

The Papal System – XXI. Miracles



Continued from [The Papal System – XX. The Worship of Relics](#).

THE most marvelous tales are recorded in the annals of Christian superstition, and are doubtless still credulously believed by large numbers.

St. Alban.

When St. Alban, in A.D. 303, was going to the place of execution, he was brought to a rapid river, and in answer to his prayers it opened a dry path for him and those who were with him. On reaching the mount on which he was to lose his head, he saw crowds of persons tortured with burning thirst under a scorching sun; immediately by his prayers, he opened a spring right before them to relieve their misery. After his head was cut off, the eyes of the executioner fell out of their sockets upon the ground.

Constantine the Great.

This prince was afflicted with an odious leprosy, to cure which he intended washing in a bath filled with the blood of innocent children. Three thousand were gathered to be slain to furnish the required amount, but on seeing them Constantine shrank from such a horrible remedy. Soon after, at night, Peter and Paul, by command of God, told him to send for holy Silvester, Bishop of Rome, and to be baptized; and they assured him that he would be healed in his baptism. Silvester baptized him at Rome, we are told, A.D. 318; and "in the font he saw Christ and was healed of his leprosy." "*Constantine was not baptized until his death was near, many years after 318, and the ceremony was performed in Nicomedia.*"

St. Donatus.

This mighty man once met a dragon, which raised its head to attack him; without sword, lance or javelin he encountered the monster, and spat upon it; the saliva entered its mouth, and immediately it expired. Such was its enormous size that the people of the neighborhood yoked eight pair of oxen to the carcass to bring it to an adjacent field, where it was burned.

Zosimas.

Was going to Caesarea, leading an ass heavily burdened, which a lion seized and devoured. Zosimas being a holy man, followed the lion, and overtaking him, gave him to understand that if he wished to continue a wild beast instead of being changed into some domestic drudge, he must immediately come and carry the ass's burden to the gates of Caesarea. All at once the lion

fawned upon and followed him; and like a grateful lion inside of which an entire donkey was lying, he bore the whole burden of the defunct beast and itself too, as far as he was required, and then returned to his den.

James, Bishop of Nisibis.

In A.D. 359, Sapor, King of Persia, attacked Nisibis with great fury but with poor success; for after a considerable siege the holy Bishop James mounted its walls, and entering a tower, he prayed that flies and gnats might be sent against the besieging hosts. His prayer was scarcely over when swarms of flies and gnats like dense clouds, filled the trunks of the elephants, and the ears and nostrils of the horses, and those of the other beasts of burden. These animals failing to get rid of the insects became furious, threw their riders, broke the ranks, left the army, and fled away at full speed, and the king and army had to retreat.

A Jewish Boy

In the East was induced by his Christian companions to receive the body and blood of the Lord in the Church of "Our Lady." When his father heard it he was enraged, and cast the child into a burning furnace. Sometime after he was taken out by the Christians uninjured; and he declared that the woman with the child in her arms, whose picture he had seen in the church, blew away the flames with her cloak, and protected him from the fire. This happened A.D. 552.

Imma, who could not be Bound.

He was captured in battle A.D. 679, by Ethelred; and his brother, a priest, supposing that he was dead, offered up masses for his soul. During the hours of each day when this sacrifice was celebrated his chains fell off. Nor could anything bind him. The mass immediately liberated him. "This story," says good, credulous Bede, "made many persons offer up to our Lord the holy oblation for the deliverance of their friends who had departed from this world." No doubt that was the object of its invention.

Clovis.

This celebrated king was baptized A.D. 476 by St. Remigius; and as the holy chrism used in baptism was not at hand when it was needed, St. Remigius prayed that the delay might not prove hurtful, when suddenly a chrismatical unction in a miraculous vase was brought to him from heaven by an angel. The vessel was in the church of Rheims in the fourteenth century.

St. Mamertus.

In his church at twilight, saw the public buildings of the city of Vienne blaze with a great conflagration. Every one fled to protect his own property, except the saint. He stood before the altar and checked the power of the flames with the stream of his tears. And as the flames were immediately extinguished, the people, returning to the church ascribed the miracle to the holy man.

Bishop John.

In A.D. 686, the wife of Earl Puch languished forty days under a painful disease; and for three weeks she could not be carried out of her room. Bishop John consecrated a church near her husband's residence; and after much persuasion, came home with the earl, bringing with him some of the holy water used in the consecration ceremonies, By command of the bishop, the woman drank some of it: and the diseased part was washed with the same precious element; immediately she lost her complaint and recovered her strength.

St. Swithin,

Was sitting one day on the bridge of Winchester, whilst some workmen were repairing it. A woman with a basket of eggs afforded malicious merriment to the laborers, who broke them all. The good bishop, filled with sorrow for her loss, and touched by her lamentations, made the sign of the cross over the broken eggs; and every one of them was restored to its original perfection. (My wife Tess laughed at this one!)

St. Dunstan,

On one occasion took burning forceps and seized the devil by the nose, who came to him in the form of a beautiful woman, and tempted him to sin; and he held him for a long time, till he changed himself into many terrible forms. And when he was released, he polluted and tainted the whole air.

St. Magnus.

In A.D. 1002, Ethelbert and eighteen companions were in the churchyard of St. Magnus, in a town in Saxony, dancing and singing profane songs. Robert, the priest, commanded them to be silent, as their voices intermingled with the solemn sounds of the mass, but they heeded him not. Then the holy man in his wrath cursed them in these words: "May it please God and St. Magnus, that you remain singing a whole year." And there they continued a whole year. The rain fell not on them; nor did cold or heat, hunger, thirst or fatigue assail them. They neither wore out their clothes nor shoes. They persevered in dancing and singing a whole year, as though they had been insane. Nor could they leave the spot till Herbert, Bishop of Cologne, released them.

St. Kenelm,

The heir to the throne of Mercia, was deprived by death of his father when he was seven years old. His sister, to secure the kingdom for herself, had him secretly murdered. The tidings though unknown in England, were published in Rome. A dove from heaven bore a parchment scroll to the altar of St. Peter, with an exact account of his death and place of burial. But it was written in English, a mistake having been made in heaven about the language of Rome, and there was some embarrassment in the eternal city, until an Englishman was found who could read it.

Robert de Broke,

A secular priest, found himself excommunicated A.D. 1171, and the dogs became

acquainted with the fact too, for when he was at dinner they would eat nothing which he had touched, though they were hungry, and greedily ate from the hands of others. As if to confirm the truth of the canine story, the chronicler immediately adds: "The same year the bones of a giant were found in England, the length of whose body was *fifty feet*."

Celestine V.

This Pope is represented as extremely modest. On a certain occasion he rode to church on the meanest of men-carrying beasts; and as he dismounted, a cripple entreated the people to place him on the Pope's donkey, and when the man occupied Celestine's saddle immediately soundness came into his whole system. The palsied was completely healed.

Vitalis,

A wealthy Venetian, in A.D. 1195, went into the woods and fell into a trap intended for wild beasts, out of which he could not escape. Here he found a lion and a serpent, fierce and hungry, which like himself had been caught in the pitfall. He was greatly frightened, but making the sign of the cross on himself, neither lion nor serpent would touch him, though he was their unwilling companion a whole night.

A grateful Woman.

Eustace, Abbot of Flaye, was a great preacher and no friend to the wicked one, A woman swollen with devils as if with dropsy applied to him for relief. At his suggestion she drank from a certain blessed fountain, after which she threw up two large black toads, which were immediately changed into great black dogs; and these soon after took the forms of asses. On being sprinkled with water from the holy fountain the monsters flew up into the air and vanished.

St. Francis,

The famous founder of the Franciscans, one of the most remarkable men of the thirteenth century, had a great miracle performed upon him. He saw in a vision a seraph with six shining wings, blazing with fire, coming to him in rapid flight from the highest part of the heavens; there appeared between his wings the figure of a man crucified with his hands and feet stretched out and fastened to the cross; after an intimate and delightful season the vision vanished, and his body appeared to have received the image of the crucifix. His hands and feet seemed bored through in the middle with four wounds, and these holes appeared to be pierced with nails of hard flesh; the heads were round and black, and were seen in the palms of his hands, and in his feet in the upper part of the instep. The points were long and appeared beyond the skin on the other side, and were turned back as if they had been clinched with a hammer. There was also in his right side a red wound, as if made by the piercing of a lance. Pope Gregory IX. attested the truth of this miracle in a bull issued A.D. 1237. Pope Alexander IV. declared himself, in a sermon to the people A.D. 1254, an eye witness of the miraculous wounds.

There is no end to papal miracles. On reading these and very many others we could not avoid astonishment at two things: *The wholesale creative power of the human imagination; and the unfathomed depths of mortal credulity.* Paul foresaw the wounds of St. Francis and kindred prodigies when he wrote about "Lying wonders;" and John when he says of Antichrist, "And he doeth great wonders; he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast."

The miracles of Rome are continued still. Some years ago in Ireland the five wounds of Jesus were said to have been miraculously inflicted upon a nun. And after brief intervals, in some benighted corner of Europe, the Virgin miraculously appears, or some picture sweats blood, or some other prodigy startles the ignorant community, and is sent forth abundantly attested to demand the credulity of the "Faithful" in all lands.

By such means the Infallible Church secured wealth, dominion, and wondering awe in past ages, and a legacy of contempt from the enlightened in Catholic lands and from the Protestant world in these centuries of intelligence.

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