

Preliminary Chapter II.

Are You A Christian?

Translated From The French By Mrs. J. Sadlier.
Anecdotes Pamphlet No.ca003

I. - WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

14. It is not sufficient to say that one is a Christian. - I have read in the Acts of St. Tiburtius, martyr, a fact which is well adapted to prove the truth of what I have told you, my friends, concerning the title Christian that we bear. That pious servant of God had remarked, amongst persons of his acquaintance, a named Torquatus, whose conduct was neither edifying, nor becoming; he had even admonished him in private several times. The unhappy man, unable to bear these just reproaches, went to denounce Tiburtius as a Christian, and lest his base treachery should be suspected, he told the governor to have himself arrested. They were both brought before Fabianus, the Prefect, who commenced by asking Torquatus what was his profession? "I am a Christian," the hypocrite replied. "Believe him not," immediately answered St. Tiburtius, "he is a Christian only in name; he assumes a title of which he is no longer worthy, for his actions are a continual denial of it. In fact, Torquatus is a sensual man; he loves to frizzle his hair and vainly ornament his person, he walks mincingly and affectedly, sleeps long of a morning and is lazy, loves good cheer and is often drunk, loses much time at play and at his lusts, and is seldom seen at church. Men like that do more harm than good to religion." These new reproaches which Torquatus so well deserved, covered him with confusion; he soon proved that the holy martyr was right, for he basely apostatized, whilst Tiburtius gave his blood for Christ. This took place at Rome, in the year 287. Let us watch over ourselves, my young friends, so that our actions may be always worthy of the name and quality of Christian, which we received in Baptism. - BOLLANDUS, Acta Sanctorum, 11th August.

15. Louis de Poissy. - The title of Christian is so fine a one that many princes have preferred it to that of king. You all have heard of St. Louis, who ascended the throne of France in 1226, at the age of twelve. That pious monarch was undoubtedly one of the most powerful kings of that age, and yet he preferred the glory of being a Christian. Many times, instead of signing Louis, king of France, he put simply, Louis of Poissy, because he had been baptized in that little town, which is situated at the edge of the forest of St. Germain en Laye, twenty-five or thirty miles from Paris. In the church there is still preserved the stone font in which that holy king received the Sacrament of regeneration. It is much defaced and broken, because, for a long time past, almost every one that went to see it broke off a small piece to preserve as a precious relic. I myself have known persons who boasted of having committed that pious theft. As for us, dear children, let us be proud and happy to have the title of Christian, and let us beware of doing anything that might dishonour it. - Life of St. Louis.

16. The Adopted Child Disinherited. - God has conferred on us a great favour, my young friends, in making us Christians; let us be more faithful than the unhappy man of whom I have read in the Parables of Father Bonaventure. A king of Persia, who had no children, took from off the street a poor little beggar of six or seven years old, intending to bring him up and appoint him heir to his

throne. The first thing done was to wash the child, comb his hair, and dress him in the new from head to foot. A preceptor was then given him, and masters to teach him all the arts and all the sciences that could embellish an education. But alas! at the end of two years, the king died; they hastened to open his will, and therein read as follows: "I adopt for my son the little Ali, whom I have taken from beggary and destitution; I wish him to be brought up and educated with all possible care till he shall attain the age of fifteen years. At that time, if he has corresponded with the care that has been bestowed upon him, if he be pious, prudent, polite, amiable and attentive to study, it is my will that he shall be placed on the throne of Persia. If, on the contrary, he became wicked, ungrateful vicious, let him be stripped and turned away; he shall no longer be recognized as my son." This testament of the king was executed to the very letter; the little beggar was duly informed of it; care was even taken to read it to him from time to time, and to show him the brilliant throne that awaited him, if he answered to the views of his benefactor. Unhappily, he paid but little attention to it; now and then he made fine promises, but that did not last long. He became idle, careless, and rebellious; he disobeyed his masters, refused to study his lessons, ran the streets with urchins of his own age, in a word, appeared to care little for the throne that had been promised him. They waited, however, till the time appointed by the will; but as soon as Ali had completed his fifteenth year, they read to him once more and for the last time, the articles which concerned him, and asked him whether he could conscientiously say that he had fulfilled the conditions imposed upon him. The unhappy youth hung his head, reddened up to the eyes, burst into tears, threw himself on his knees, prayed, entreated, promised to amend. But all was in vain. The late king's brother made him leave off his fine clothes, gave him others of the coarsest and commonest kind and had him turned out of the palace. I am sure many of you, my dear children, have recognized yourselves in this story, which aptly represents what God has done for us by baptism; be faithful to that grace if you would inherit the celestial kingdom, if not you will be expelled like the king of Persia's beggar. - PERE BONAVENTURE-GIRANDRAU, Stories and Parables.

17. The Beggar Heiress of a Kingdom. - When you are asked - "Are you a Christian?" you answer: "Yes, by the grace of God." It is a great honour, dear friends, to be a Christian, especially because of the titles which it gives us. M. Boudon, who was Archdeacon of Evreux, in the time of Louis XIV., relates a very touching story on this subject. A new church was being built in a town of that diocese, and each one gave what they could to promote this pious object. A poor old woman, who was reduced almost to beggary, came one day to the sacristy to the priest, who was receiving the offerings, and gave him three francs. "How, my good woman, you want to give me money! Why it seems to me that I ought rather to offer you some, for I see by your clothing you are very poor." "Poor! reverend father? Why, am I not a Christian, and consequently, daughter of a great king and heiress of a great kingdom? "Have no fears for me, then, for I shall always be able to earn a living for myself, and I hope the good God will one day receive me into His eternal kingdom." Were not these noble sentiments, dear children? Well! what that woman said, every Christian may say. - DEBUSSI, Month of Mary, 127.

II. - THE CHRISTIAN'S SIGN.

18. An Earthquake Yielding to the Sign of the Cross. - "If you had faith even as large as a mustard seed," said Our Lord, "you would say to that mountain: Cast yourself into the sea, and immediately it would be done." In truth, dear children, the Saints have wrought wonders with the sign of the cross. St. Jerome, an illustrious doctor of the Church, gives himself an example in the life of St. Hilarion. After the death of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, there was a tremendous earthquake all

over the East. The seas overflowed their bounds, as though they would have submerged the earth in another deluge. At sight of these prodigies, the inhabitants of Epidaurus, a small city of Greece, ran to the cell of St. Hilarion, and with tears besought him to have pity on them and come to their aid. They brought him to the sea-shore. There, St. Hilarion knelt on the sand, prayed with fervour, and made the sign of the cross three times over the troubled waters. Immediately there was a dead calm. All the people of Epidaurus witnessed this miracle, and for long years after they ceased not to remember it with gratitude. - ST. JEROME, Life of St. Hilarion. 19. St. Dorotheus' Asp. - If we had a very lively faith, we could work wonders with a single sign of the cross, as did the Saints of old. There was in the Egyptian desert a holy hermit named Dorotheus, who had for a disciple, Palladius, a very pious and well. instructed young man. One day, at dinner-time, Palladius went, as was his wont, to draw water from the neighbouring well. But scarcely had he approached it, when he perceived at the bottom, an asp, who had probably been drowned there. Seeing it, he ran back as fast as he could, to tell St. Dorotheus. "Ah! father, we are lost! I saw an asp in the well!" The holy man only laughed, and said, shaking his head: "What, my son, if the devil took a notion to throw asps and serpents into all the wells and fountains, you would then drink no more? Follow me!" St. Dorotheus went to the well, drew up himself a bucket of water, made over it the sign of the cross, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, then drank of the water, saying: "All the power of Satan is annihilated in presence of the sacred sign of the Cross. - PALLADIUS, Histoire Lausaique, (History of the Monasteries) Chap. II.

20. The Tree Thrown Down by St. Martin. - There is nothing so powerful as the sign of the cross, provided it be accompanied with a lively faith, and a boundless confidence. We find many examples of this in the life of the great St. Martin, Bishop of Tours. I particularly remember the following: One day, having overthrown, in Burgundy, a famous and very ancient temple, he wished likewise to cut down a large pine-tree that stood near it. But to this he found the pagans entirely opposed, but they told him that since he had so much confidence in his God, they would cut down the tree themselves, provided he would stand under it when it fell. Martin accepted the condition and allowed himself to be tied on the side to which the tree was already inclining. A great crowd of people assembled to see the sight. All the Saint's disciples feared for him and looked upon him as a dead man. The tree, half cut, began, in fact, to fall upon him, when he simply made the sign of the cross. The pine, as if blown by a gust of wind, fell to the other side, on those of the spectators who thought themselves the safest. There arose a great cry, and a large number of idolaters embraced the faith of Christ. - Sulpice Severus, Life of St. Martin.

21. A Ravenous Woman Cured. - My young friends, it is not I who relate to you a story to-day ; it will be a learned doctor of the Church, who lived in the fifth century - the blessed Theodoret, Bishop of Cyr, in Syria. In his life of St. Macedonius, a famous solitary, he says that the holy man was surnamed Crithophagus, because, for forty years, he eat nothing but barley bread. He wrought many miracles, amongst others this: The wife of a rich noble man had been seized with a malady called dog hunger, which some attributed to the power of the devil, others to a corporal infirmity. However that might be, this malady was said to be such, that the poor woman eat thirty fowls a day, and still unsatisfied, kept asking for more. As this expense could not much longer be continued, her friends, taking compassion on her wretched state, had recourse to the man of God. Macedonius came, began to pray, and had some water brought, into which he dipped his hand, and after having made the sign of the cross, he commanded this woman to drink of the water. Immediately she was cured, so perfectly that, from that time forward, one small piece of meat served for her daily

nourishment. There is what was done by a sign of the cross made with faith. - THEODORET, Eccles. Hist. (Ecclesiastical History)

22. St. Benedict's Glass Broken Miraculously. - The first who conceived the idea of founding a religious order in Italy, was St. Benedict, whose disciples still bear the name of Benedictines. The splendour of his sanctity transmitted his fame so far and wide, that certain monks who had lost their superior conceived the design of choosing him for their abbot. They were not very regular in their lives, these monks, and St. Benedict did not much care to take charge of a house where serious abuses were known to exist. But they urged him so much, and promised so faithfully to amend their ways, that he was at length induced to comply with their request. His first care, as he promptly announced, was to revive the observance of the holy rules which these monks had somewhat laid aside. It was then that their ill will appeared in its true light; they would not hear of reform, and they soon came to hate St. Benedict on account thereof, as much as they had before appeared to desire his coming. One of them even dared form the horrible project of putting him to death. With that intention he prepared some poisoned wine which he presented in a goblet to the holy abbot. According to his custom, the latter made the sign of the cross over the liquor and immediately the goblet flew in pieces and the wine fell to the ground. This miraculous occurrence made him suspect that there was poison in it. He thanked God for having saved him by the sign of the cross, then departed from amongst those perverse men, who pretended to live as monks, whereas they were not even good Christians. - ST. GREGORY THE GREAT, Dialogues Book II., Chapter 3.23.

Children Preserved from Death by the Sign of the Cross. - The simple sign of the cross has wrought thousands of miracles; ecclesiastical history is full of them. Here is one which I find in the life of St. William, Archbishop of York, in England. He had made, in 1154, a pilgrimage to Rome, which had kept him long away from his diocese. His return was an extraordinary event for every one; all work was suspended, and young and old went out in crowds to meet him. The throng was so great that, passing the wooden bridge over the river Ouse, on which the city of York is situated, the bridge gave way, and a multitude of people were precipitated into the river. At the sight, St. William is penetrated with grief; he stops, raises his eyes to heaven, excites his faith, and makes the sign of the cross over the river. Nothing more was required to save almost all those who had fallen into the water; the children, especially, were drawn out safe and sound; God had compassion on their innocence and their tender age. - GODESCARD, Lives Of the Saints, 8th June.
