of Cæsarea—Account given by Eusebius—Monuments testifying to the cultus—The three legends of St. Procopius—Analysis of the three legends—The Synaxaries—Latin Acts of St. Procopius—Adaptations to St. Ephysius and to St. John of Alexandria—Conclusions.

IT is often an arduous task to establish the claims of a saint of the first centuries to the honours of public worship. Where historical documents are not entirely lacking they have sometimes undergone such marked modifications under the combined efforts of legend and legend writers that one can only make use of them with extreme caution. Nor is it all plain sailing when, by rare good fortune, the cause of a saint is founded on a comparatively well-furnished record. One must know how to classify the documents, to interpret them at their proper value, to weigh evidence, and to establish the degree of credibility to which each witness is entitled. It is a long and infinitely delicate task in which the inexperienced critic, unfamiliar with hagiography, meets with many a disappointment.

A providential accident has preserved for us an exceptionally complete series of documents concerning a saint of the persecution under Diocletian. Contemporary records, narratives derived from them and revised more than once, entries in the martyrologies, historical

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# THE LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS

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BOLLANDIST

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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