

## **ACTA SANCTORUM**

Monumental hagiographical work whose beginnings go back to the Counter-Reformation, which took its stamp from the [Council](#) of Trent (1545-1563). Reformed criticism of the cult of saints was answered on the [Roman](#) Catholic side by efforts at moderation and orderliness in the veneration of the saints, and by a critical sifting of the traditions with a view to separation of the false from the true. In 1603 a Belgian Jesuit, H. Rosweyde (1569-1629), developed his plan of replacing the many apocryphal lives of the saints by a new collection based on the manuscript treasures of the Belgian libraries. In 1615 he published the *Vitae patrum*, which is important for the [history](#) of early Egyptian monasticism. When Rosweyde died, J. van Bolland (1596-1665) was entrusted with continuing the work. With G. Henschenius (1601-1681) he developed the principles of source criticism used in producing the two volumes of the *Acta sanctorum* that covered January.

For the first time in the [history](#) of hagiography, the effort was made to sift the sources by age and trustworthiness, and to give an account of this in the prolegomena to the printed texts. The group of researchers that established itself in Antwerp, and was joined in 1659 by D. Papebroch (1628-1714), came to be called the Society of the BOLLANDISTS, after Bolland. Thereafter the volumes for the rest of the months were published in the order of the Calendar of Saints. By 1773, when the Jesuit order was dissolved, the third volume for October had been reached. After a period of confusion, with many attempts to provide a new basis for the *Acta sanctorum*, the Society of the Bollandists was inaugurated at the Collège Saint Michel in Brussels, following the reestablishment of the Belgian province of the Jesuits.

[Adoption](#) of the methods of historical scholarship, which began to blossom in the nineteenth century, led to a considerable expansion in activities. Since 1882 the *Analecta Bollandiana* have been appearing, and alongside them the *Subsidia Hagiographica* series. In both, manuscript

catalogs were published. Important aids for hagiographical work are *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina* (2 vols., 1898-1901, with supplement of 1911); *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca* (3rd impression, edited by F. Halkin, 3 vols. with *auctaria*, 1957 and 1969); *Bibliotheca hagiographica orientalis* (1910). Leaders in the field were H. Delehaye (on him and his writings, see Peeters, *Analecta Bollandiana* 60 [1942], I-LII) and, in the area of Oriental studies, P. Peeters (see P. Devos, *Analecta Bollandiana* 69 [1951], I-LIX, with bibliography), who also created the *Bibliotheca hagiographica orientalis*. These two scholars dealt with Egyptian hagiography in outstanding studies. In the *Acta sanctorum* Egyptian saints are also taken into account. In addition, scholarly handling of the Egyptian saints, whether in the Greek, the Coptic, or the Arabic texts, is dependent on the relevant studies and aids produced by the Bollandists.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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