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FROM MY DIARY

It is good to have the *Life* of St Cuthman out of the way at last. But it is not the only project of mine that has been stalled for many months.

More than a year ago, a kind correspondent offered to translate a very early Latin *Life* of St George. He did send in drafts of all the chapters, but each requires quite a bit of revision. Four were still outstanding when I last looked. So I will pick this up next and try to get it completed. The translation can only be approximate, because of the terrible state of the text.

Another project that was hardly begun, but for which a link sits on my desktop, was to translate the Latin *Life* of St Nicholas by John the Deacon. This was the origin of most of the western lives of St Nicholas. But the original Greek text was an awful thing, and the Latin of John is not easy either.

The Cuthman project taught me much. The most important revelation was that the Vulgate bible was key to all these medieval compositions. In a sense, all of the Latin saints' lives are vulgate fanfic. The language of the bible is used to create this literature of Christian fiction.

Some interesting ideas follow from this.

Firstly, if these texts are all basically based on the Vulgate, then anybody intimate with that version of the bible ought to be able to read them freely. So it is really important to get acquainted with the Vulgate. But it is much more difficult to obtain handy printed texts than it ought to be, if anyone still reads the Vulgate. I have found, curiously, that the mobile web version of BibleGateway ([link](#)) allows you to easily display on your Android handset the Vulgate with parallel Douai translation. This is actually easier to use than any printed text known to me!



Psalmi 1



Bible Book List ▾

Font Size ▾



Psalmi 1 ▾
Biblia Sacra
Vulgata ▾

1 Beatus vir qui non
abiit in consilio
impiorum, et in via
peccatorum non
stetit, et in cathedra
pestilentiae non
sedit;

2 sed in lege Domini



Psalm 1 ▾
Douay-Rheims
1899 American
Edition ▾

1 Blessed is the
man who hath not
walked in the
counsel of the
ungodly, nor stood in
the way of sinners,
nor sat in the chair

PASSAGE

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Secondly, if we treat the legends of the Saints, not as history, but as Christian fiction, then I find that they become much more useful, and acceptable.

For Christian fiction is a really important thing, as I discovered eight years ago during a time of much personal re-evaluation. Quite by accident I started to read novels purchased from the local Christian bookshop. They were random; whatever that shop happened to have. For instance I read *Left Behind*, and others. I found, in so doing, that they affected my imagination in a day to day way. I felt myself feeling closer to God, more aware of spiritual things in daily life, more aware of eternity, and less influenced by the clamour of worldly nothingnesses.

Could the legends of the saints have served the same purpose? To enhance the devotion of the readers? I think probably so. They probably were always known to be fictional; bible-fanfic, essentially. Thus such books could be composed about any figure of the bible or the fathers etc.

Maybe so; maybe I am wrong. But it is an interesting thought all the same.
