

The Theban Legion

(also known as the **Martyrs of Agaunum**) figures in Christian hagiography as an entire Roman legion – of "six thousand six hundred and sixty-six men" – who had converted en masse to Christianity and were martyred together, in 286, according to the hagiographies of Saint Maurice, the chief among the Legion's saints. Their feast day is held on September 22.

According to Eucherius of Lyon, ca. 443-450, the Legion was the garrison of the city of Thebes in Egypt. The Legion were quartered in the East until the emperor Maximian ordered them to march to Gaul, to assist him against the rebels of Burgundy. The Theban Legion was commanded in its march by Saint Maurice (Mauritius), Candidus, Innocent, and Exuperius, all of whom are venerated as saints. At Saint-Maurice, Switzerland, then called Agaunum, the orders were given – since the Legion had refused to sacrifice to the Emperor – to "decimate" it by putting to death a tenth of its men. This act was repeated until none were left.

According to a letter written about 450 by Eucherius, Bishop of Lyon, bodies identified as the martyrs of Agaunum were discovered by Theodore (Theodulus), the first historically identified Bishop of Octudurum, who was present at the Council of Aquileia, 381 and died in 391. The basilica he built in their honor attracted the pilgrim trade; its remains can still be seen, part of the abbey begun in the early sixth century on land donated by King Sigismund of Burgundy.

The earliest surviving document describing "the holy Martyrs who have made Agaunum illustrious with their blood" is the letter of Eucherius, which describes the succession of witnesses from the martyrdom to his time, a span of about 150 years.

The bishop had made the journey to Agaunum himself, and his report of his visit multiplied a thousandfold the standard formula of the martyrologies:

We often hear, do we not, a particular locality or city is held in high honour because of one single martyr who died there, and quite rightly, because in each case 30 the saint gave his precious soul to the most high God. How much more should this sacred place, Agaunum, be reverenced, where so many thousands of martyrs have been slain, with the sword, for the sake of Christ.

As with many hagiographies, Eucherius' letter to Bishop Salvius reinforced an existing pilgrimage site. Many of the faithful were coming from diverse provinces of 35 the empire, according to Eucherius, devoutly to honor these saints, and (important for the abbey of Agaunum) to offer presents of gold, silver and other things. He mentions many miracles, such as casting out of devils and other kinds of healing "which the power of the Lord works there every day through the intercession of his saints".

40 In the late sixth century, Gregory of Tours was convinced of the miraculous powers of the Theban Legion, though he transferred the event to Cologne, where there was an early cult devoted to Maurice and the Theban Legion:

At Cologne there is a church in which the fifty men from the holy Theban Legion are said to have consummated their martyrdom for the name of Christ. And because the 45 church, with its wonderful construction and mosaics, shines as if somehow gilded, the inhabitants prefer to call it the "Church of the Golden Saints". Once Eberigisilus, who was at the time bishop of Cologne, was racked with severe pains in half his head. He was then in a villa near a village. Eberigisilus sent his deacon to the church of the saints. Since there was said to be in the middle of the church a pit into which 50 the saints were thrown together after their martyrdom, the deacon collected some dust there and brought it to the bishop. As soon as the dust touched Eberigisilus' head, immediately all pain was gone.

Thebaei is the proper name of one particular military unit, the Legio I Maximiana, also known as Maximiana Thebaeorum, recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.

According to Samir F. Girgis, writing in the Coptic Encyclopedia, there were two legions bearing the name "Theban," both of them formed by Diocletian sometime after the organization of the original Egyptian legion, stationed at Alexandria. It is not certain which of these was transferred from Egypt to Europe in order to assist 60 Maximian in Gaul.

The monastic accounts themselves do not specifically state that all the soldiers were collectively executed; an eleventh-century monk named Otto of Freising wrote that most of the legionaries escaped, and only some were executed. It is possible that the legion was simply divided during Diocletian's re-organization of units (breaking up 65 legions of 6000 men to create smaller units of 1000), and that some of the soldiers had been executed, and that this was where the story of the legion's destruction originated from. Henri Leclercq suggests that it is quite possible that an incident at Agaunum may have had to do not with a legion, but with a simple detachment.

70 Johan Mösch, after comparing information from the various chronicles on the events and geography of the martyrdoms of the legionaries, concluded that only a single cohort was martyred at Agaunum. The remainder of the cohorts (battalion sized units of which there were ten to a legion) were either on the march or already stationed along the Roman road that ran from Liguria through Turin and Milan, then across Alps and down the Rhine to Colonia Agrippinensis (Cologne).

75 L. Dupraz and Paul Müller, by examining the military titles and ranks of the legionnaires and thereby determining the total number of soldiers involved, estimated that the Thebans martyred at Agaunum consisted of but one cohort whose number did not exceed 520 men. Thus the execution of an entire cohort is equivalent to decimation of a legion.

80 Denis van Berchem, of the University of Geneva, proposed that Eucherius' presentation of the legend of the Theban legion was a literary production, not based on a local tradition. David Woods, Professor of Classics at the University College Cork, alleges that the model of Maurice and the Theban Legion based on Eucherius of Lyon's letter 85 was a complete fiction.

85 The strength of the account is based on the historical reputation for the first monks in the Christian tradition, the hermits of the Egyptian desert known as the "Desert Fathers", and the almost fanatical Christian following they inspired during the first two centuries. The most famous of the Desert Fathers was Anthony the Great. The 90 persecution of high-ranking Christian nobility under Emperor Valerian following his edict in 258 and the purge of Christians from the military from 284 through 299 under Emperor Diocletian indicate that noncompliance with emperor worship was the common method for detecting Christian soldiers and eventually executing them.

95 Donald F. O'Reilly argues that evidence from coins, papyrus, and Roman army lists supports the story of the Theban Legion. A papyrus dated "in the sixth year of our Lord the Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Probus Pius Augustus, Tubi sixteenth" (13 January 282), shows rations which would sustain a legion for about three months to be delivered to Panopolis to the "mobilized soldiers and sailors". Coins from Alexandria from the same time period were minted in a style used only when troops for a new 100 legion were leaving port. During the trial of the martyr Maximilian, it was noted that there were Christians serving in the Roman army, and the existence of Theban Christian legionnaires in the same units as mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* was shown.

105 Henri Leclercq also notes that the account of Eucherius "has many excellent qualities, historical as well as literary". L. Dupaz countered Denis van Berchem's assertion by sifting through the stories, carefully matching them with archeological discoveries at Agaunum, thus concluding that the martyrdom is historical and that the 110 relics of the martyrs were brought to Agaunum between 286 and 292 through the office of the bishop Theodore. Dora Ruinart, Paul Allard, and the editors of the "Analecta Bollandiana" are of opinion that "the martyrdom of the legion, attested, as it is by ancient and reliable evidence, cannot be called in question by any honest mind".

Saints associated with the Theban legion

Attilio

115 Attilio, one of the legendary martyrs of the Theban Legion, is venerated as a saint in the area of Trino Vercellese, in Piedmont, north-west Italy and commemorated on 28 June. However his cult is no longer officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church and he has no entry in its current martyrologies. He has been depicted with a flag, a helmet and the palm of martyrdom.

120

Maurice

Maurice (also Moritz, Morris, Maurits, or Mauritius; Coptic: ⲉⲃⲃⲁ ⩻ⲁⲡⲒ) was an 125 Egyptian military leader who headed the legendary Theban Legion of Rome in the 3rd century, and is one of the favourite and most widely venerated saints of that martyred group. He is the patron saint of several professions, locales, and kingdoms. According to the hagiographical material, Maurice was an Egyptian, born in AD 250 in Thebes, an ancient city in Upper Egypt that had been the capital of the New Kingdom of Egypt (1575-1069 BC). He was brought up in the region of Thebes (Luxor).

130 Maurice became a soldier in the Roman army. He rose through the ranks until he became the commander of the Theban legion, thus leading approximately a thousand men. He was an acknowledged Christian at a time when early Christianity was considered to be a threat to the Roman Empire.

135 The legion, entirely composed of Christians, had been called from Thebes in Egypt to Gaul to assist Emperor Maximian in defeating a revolt by the bagaudae. The Theban Legion was dispatched with orders to clear the Great St Bernard Pass across the Alps. Before going into battle, they were instructed to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods

and pay homage to the emperor. Maurice pledged his men's military allegiance to Rome. He stated that service to God superseded all else. He said that to engage in wanton slaughter was inconceivable to Christian soldiers. He and his men refused to worship Roman deities.

140 When Maximian ordered them to murder local Christians, they refused. Ordering the unit to be punished, Maximian had every tenth soldier killed, a military punishment known as decimation. More orders followed, the men refused compliance as encouraged by Maurice, and a second decimation was ordered. In response to the Theban Christians' refusal to attack fellow Christians, Maximian ordered all the remaining members of the legion to be executed. The place in Switzerland where this occurred, known as Agaunum, is now Saint-Maurice, Switzerland, site of the Abbey of St. Maurice.

145 So reads the earliest account of their martyrdom, contained in the public letter which Bishop Eucherius of Lyon (c. 434-450), addressed to his fellow bishop, Salvius. Alternative versions have the legion refusing Maximian's orders only after discovering innocent Christians had inhabited a town they had just destroyed, or that the emperor had them executed when they refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods.

Veneration

150 Maurice became a patron saint of the German Holy Roman Emperors. In 926, Henry the Fowler (919-936), even ceded the present Swiss canton of Aargau to the abbey, in return for Maurice's lance, sword and spurs. The sword and spurs of Maurice were part of the regalia used at coronations of the Austro-Hungarian emperors until 1916, and among the most important insignia of the imperial throne (although the actual sword dates from the 12th century). In addition, some of the emperors were anointed before the Altar of Saint Maurice at St. Peter's Basilica. In 929, Henry the Fowler held a royal court gathering (Reichsversammlung) at Magdeburg. At the same time, the Mauritius Kloster in honour of Maurice was founded. In 961, Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor, was building and enriching Magdeburg Cathedral, which he intended for his own tomb. To that end, in the year 961 of the Incarnation and in the 25th year of his reign, in the presence of all of the nobility, on the vigil of Christmas, the body of St. Maurice was conveyed to him at Regensburg along with the bodies of some of the saint's companions and portions of other saints. Having been sent to Magdeburg, these relics were received with great honour by a gathering of the entire populace of the city and of their fellow countrymen. They are still venerated there, to the salvation of the homeland.

155 Maurice is traditionally depicted in full armour, in Italy emblazoned with a red cross. In folk culture he has become connected with the legend of the Holy Lance, which he is supposed to have carried into battle; his name is engraved on the Holy Lance of Vienna, one of several relics claimed as the spear that pierced Jesus' side on the cross. Maurice gives his name to the town St. Moritz as well as to numerous places called Saint-Maurice in French-speaking countries. The Indian Ocean island state of Mauritius was named after Maurice, Prince of Orange, and not directly after Maurice himself.

160 180 Over 650 religious foundations dedicated to Saint Maurice can be found in France and other European countries. In Switzerland alone, seven churches or altars in Aargau, six in the Canton of Lucerne, four in the Canton of Solothurn, and one in Appenzell Innerrhoden can be found (in fact, his feast day is a cantonal holiday in Appenzell Innerrhoden). Particularly notable among these are the Church and Abbey of Saint-Maurice-en-Valais, the Church of Saint Moritz in the Engadin, and the Monastery Chapel of Einsiedeln Abbey, where his name continues to be greatly revered. Several orders of chivalry were established in his honour as well, including the Order of the Golden Fleece, Order of Saint Maurice, and the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus. Additionally, fifty-two towns and villages in France have been named in his honour.

165 185 190 Maurice was also the patron saint of a Catholic parish and church in the 9th Ward of New Orleans and including part of the town of Arabi in St. Bernard Parish. The church was constructed in 1856, but was devastated by the winds and flood waters of Hurricane Katrina on 29 August 2005; the copper-plated steeple was blown off the building. The church was subsequently deconsecrated in 2008, and the local diocese put it up for sale in 2011. By 2014, a local attorney had purchased the property for a local arts organization, after which the building served as both an arts venue and the worship space for a Baptist church that had been displaced following the hurricane.

195 200 On 19 July 1941, Pope Pius XII declared Maurice to be the patron saint of the Italian Army's Alpini (mountain infantry corps). [The Alpini have celebrated Maurice's feast every year since then.

There are several Coptic Orthodox churches named for him.

Apparition

The Our Lady of Laus apparitions included an apparition of Saint Maurice. He appeared

205 in an antique episcopal vestment and told Benoîte Rencurel that he was the one to whom the nearby chapel was dedicated, that he would fetch her some water (before drawing some water out of a well she had not seen), that she should go down to a certain valley to escape the local guard and see the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, and that Mary was both in Heaven and could appear on Earth.

210 Patronage Maurice is the patron saint of the Duchy of Savoy (France) and of the Valais (Switzerland) as well as of soldiers, swordsmiths, armies, and infantrymen. In 1591 Charles Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy arranged the triumphant return of part of the relics of Saint Maurice from the monastery of Agaune in Valais.

215 He is also the patron saint of weavers and dyers. Manresa (Spain), Piedmont (Italy), Montalbano Jonico (Italy), Schiavi di Abruzzo (Italy), Stadt Sulza (Germany) and Coburg (Germany) have chosen Maurice as their patron saint as well. Maurice is also the patron saint of the Brotherhood of Blackheads, a historical military society of 220 unmarried merchants in present-day Estonia and Latvia. In September 2008, certain relics of Maurice were transferred to a new reliquary and rededicated in Schiavi di Abruzzo (Italy).

225 He is also the patron saint of the town of Coburg in Bavaria, Germany. He is shown there as a man of colour especially on manhole covers as well as on the city coat of arms. There he is called "Coburger Mohr" (English: "Coburg Moor").

230 Portrayal and modern debates on race In the modern era, there has been debate surrounding Saint Maurice's race and physical depictions. The earliest surviving work portraying Maurice as a dark-skinned African dates from the 13th century. Before the 13th century, he was usually depicted with European features. The oldest surviving image that depicts Saint Maurice as a dark-skinned man in knight's armour was sculpted in the mid-13th century for Magdeburg Cathedral; there it is displayed next to the grave of Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor. Jean Devisse, author of the book *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, laid out the documentary sources for the saint's popularity and documented it with 235 illustrative examples. The Magdeburg cathedral in the 13th century presumably had other images of Maurice that did not visibly represent him as being an African, though with the exception of a statue from c. 1220, none has survived. During the 11th century, before art of Maurice began depicting him as visibly dark-skinned, he was seen as "the symbol of the Germanic offensive against the Slavs".

240 Devisse argues that Frederick II likely initiated the "black St. Maurice" trope, around 1240-1250. As a military saint, Maurice played an important role for the Holy Roman Empire during the Crusades, most of which had been failing at the time. Frederick seemingly wanted to symbolically state that, even though Christians cannot reconquer Africa, Christianity once triumphed in Africa before the arrival of Islam.

245 Given that Maurice was a Christian, his foreignness could not be depicted with iconographic vocabulary such as curved swords, insignia on shields or headdresses. As such, Maurice was "turned" into a "black" or darker-skinned man to specify his geographic provenance with racial characteristics of color and physiognomy. Paul Kaplan, agreeing with Devisse's thesis, additionally argues that Frederick II also wanted to propagandistically emphasize how "All races are equal before God, and... the Christian mission is universal", and also that one of his goals was to "advance his claims to global rule by promoting the visibility of his most strikingly 'different' subjects".

250 Gude Suckale-Redlefsen gives another view on the subject, arguing instead that it was not Frederick who transformed Maurice into a "black man", but rather archbishop Alfred I of Käfernburg, after 1220, or his half-brother Wilbrand later on. Suckale-Redlefsen reasons that Alfred had read the *Kaiserchronik* which described Maurice as "the leader of the [black] Moors". As such, according to her, Alfred took cognizance of this new idea of the saint as a dark-skinned Moor and commissioned a "black St. 255 Maurice" in the context of a new building program after a fire devastated the old cathedral in 1207. Devisse had also raised this idea but had eventually dismissed it because of "what [he] assumed would be negative psychological reactions on the part of the populace to the sudden arrival of a black African saint substituting for the old Maurice at an inopportune moment, and also because of the financial costs involved".

260 Images of the saint died out in the mid-16th century. Suckale-Redlefsen suggests that this was due to the developing Atlantic slave trade. "Once again, as in the early Middle Ages, the color black had become associated with spiritual darkness and cultural 'otherness'". There is an oil-on-wood painting of Maurice by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

265 The city of Coburg's coat of arms honoured the town's patron saint, Saint Maurice, since they were granted in 1493. In 1934, the Nazi government forbade any

glorification of the "Black" race, and they replaced the coat of arms with one depicting a vertical sword with a Nazi swastika on the pommel. The original coat of arms was restored in 1945 at the end of World War II. Today, the silhouette of Saint Maurice can be found mainly on manhole covers as well as the city coat of arms.

History

There is a difference of opinion among researchers as to whether or not the story of the Theban Legion is based on historical fact, and if so, to what extent. The account by Eucherius of Lyon is classed by Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye among the historical romances. Donald F. O'Reilly, in *Lost Legion Rediscovered*, argues that evidence from coins, papyrus, and Roman army lists support the story of the Theban Legion.

[According to the hagiographical material, Maurice was an Egyptian, born in 250 in Thebes, an ancient city in Upper Egypt that was the capital of the New Kingdom of Egypt (1575-1069 BC). He was brought up in the region of Thebes (Luxor). Maurice became a soldier in the Roman army. He was gradually promoted until he became the commander of the Theban legion, thus approximately leading a thousand men. He was an acknowledged Christian at a time when early Christianity was considered to be a threat to the Roman Empire. Yet, he moved easily within the pagan society of his day. The legion, entirely composed of Christians, had been called from Thebes in Egypt to Gaul to assist Emperor Maximian to defeat a revolt by the bagaudae. The Theban Legion was dispatched with orders to clear the Great St. Bernard Pass across Mont Blanc. Before going into battle, they were instructed to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods and pay homage to the emperor. Maurice pledged his men's military allegiance to Rome. He stated that service to God superseded all else. To engage in wanton slaughter was inconceivable to Christian soldiers he said. He and his men refused to worship Roman deities.

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Alexander of Bergamo

Alexander of Bergamo (died c. 303) is the patron saint of Bergamo, as well as Capriate San Gervasio and Cervignano d'Adda. Alexander may have been a Roman soldier or resident of Bergamo who was tortured and killed for not renouncing his Christian faith. Details of his life are uncertain, but subsequent Christian stories consider him a centurion of the Theban Legion commanded by Maurice.

Before the commencement of the Diocletianic Persecution in 303, both Galerius and Maximian in the West inaugurated, on their own responsibility, a crusade against Christianity and sought particularly to remove all Christians from the armies. Alexander, traditionally considered the standard bearer of the Theban Legion, was one of the victims of this persecution. He is reputed to have been a survivor of the decimation (the killing of every tenth man) ordered against the legion at Agaunum. He fled to Italy.

At Milan, he was recognized and imprisoned in the Zebedeo Prison in Milan, later site of the church of Sant'Alessandro in Zebedia. He refused to renounce his Christian faith. However, he was visited in jail by Fidelis and Bishop Maternus. With the help of Fidelis, Alexander managed to escape. Alexander fled to Como but was captured again.

Brought back to Milan, he knocked down the sacrificial altar, enraging Emperor Maximian. Alexander was condemned to death by decapitation. However, the executioner's arms went stiff during the execution. He was imprisoned again, but Alexander once again managed to escape and ended up in Bergamo after passing through Fara Gera d'Adda and Capriate San Gervasio. At Bergamo, he was the guest of the lord Crotacius, who bid him to hide from his persecutors. However, Alexander decided to become a preacher instead and converted many natives of Bergamo, including Firmus and Rusticus, who were later martyred. Alexander was once again captured and was finally decapitated on August 26, 303, on the spot now occupied by the church of San Alessandro in Colonna.

The Martyrdom of St. Alexander (Workshop of Lorenzo Lotto, after 1560) The oldest Passio dates from about the 8th century, but his cult is much earlier. Alexander was most likely a Roman soldier, native or resident of Bergamo, tortured and killed for not having renounced his Christian faith.

345 Bergamo Cathedral is dedicated to him. He is one of the saints in the dedication of the church in Rome for natives of Bergamo. The 1887 "The Martyrdom of Saint Alexander of Bergamo" by Ponziano Loverini is in the Pinacoteca Vaticana. Many Italian cities and towns have Saint Alexander of Bergamo as their patron saint.

350 **Bessus** Bessus, sometimes Besse, (Italian: San Besso) is venerated as a member of the legendary Theban Legion, whose members were led by Maurice and were martyred for their Christian faith in the 3rd century.

355 Legend Evidence for Bessus's existence is confused and uncertain: the name of Bessus is actually identified with two different, semi-legendary saints with the same name: one was a martyred bishop of Ivrea who lived in the eighth century, the other was a hermit with the same name who lived in an Alpine sanctuary near Campiglia in Cogne Valley.

360 In addition, there are two feast days associated with Bessus that were celebrated at Ivrea: August 10 and December 1. The cult of Saint Bessus may actually represent the Christianization of the cult associated with the Egyptian god Bes, also invoked for fertility. Bessus and Bes, as Fabio Arduino points out, are both associated with an ostrich feather in their iconography.

365 According to tradition, Bessus survived the decimation of his legion and fled to valleys of Aosta and Cogne. He then dedicated himself to converting the local shepherds to Christianity.

370 Numerous legends were connected with Bessus. A breviary dating from 1473 states that Bessus was martyred in the following manner: he was invited to a banquet by some Piedmontese who had stolen the cattle that was now being served as a meal. When Bessus discovered this, he denounced the cattle thieves. Angered, the thieves chased him and forced him to jump the cliffs of Monte Fantino. Bessus survived but was then killed by the Roman legionnaires who had slaughtered the Theban Legion at Agaunum.

375 The cliff preserves an imprint associated with Bessus. According to local tradition, the sanctuary dedicated to the saint was constructed on the place of Bessus's martyrdom, which remains today a place of pilgrimage. A different version of the tale states that Bessus hid himself in the Valley of Cogne before being killed by the Roman soldiers.

380 In 1912, Robert Hertz, a French historian and anthropologist, collected at Cogne a different version of Bessus's death, which was part of an oral tradition passed down from generation to generation. This version states that Bessus was not a soldier of the Theban Legion at all, but a local shepherd who was so pious that God rewarded him with a prosperous, fat, and healthy flock. Envious of his prosperity, some shepherds killed him by forcing him off a cliff.

385 Except for the cult of Saint Maurice, veneration for Bessus enjoyed a wider popularity than those associated with other saints of the Theban Legion and remains popular today.

390 According to a local tradition, Bessus's relics were stolen in the ninth century and taken to Ozegna, to the chapel now occupied by the sanctuary known as Beata Vergine del Convento e del Bosco. Subsequently, during the reign of Arduin of Italy, the relics were translated to the cathedral of Ivrea, where they were placed in a Roman sarcophagus. Today, the relics rest in a lateral altar along with those associated with other martyr saints. Bessus is depicted in an altarpiece by Claudio Francesco Beaumont.

395 Bessus was considered to be a great thaumaturgus and miracle-worker, and a protector of soldiers against the dangers of war; he was also invoked for fertility. On August 10, an annual festival and pilgrimage is held in the mountains of Gran Paradiso National Park (Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso), in the Val Soana. A statue of the saint is carried to the cliff that is associated with his martyrdom.

400 The honor of carrying the saint was once a cause of dispute between the towns of Cogne and Campiglia. Each town had once been under the jurisdiction of separate dioceses, but in the 13th century, the two towns became part of the diocese of Ivrea.

405 **Candidus** Candidus (died c.287 AD) was a commander of the Theban Legion. The Theban Legion was composed of Christians from Upper Egypt. He is venerated as a Christian saint and martyr.

410 Candidus was first mentioned as a member of the Theban Legion by Eucherius, Bishop of Lyon (434 AD). The 13th-century Golden Legend states: "And the noble man, Maurice, was duke of this holy legion; and they that governed under him, which bare the banners, were named Saint Candidus, Saint Innocent, Saint Exsuperius, Saint Victor, and Saint Constantine, all these were captains."

415 Candidus is called Maurice's senator militum or staff officer. He opposed Maximian, who had ordered them to harass the local Christians in his name, stating that "we are your soldiers, but we are also servants of the true God. We cannot renounce Him who is our Creator and Master, and also yours even though you reject Him."

420 Candidus, along with Maurice, the other staff officers and 6,600 soldiers, is said to have been martyred at the Swiss town of Saint Maurice-en-Valais, then called Agaunum. His feast day is September 22.

Remains

425 Candidus' relics were stored in a 6th-century reliquary at the Abbaye de Saint-Maurice d'Agaune. His skull is kept in an embossed silver bust in the Abbey's Treasury. Some of Candidus' relics are stored at Our Lady of Malibu Catholic Church, given by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to the newly formed parish in 1960 under founding rector, Joseph Burbage. The relics were rededicated by Archbishop Jose Gomez in November, 2014. It has been confirmed that his relics can also be found at St. Bonaventure Catholic Church in Huntington Beach, CA.

430 Cassius and Florentius

435 Saint Justin of Siponto, as well as Saints Florentius, Felix, and Justa, are venerated as Christian martyrs by the Catholic Church. Information about them is fragmentary but their names were inserted into various martyrologies. Tradition states that Justin was a priest and bishop, that Florentius and Felix were his siblings, and that Justa was his niece. The earliest document about them dates from the 15th century; this is their legendary *passio*.

440 They lived in Siponto at the beginning of the fourth century. Justin as the most erudite and eloquent of the three brothers. He was appointed bishop of Siponto. Florentius, meanwhile, married and had a daughter named Justa, named after Justin, who had baptized her. After a decade or so, the four left Siponto and went to Chieti, where they preached and performed miracles. Pagan priests, alarmed by this, contacted Maximian; the authorities ordered the four to sacrifice to Jove. Justin escaped to a mountain named Tuberium while Florentius, Felix, and Justa were arrested and taken to Forconium (Furci). Florentius and Felix were decapitated immediately, on July 25, 310. Justa was thrown into a burning furnace, but after emerging unharmed, was shot with arrows on August 1 of that year. She was buried in a place two miles from Furci where a basilica would later be built.

445 Justin, meanwhile, buried the bodies of his brothers beside that of his niece and died of natural causes at the age of eighty-four. He was buried near Offida (province of Ascoli Piceno), where a basilica was also built.

450 The varying dates of celebration and places with which they were associated has led scholars to believe that they are purely legendary. Justin was confused with the cult of Saint Justin of Chieti, whose feast day falls on January 1, and May 11 locally. Florentius and Felix were sometimes identified as soldier saints, probably through confusion with Felix of Nola. Of Justa it is known that there was a crypt dedicated to her at Bazzano, where her body was conserved. The church there was expanded in the 13th century. Her cult, with a feast day of August 1, was centered in the Abruzzo and Campania regions. There were three churches dedicated to her in Penne, Sulmona, and Chieti. The four saints all had their own feast day of July 25 in previous Roman Martyrologies; currently they are not mentioned in this martyrology.

455 **Bonn Minster** (German: Bonner Münster) is a Catholic church in Bonn. It is one of Germany's oldest churches, having been built between the 11th and 13th centuries. At one point the church served as the de facto cathedral for the Archbishopric of Cologne, because it is the major church of what was then the Archbishop-Elector's residence. It is now a minor basilica. It served as the inspiration for the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, as Kaiser Wilhelm II had studied in Bonn. The basilica was built on the site of the graves of two martyrs Cassius and Florentius, the patrons of Bonn. They are piously believed to have been Roman legionaries of the Theban Legion. At some point during their march to Gaul, the legion refused to follow the emperor's orders either to kill the indigenous Christians or to worship Maximian as a god. As a result, a large number of legionaries were martyred in Agaunum, now named Saint Maurice-en-Valais after Saint Maurice. According to legend, Saints Cassius and Florentius, who were under the command of Saint Gereon, were beheaded for their religious beliefs at the present location of the Minster.

480 A memorial chapel was built in the early fourth century in what was a suburban cemetery about 1 km south of the Roman fortress. In the sixth century, a memorial building took its place. In the eighth century the Collegiate Church of SS. Cassius and Florentius" was built. The medieval town developed around the minster. A late Romanesque monastic church was constructed from 1140 to 1250. At one point the church served as the cathedral for the Archbishopric of Cologne. The cathedral was the model for the Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. On Pentecost Sunday 1956, the church was elevated to the status of a minor basilica.

485 A fund raising initiative was launched in 2014 for necessary renovations to the 1,000-year-old building to address cracks in the vault, water damage, and an aging electric service, among other concerns. The church has square towers decorated with Lombard bands; a Romanesque feature, the minster also shows adaptation of some Gothic elements. Writer T. Francis Bumpus said, "The most beautiful stone spire in Germany is that of the minster at Bonn."

490 The Minster in Bonn housed one of the first organs in Germany, when in 1230 one was placed on the east wall in the north transept.

Chiaffredo (Theofredus)

495 Chiaffredo (also Chiaffredus, Theofredus, Ciafrè, Chaffre, Teofredo, Jafredo, Jafredus, Eufredus, Jofredus, Sinfredus, Zaffredus) is venerated as the patron saint of Saluzzo, Italy. Tradition considers him a member of the Theban Legion, but instead of being martyred with this legion at Agaunum (in present-day Switzerland), he escaped to Piedmont and was martyred there.

500 A 14th-century account relates that, around 522, a man fell from a precipice near Crissolo but remained unharmed. The local population attributed his being unharmed to relics discovered by a peasant plowing in the vicinity - a discovery attributed to divine intervention. The mysterious skeleton was given the name of "San Ciafrè" and the tomb became the focus of a celebrated sanctuary at Crissolo.

505 The first documentary evidence pointing to a cult devoted to Chiaffredo dates from 1387, when Avignon Pope Clement VII granted indulgences to those who visited the church at Crissolo and helped in its repair. A late 16th century legend written down by Guglielmo Baldesano states that Chiaffredo or Teofredo, soldier of the Theban Legion, escaped to Piedmont to avoid sacrificing to pagan idols and was martyred at Crissolo around 270. Fabio Arduino believes this story to have no historical foundation, as it would have been unlikely for a Roman legionary of the 3rd century to bear such a clearly Germanic name. The name is a variant of Theudofridus, derived from the Germanic theuda- "people," and frithu- "peace."

510 515 The sepulcher identified as Chiaffredo's burial place may have been a tomb of pagan origins. Similar to the cults of Constantius at Crissolo, Bessus at Val Soana, Tegulus at Ivrea, Magnus at Castelmagno, and Dalmatius at Borgo San Dalmazzo, the cult of Chiaffredo was linked with that of the Theban Legion to lend antiquity to a local saint about whom nothing was really known.

520 525 530 In 1902, a scholar identified Chiaffredo as the 8th century figure Theofredus (Chaffre, Theofrid, Teofredo), abbot of Le Monastier near Puy-en-Velay, who was killed by Muslim raiders and was also venerated in Piedmont. Tornabuoni, bishop of Saluzzo, declared Chiaffredo patron of his diocese during a synod of 1516, with Constantius (San Costanzo) as co-patron. Chiaffredo's relics were translated to Revello in 1593, and thence to the cathedral of Saluzzo in 1642. Constantius and Chiaffredo are depicted together in the altar of Saluzzo Cathedral. Chiaffredo enjoyed veneration in Piedmont; one English scholar has written that "beneath the shadow of Monte Viso, San Chiaffredo, a runaway apostle of the Theban legion, has usurped the worship paid in old time to the river-god Eridanus..." Due to his alleged Theban origins, he is venerated by the Coptic Church. He is however, not mentioned explicitly in the Roman Martyrology, although this martyrology includes Maurice and the Theban Legion as a whole, without naming Chiaffredo specifically.

535 Constantius

540 Constantius (Italian: San Costanzo) is venerated as a member of the legendary Theban Legion. Similar to the cults of Chiaffredo at Crissolo, Bessus at Val Soana, Tegulus at Ivrea, Magnus at Castelmagno, and Dalmatius at Borgo San Dalmazzo, the cult of Constantius was linked with that of the Theban Legion to lend antiquity to a local saint about whom nothing was really known.

According to tradition, Constantius survived the decimation of his Legion and fled to the Val Maira, today in the province of Cuneo, with some other survivors. These included Constantine, Dalmatius, Desiderius, Isidore, Magnus, Olympius, Pontius, Theodore, and Victor. They dedicated themselves to preaching the Christian religion,

545 but all of them, except for Constantius, were soon killed by the Roman authorities. Constantius buried his companions.

546 The local geologic formation known as Ciciu del Villar, which are columns formed by natural erosion, was connected with Constantius' legend: the stones are said to be the Roman soldiers sent to kill him, who were miraculously petrified before they could harm the saint.

550 According to tradition, Constantius was eventually beheaded on Monte San Bernardo, where a sanctuary dedicated to him was built, known as San Costanzo al Monte. This sanctuary probably dates to Lombard times; some eighth century sculptures remain. The 555 sanctuary was rebuilt and altered in succeeding centuries, and the stone church was completed in 1190. A Baroque façade was added later. The Benedictine abbatial church of Santi Vittore e Costanzo, also in Villar, conserves some important archaeological remains, including a marble slab bearing vermilion symbols and worn down by the hands of the faithful.

560 Constantius' cult became popular, with a pilgrimage to Villar by the faithful taking place every year.

565 Tornabuoni, bishop of Saluzzo, declared Chiaffredo patron of his diocese during a synod of 1516, with Constantius as co-patron. Statues of Chiaffredo and Constantius can be found in the altar of the cathedral of Saluzzo. Due to his connection with the Theban Legion, Constantius is considered to have been of Egyptian birth; this has led to his veneration in the Coptic Church.

Defendens

570 Defendens of Thebes (Italian: San Defendente di Tebe) is venerated as a martyr by the Catholic Church. Venerated as a soldier-saint, Defendens was, according to Christian tradition, a member of the Theban Legion, and thus martyred at Agaunum.

575 Particular veneration for Defendens was widespread in Northern Italy; evidence for this cult dates from as early as 1328. His feast day was celebrated in the cities of Chivasso, Casale Monferrato, Novara, and Lodi on January 2, and oratories, altars, and confraternities were dedicated to him. He also enjoyed veneration in Marseille; the Catholic Encyclopedia states that "several saints belong in a particular way to Marseille: the soldier St. Victor, martyr under Maximian; the soldier St. Defendens and his companions, martyrs at the same time..." But as Antonio Borrelli writes, some scholars believe that the Defendens venerated in Italy is different from the martyr who was a member of the Theban Legion.

580 There is an oratory dedicated to him at Solto Collina. There is also a church dedicated to him at Clusone, the church of San Defendente, and another at Invorio. Until 1476 his relics, according to the 1578 Martyrologium Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae of Pietro Galesino, were kept in the church of Santa Croce in Casale Monferrato, which suggested that his martyrdom may have taken place in that region.

585 Exuperius (Exupernis)

590 Exuperius or Exupernis is venerated as a saint and martyr by the Catholic Church; according to tradition, he was the standard-bearer of the Theban Legion and thus a companion to Saint Maurice.

595 Exuperius' relics were translated in the 10th century to Gembloux Abbey. This translation was performed by the monastery's founder, Saint Guibert (Guibertus), who dedicated the monastery in honor of Saint Peter and Saint Exuperius. The saint thus enjoyed special veneration at Gembloux; Sigebert of Gembloux wrote a long poem on the martyrdom of the Theban Legion. The buildings of the abbey, which largely survived, are used for the Agronomical University of Gembloux.

Felix and Regula, the patron saints of Zürich

600 Felix and Regula (together with their servant Exuperantius) are Coptic Orthodox and Roman Catholic saints. They are the patron saints of Zürich.

605 Felix and Regula were brother and sister, beheaded in the third century, along with Exuperantius, for converting to Christianity. Their feast day is 11 September in the Gregorian calendar, celebrated on the same day using the Julian calendar (which is the 24th of September Gregorian), the 14th of Tout in the Coptic Calendar.

610 Felix and Regula were siblings, and members of the Theban legion which was based in Egypt under Saint Maurice and stationed in Agaunum in the Valais, Switzerland. When the legion refused to sacrifice to Emperor Maximian, the order was given to execute them. The siblings fled, reaching Zürich (then called Turicum) via Glarus before they were caught, tried and executed in 286. According to legend, after decapitation, they miraculously stood to their feet, picked up their own heads, walked forty paces uphill, and prayed before lying down in death. They were buried on the spot where they lay down, on the hilltop which would become the site of the Grossmünster. This story was revealed in a dream to a monk called Florentius in the 8th century. It

largely contributed to the massive conversion of the inhabitants of these regions to Christianity and had such an impact on Zurich that these three saints still appear on the seal of Zurich today.

In the 9th century, there was a small monastery at the location, outside the settlement of Zürich which was situated on the left side of the Limmat. The Grossmünster was built on their graves from ca. 1100, and the Wasserkirche was built at the site of their execution.

From the 13th century, images of the saints were used in official seals of the city and on coins. On the saints' feast day, their relics were carried in procession between the Grossmünster and the Fraumünster, and the two monasteries vied for possession of the relics, which attracted enough pilgrims to make Zürich the most important pilgrimage site in the bishopric of Konstanz.

With the dissolution of the monasteries by Huldrych Zwingli in 1524, their possessions were confiscated and the graves of the martyrs were opened. There are conflicting versions of what happened then. Heinrich Bullinger, a Protestant theologian, claimed that the graves were empty save for a few bone fragments, which were piously buried in the common graveyard outside the church. The Catholics, on the other hand, claimed that the reformers were planning to throw the relics of the saints into the river, and that a courageous man of Uri (who happened to be exiled from Uri, and by his action earned amnesty) stole the relics from the church. He carried them to Andermatt, where the two skulls of Felix and Regula can be seen to this day, while the remaining relics were returned to Zürich in 1950, to the newly built St. Felix und Regula Catholic church.

The skulls have been Carbon 14 dated, and while one dates to the Middle Ages, the other is in fact composed of fragments of two separate skulls, of which one is medieval, and the other could indeed date to Roman times.

Zurich's Knabenschiessen competition, which started in 1889, originated with the feast day of the saints on 11 September, which came to be the "national holiday" of the early modern Republic of Zürich.

The account of the Theban legion is regarded as fictitious by many modern historians. However, other historians believe that historical and archaeological evidence places the legion in Switzerland at that time.

Fidelis of Como

Fidelis of Como (Italian: San Fedele) (died c.304) was an Italian soldier-saint, according to Christian tradition.

Fidelis' cult is associated with Carpophorus and Exanthus, two soldier-saints.

Variations on their legend are applied to Fidelis. The first says that he, with Carpophorus and Exanthus, were Roman soldiers, members of the legendary Theban Legion, who deserted during the persecution of Christians by Maximian. The three split up at Como, with Carpophorus and Exanthus going into hiding, while Fidelis took a boat across the lake to Samolaco. All were eventually caught and beheaded.

The second says that Fidelis was an army officer who was guarding Christian prisoners at Milan, including Alexander of Bergamo. He managed to procure the freedom of five of these prisoners. With Carpophorus and Exanthus, he and these five attempted to make their way to the Alps, but were executed at Como.

More likely, he was a Christian missionary sent by Maternus (bishop of Milan) to convert the still pagan area around Lake Como, and there met his death.

The cult of Fidelis at Como is ancient. Milan, Como, and Arona claim the relics of Fidelis.

Magnus Felix Ennodius describes, in the early sixth century, a tomb at Como containing the relics of the martyr. Reports of miracles at the tomb fomented the popularity of his cult. Como's claim is based on an account of 964 that describes the translation of Fidelis' relics from the spot where he was killed to Como in that year. Sometime before 1000, the church of Sanfedelino, which was dedicated to him, was built on the site of a much earlier simple chapel, from around the fourth century, previously dedicated to Saint Euphemia.

Relics are said to have been transferred to Arona during a time of war between Milan and Como. In Arona, the presence of the relics of Fidelis and Carpophorus is attested in documents dating back to 1259 and 1321.

In 1576, Charles Borromeo transferred to Milan relics of Carpophorus and Fidelis. Though until then their veneration in Arona was minimal, Borromeo's proposed transfer angered the people of the city. As a compromise, Borromeo brought back to Arona the two left forearms of the saints. This occurred on March 13. The city council, which had been pressured by the populace to bring back the relics, decreed that an annual festival occur on that day, which in succeeding centuries has increased in importance. The purpose of the festival was extended to include the celebration for the martyrs Felinus and Gratian, thereby uniting their cult to that of Carpophorus.

and Fidelis.

At Milan, Borromeo commissioned the church of San Fedele to Pellegrino Tibaldi (1559).

685 Fortunatus of Casei

Fortunatus of Casei (Italian: San Fortunato di Casei) is venerated as a saint by the Catholic Church. Tradition makes him a member of the Theban Legion, and thus martyred at Agaunum. However, his relics were situated in the catacombs of Pope Callixtus I in Rome until 1746, when Cardinal Guadagni, Roman vicar to Benedict XIV, re-exhumed and displayed Fortunatus' relics in the collegiate church of Santa Maria in Via Lata in Rome. It is unclear how the relics of Fortunatus reached Rome from the saint's supposed place of death in the Swiss Alps.

690 From Santa Maria in Via Lata, Fortunatus' relics were translated to Casei Gerola in 1765, as a gift to the church there from the Holy See. Casei Gerola, in the province 695 of Pavia, was an important village of the diocese of Tortona, which had close ties to the papacy. His relics were kept in an urn; Fortunatus' skull was crushed, indicating the cause of death to be a fatal blow to the head.

700 Another source states that he was venerated in the catacombs of Saint Priscilla in Rome until 1600, when some of his relics were translated to Turbigo, although his 705 relics were also claimed by Casei from 1700 onwards. There may have been two saints with the same name of Fortunatus. Some of his relics are also claimed by the parish of Lonate Pozzolo.

710 He was proclaimed patron saint of Pantelleria after he is believed to have aided the island through miraculous intervention during an earthquake in 1831 and a seaquake in 715 1891. A procession in honor of the saint is held on October 16; a statue of the saint is carried on a boat.

Gereon

710 Gereon of Cologne (French: Géréon), who may have been a soldier, was martyred at Cologne by beheading, probably in the early 4th century.

715 The Roman Martyrology states that "In Cologne in Germany, the Saints Gereon and his companions, martyrs, who with sincere piety, courageously offered their necks to the sword." That brief outline is the official account of the church, that is, the martyrdom by beheading, in the famous German city, of a group of Christians headed by a certain Gereon. In fact, nothing more can be said about them with historical certainty.

720 According to his legend, Gereon (called the "Golden Saint") was said to be a soldier of the Theban Legion. Gregory of Tours, writing in the 6th century, said that Gereon and his companions were a detachment of fifty men of the Theban Legion who were 725 massacred at Agaunum by order of Emperor Maximian for refusing to sacrifice to pagan gods to obtain victory in battle.

730 Some of his companions' names are stated as being Cassius, Gregorius Maurus, Florentius, Innocentius (Innocent), Constantinus, and Victor.

735 Bede the Venerable mentions that their feast was included in the Sarum calendar, as well as the calendars of Barking and Durham. Later medieval legends increased the number of Gereon's companions to 290 or 319, and Norbert of Xanten is said to have discovered, through a vision, the spot at Cologne where the relics of Ursula and her companions, of Gereon, and of other martyrs lay hidden.

740 Gereon became a popular military saint and is often represented in art as a Roman soldier or medieval knight. Along with other saints who were beheaded, he is invoked by those suffering from migraine headaches. Hélinand of Froidmont's Martyrium mentions Saint Gereon.

745 St. Gereon's Basilica, in Cologne, is dedicated to him. Stefan Lochner painted a triptych in the 15th century which, in the centre piece, shows in almost life-size figures the worshipping of the Magi, and the side panels of which represent Ursula with her companions, and Gereon with his warriors. In 1810 the triptych was moved from the town hall to the choir chapel of the cathedral.

Saint-Géron is a small town located in the department of Loire-Atlantique of the French region Pays de la Loire.

750 The martyr is depicted on the 13th century seal of the Convent of St. Gereon, Cologne.

Magnus of Cuneo

755 Magnus of Cuneo (Italian: San Magno) is venerated as a martyr and member of the legendary Theban Legion. The center of his cult is situated at the mountain sanctuary known as the Santuario di San Magno, in the Valle Grana, Castelmagno, in the province of Cuneo. His feast day is August 19.

Local tradition says he was a soldier of the Theban Legion, which had been commanded

750 by Maurice. The legion is supposed to have been decimated at Agaunum in 286 AD, but Magnus fled to the mountains of Piedmont, preaching the Christian religion in the Alps. He was eventually martyred and buried in the spot now occupied by the Santuario di San Magno. The church may have occupied a spot once dedicated to the Roman god Mars. The current church was built between 1704 and 1716, in Piedmontese Baroque style, though its interior still preserves frescoes of the 15th and 16th centuries.

755 As Damiano Pomi points out, neither documentary nor archaeological evidence supports the connection between Magnus and the Theban Legion. Similar to the cults of Chiaffredo at Cressolo, Bessus at Val Soana, Tegulus at Ivrea, Constantius at Villar San Costanzo, and Dalmatius at Borgo San Dalmazzo, the cult of Magnus was linked with that of the Theban Legion to lend antiquity to a local saint about whom nothing was 760 really known.

Magnus has theoretically been identified with Magnus of Füssen (Mang), a later monk of the same name associated with the Bavarian monastery at Füssen, whose cult would have spread south to Piedmont by the Benedictines. However, due to his association with the Theban Legion, Magnus was depicted as a Roman soldier holding a banner and the palm of martyrdom. He should not be confused with Magnus of Anagni or Magnus of Cappadocia, whose feast days occur on the same day. A set of relics, translated from Anagni to St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in Louisville, Kentucky in 1901, may belong to one of them.

770 Solutor, Octavius, and Adventor

Solutor, along with Octavius and Adventor (Italian: Solutore, Ottavio, e Avventore), (died ca. 284 AD) is the patron saint of Turin.

775 Historical detail regarding these martyrs is sparse; their memory is preserved because the three were mentioned in a sermon by Maximus of Turin. However, Maximus makes no precise geographic or temporal references regarding Solutor, Octavius, and Adventor.

Their legend states that they were members of the Theban Legion during the end of the 3rd century. While the legion's leader, Saint Maurice, was killed at Agaunum, along with many other soldiers, Solutor, Adventor, and Octavius managed to escape. Adventor and Octavius, however, were caught at the Dora Riparia and killed there. Solutor would be killed at a quarry near the Dora Baltea near Caravino. A matron of Ivrea collected their bodies in a quadriga and carried them to Turin.

780 In 490, Victor of Turin, bishop of the city, enlarged the church that housed their relics. In 1006, a monastery, San Solutore in Turin, was established by Bishop Gezo of Turin. The relics of the three martyrs, together with those of Saint Juliana and Saint Gozzelino (Goslino), second abbot of San Solutore, were transferred to the Turinese sanctuary known as the Consolata after Francis I of France ordered the demolition of San Solutore. In 1619, the relics were translated to the new church of the Holy Martyrs (Santi Martiri) on the Via Garibaldi. This church was built with the support of the Piedmontese pontiff Pius V and Emmanuel Philibert. The relics are 790 still found at this church.

According to legend, a vision of the Virgin Mary appeared in a dream to John Bosco in 1844 or 1845 and revealed the site of the martyrdom of Adventor and Octavius. The Basilica dell'Ausiliatrice was built on the spot.

795 The cult of Saint Solutor is particularly strong in the diocese of Ivrea, and he is also venerated in Caravino, Romano Canavese, and Strambino.

The codex called the Codice della Catena depicts Saints Octavius, Maximus of Turin, Adventor, Solutor, John the Baptist, and Secundus of Asti.

800 Tegulus

Tegulus (Italian: San Tegulo, Tegolo) is venerated as a member of the legendary Theban Legion, whose members were led by Maurice in the 3rd century. The center of Tegulus' cult is at Ivrea. Veneration of Tegulus actually arose at the end of the 10th century, when during the episcopate of Warmondus (Varmondo), the Tegulus's 805 relics were discovered in a sepulcher situated a short distance away from Ivrea. The relics were translated to the cathedral of Ivrea within the city walls, and placed in the chapel of San Giacomo. The relics were later translated, with those of Bessus, to the chapel of Santissimo Sacramento.

According to local tradition, Tegulus survived the decimation of his legion but was 810 eventually beheaded on the road to Montaldo Dora, at the spot later occupied by the chapel of Santa Croce, which was built in the 14th century.

However, nothing certain was known of him, though he may have been a local Christian martyred for his faith during the last imperial persecutions; his cult was linked with that of the Theban Legion to lend antiquity to a local saint about whom nothing 815 was really known. Damiano Pomi theorizes that the relics may have been the remains of a soldier that were mistaken for those of a Christian martyr. The name Tegulus, as

Pomi also theorizes, may in fact not have been his name at all, but a reference to the building material commonly used for Roman graves: the tegula or tile.

820 Ursus of Solothurn

Ursus of Solothurn was a 3rd-century Roman Christian who is venerated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church, Coptic church and Roman Catholic church. He was associated very early with the Theban Legion and is recorded in the Roman Martyrology, commemorated with St. Victor of Solothurn on 30 September.

825 The Life of Ursus was written by Eucherius of Lyon in the 5th century; it recounts that Ursus was tortured and beheaded at Solothurn under Emperor Maximian and the governor Hyrtacus for refusing to worship idols around 286. The legend is classed by Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye among the historical romances.

830 The first church dedicated to Ursus in Solothurn was probably built after Victor of Solothurn's remains were taken to Geneva in the late 7th century. The Treaty of Meerssen of 870 mentions a monastery of St. Ursus in Solothurn.

His relics are displayed in churches throughout Switzerland, and his coffin was found in 1519 under the choir altar of St. Ursen. His feast day is September 30.

835 Saint Ursus Fountain in Solothurn, Switzerland, where St. Ursus is depicted as a soldier.

Ursus is depicted as a soldier in arms, often with his head under his arm. He is depicted in the Solothurn Madonna by Hans Holbein the Younger.

Ursus is the patron of the Roman Catholic cathedral in Solothurn, Switzerland, where his body is located.

840

Victor of Xanten

845 Viktor of Xanten was a 4th century martyr and saint recognized by the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Since the 12th century, his presumed bones have been kept in a shrine, which is embedded in the high altar of the Xanten Cathedral. His feast day is October 10.

Tradition states that Viktor, as a Praefectus cohortis of a Cohort of the Theban Legion, was not caught up in the decimation at Agaunum but then fell victim to the persecution under Emperor Maximian together with other companions in Xanten. He was executed in the amphitheater of Castra Vetera (the site of present-day Xanten) for refusing to sacrifice to the Roman gods. He was closely associated with Ursus of Solothurn, and is said to have been a relative of Saint Verena.

850 Victor was first mentioned by Gregory of Tours in connection with the discovery of the bones of a Mallosus in the village of Birten, today a suburb of Xanten. The place name "Xanten" is also derived as "ze santen", which thus refers to a widely known and revered burial place. According to legend, Helena of Constantinople recovered the bones of Victor and his legion and erected a chapel in their honour.

According to other traditions, he was a companion of Gereon of Cologne. The tradition of Victor as a member of the Theban Legion is mixed with that of Victor of Agaunum and Victor of Solothurn.

860

Victor of Solothurn

Victor of Solothurn is a martyr and saint of the Catholic Church. He was a soldier of the Theban Legion led by Maurice and died in Solothurn.

865 Victor was one of the soldiers of the famous Theban legion that, under the leadership of Maurice was dispatched to put down a revolt in Gaul. The soldiers came from the Egyptian city of Thebes, and were for the most part Christians. Sent to clear the Great St Bernard Pass across the Alps, they arrived at Agaunum, the present town of Sankt-Moritz in Switzerland. When ordered to harass some local Christians, they refused. They then refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods, because that would have meant betraying their own God. This cost them all their lives.

Otto of Freising wrote in his Chronica de duabus civitatibus that many of the legionaries escaped and only some were executed at Agaunum, and the others apprehended later and put to death both at Bonn and Köln. Victor reached Solothurn near Bern before the Roman authorities caught up with him and he was beheaded.

875 In 480 the body of Victor was brought to Geneva by the Burgundian Queen Theudelinde. He is buried in the former St-Victor's Basilica in Geneva.

Victor is the patron saint of the city of Geneva. He and Ursus of Solothurn are patron saints of the Cathedral of St. Ursus and St. Victor in Solothurn, Switzerland. A relief on the front facade shows Saints Ursus and Victor refusing to worship idols.

880 His feast day is 30 September.

Verena

Verena of Zurzach, also known as Saint Verena (c.260 – c.344), was an early Christian consecrated virgin and hermit. She is venerated as a saint in the Eastern

885 Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches. She is especially venerated in Switzerland, where her cult is attested in Bad Zurzach, the reported place of her burial, from at least the 5th century. Her feast is on 1 September.

890 The oldest tradition of the life of Verena is found in the so-called *Vita prior* by Hatto, the abbot of Reichenau (and later bishop of Mainz), written in c. 888. The younger *Vita posterior* was most likely written by a monk in Zurzach in the 11th century, the oldest extant copy dating to the 12th century.

895 According to Hatto's account, Verena was born in Thebes as the daughter of a notable Christian family. She was educated by a bishop named Chaeremon (*Vita prior*, ch. 3). A bishop Chaeremon of Nilopolis is mentioned by Eusebius as martyred in 250, which would place Verena's birth before that date.

900 After the death of Chaeremon, Verena travelled to Lower Egypt with a group of Christians, where the Theban Legion was being recruited. With the Theban Legion, she then travelled to Milan (*Vita prior* ch. 4). While still in Milan, she heard of the martyrdom of the Theban Legion (an event of uncertain historicity, traditionally dated to 286, during the reign of Maximian) and travelled to Agaunum (Saint-Maurice). In later sources, she is said to have buried the martyred legionnaires.

905 Verena then moved on to Salodurum (Solothurn) in a hermitage, and spent her days in fasting and prayer, and working miracles. Hatto presents her as a prototype of the consecrated virgin, saying that she attracted a following of young virgins. She was at one point imprisoned by a local governor, and Saint Maurice appeared to her in jail to console and strengthen her. After she was released, she continued her good works. At the end of her natural days, she retired into a narrow cave.

910 The year of her death was calculated as 344 by Johannes Laurentius Huber (1812-1879), provost at Verenamünster in Zurzach. If her birth before 250 is accepted (based on the identification of her mentor, bishop Chaeremon), this would imply that she was more than 95 years old at the time of her death.

915 The Verena Minster in Zurzach was built over the grave of Saint Verena in a Roman cemetery.

920 Her cult became widespread from the 12th century, and Verena was one of the most venerated saints in medieval Switzerland. A Benedictine abbey existed in the 10th century at the site of her burial in Bad Zurzach. The monastery was replaced by a collegiate church at some time before 1265, with Saint Verena as its patroness. In southern Germany, a chapel dedicated to her was present at the site of the minster of Salem Abbey in 1137. The minster there includes a niche dedicated to her. The convent of beguines in Zürich, established in the mid-13th century, had a chapel dedicated to St. Verena.

925 Verena is often portrayed as a matron with either bread, or a jar of water in one hand, and a comb in the other, symbols of her care for the poor and lepers.

930 The given name Verena is not recorded outside of the context of this saint; it has been associated with the name Berenice (i.e. Veronica). In reference to the saint, Verena came to be a commonly given feminine name in Switzerland, in hypocoristic form [Vreni" becoming an almost archetypically Swiss girls' name (cf. diminutive "Vreneli"). The name Verena or Vreneli was also transferred to numerous female figures in Swiss folklore and mythology; notable among these is the Vrenelisgärtli ("Verena's garden") glacier of the Glärnisch massif.

935 The Verena Gorge Hermitage north of Solothurn, ostensibly the site of Verena's hermitage, is known to have been in existence since the 12th century (the older of the two chapels has foundations of the 12th century). The presence of a resident hermit is recorded for 1442. The site features Stations of the Cross dating from 1613 (restored around 1990). In the 18th century, the gorge was developed as a landscape garden in the style of Romanticism, notably due to the advocacy of French diplomat Louis Auguste Le Tonnelier de Breteuil. During 1810-1813, the footpath along the gorge was further developed as a partly Roman Catholic pilgrimage site, and a partly national romantic shrine for the patriciate of Solothurn. In a century-old tradition, the resident hermit is provided for by the Bürgergemeinde of the city of Solothurn.

940 The municipality of Stäfa at Lake Zürich displays Verena in its coat of arms, from the coat of arms of Stäfa bailiwick in use since 1526.

945 In 1986, a delegation from Saint Verena's Church in Switzerland, brought a part of Saint Verena's relics to Egypt. The first Coptic church consecrated in the name of Saint Verena is Saint Maurice and Saint Verena's Church in Cairo, which was consecrated by Pope Shenouda III on 22 February 1994.

950 In October 2004, a delegation from the Diocese of Los Angeles in the United States of America, along with Metropolitan Serapion of Los Angeles, Fr. Joseph Boules and Fr. Gregory Bishay travelled to Switzerland to bring a part of Saint Verena's relics to her churches in Anaheim and Orange. The Anaheim church, now located in Yorba Linda, California, now has a shrine dedicated to her relic, as well as the church in Orange.