

5// HERE BEGINNETH THE LIFE OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

THE LORD SENDS THOMAS TO INDIA

St. Thomas, when he was in Cæsarea, our Lord appeared to him, and said: The King of India, Gundoferus, hath sent his provost, Abbanes, for to seek men that can well the craft of masons, and I shall send thee to him.

And St. Thomas said: Sir, send me over all save to them of India.

And our Lord said to him: Go thy way thither surely, for I shall be thy keeper, and when thou hast converted them of India, thou shalt come to me by the crown of martyrdom.

And Thomas said to him: Thou art my lord, and I thy servant; thy will be fulfilled.

And as the provost went through the market, our Lord said to him: Young man, what wilt thou buy?

And he said: My lord hath sent me for to bring to him some that be learned in the science of masonry, that they might make for him a palace after the work of Rome.

And then our Lord delivered to him St. Thomas the Apostle, and told to him that he was much expert in that work.

THE WEDDING OF DENIS AND PELAGIA

And they departed and sailed till they came in a city, where the king made a wedding of his daughter, and had do cry that all the people should come to this feast of this marriage or else he would be angry. And it so happed that the provost and Thomas went thither, and an Hebrew maid had a pipe in her hand and praised ever each one with some laud or praising. And when she saw the apostle she knew that he was an Hebrew because he ate not, but had alway his eyes firm toward heaven. And as the maid sang tofore him in Hebrew, she said: The God of heaven is one only God, the which created all things and founded the seas.

Thomas is as much to say as abysm or double, which in Greek is said didimus; or else Thomas is said of Thomos, which is said division or parting. He was abysm or swallow because he deserved to pierce the deepness of divinity, when at his interrogation Jesu Christ answered to him: Ego sum via, veritas et vita: I am the way, truth, and life. He is said double because he knew Christ in his resurrection in double wise more than other knew, for they knew him but only in seeing, but Thomas knew him both seeing and feeling. He is said division or departing, for he departed his love from the love of the world, and was departed from the other apostles at the resurrection. Or Thomas is said as, appeared again, that is in the love of God by contemplation. He had there things in him of which Prosper saith in the book of the Soul Contemplative, and demandeth what it is for to love nothing but to conceive the burning of him in his thought, and the talent of God, and the hate of sin, and to forsake the world. Or Thomas is as much to say as alway going in the love and contemplation of God. Or Thomas is as much as: My God, because he said, when he touched the side of our Lord: My God and my Lord.

And the apostle made her to say these words again. And the butler beheld him, and saw that Thomas ate not ne drank not, but alway looked upward to heaven. And he came to the apostle and smote him on the cheek; and the apostle said to him, that in time to come it be pardoned to thee, and that now a wound transitory be given to thee, and said: I shall not arise from this place till the hand that hath smitten me be eaten with dogs.

And anon after, the butler went for to fetch water at a well, and there a lion came and slew him and drank his blood, and the hounds drew his body into pieces, in such wise that a black dog brought the right arm into the hall in the middle of the dinner. And when they saw this, all the company was abashed, and the maid remembered the words, and threw down her pipe or flute, and fell down at the feet of the apostle.

And this vengeance blameth St. Austin in his book of Faustius, and saith that this was set in of some false prophets, for this thing might be suspicious unto many things. Whether it be true or no it appertaineth not to me, but I wot well that they should be like as our Lord teacheth, which saith, "If any man smiteth thee on that one cheek, show and offer to him that other," and certainly the apostle held within his courage the will of God and of dilection, and without forth he required example of correction. This saith St. Austin.

And then, at the request of the king, the apostle blessed them that were new married, and said: Lord God give to these children the blessing of thy right hand, and set in their minds the seed of life.

And when the apostle was gone, there was found, in the hand of the young man that was married, a branch of palm full of dates; and when he and his wife had eaten of the fruit they fell asleep, and they had one semblable dream. For them seemed that a king adorned with precious stones embraced them, and said: Mine apostle hath blessed you in such wise that ye shall be partakers of the glory perdurable.

Then they awoke, and told to each other their dream. And then the apostle came to them and said: My king hath appeared right now to you, and hath brought me hither, the doors being shut, so that my blessing may be fruitful upon you, and that ye may have the sureness of your flesh, the which is queen of all virtues and fruit of perpetual health, and above the angels' possessions of all good, victory of lechery, lord of the faith, discomfiture of devils, and surety of joys perdurable. Lechery is engendered of corruption, and of corruption cometh pollution, and of pollution cometh sin, and of sin is confusion engendered.

And he thus saying, two angels appeared to them and said: We be the two angels deputed for to keep you, and if ye keep well all the admonestments of the apostle we shall offer to God all your desires.

And then the apostle baptized them, and informed them diligently in the faith. And long time after the wife, named Pelagia, was sacred [consecrated] with a veil, and suffered martyrdom, and the husband named Denis was sacred bishop of that city.

THE PALACE OF THE KING OF INDIA

And after this, the apostle and Abbanes came unto the King of India, and the king devised [described] to the apostle a marvellous palace, and delivered to him great treasure [i.e., to pay the costs of building the palace]. And the king went into another province, and the apostle gave all the treasure to poor people, and the apostle was alway in predications [preaching] two years or thereabout ere the king came, and converted much people without number to the faith. And when the king came and knew what he had done, he put him and Abbanes in the most deepest of his prisons, and purposed fully to slay them and burn.

And in the meanwhile Gad, brother of the king, died, and there was made for him a rich sepulchre, and the fourth day he that had been dead arose from death to life, and all men were abashed and fled. And he said to his brother: This man that thou intendest to slay and burn is the friend of God, and the angels of God serve him, and they brought me in to paradise, and have showed me a palace of gold and silver and of precious stones, and it is marvellously ordained. And when I marvelled of the great beauty thereof, they said to me: "This is the palace that Thomas hath made for thy brother." And when I said that I would be thereof porter, they said to me: "Thy brother is made unworthy to have it; if thou wilt dwell therein, we shall pray God to raise thee so that thou mayst go buy it of thy brother, in giving to him the money that he supposed he had lost."

And when he had said this he ran to the prison and required of the apostle that he would pardon his brother that he had done to him, and then delivered him out of prison, and prayed the apostle that he would take and do on him a precious vesture. And the apostle said to him: Knowest thou not that they which ween to have power in things celestial set nought in nothing fleshly ne earthly?

And when the apostle issued out of prison, the king came against [toward] him and fell down at his feet, and required of him pardon. Then the apostle said to him: God hath given to you much great grace when he hath showed to you his secrets; now believe in Jesu Christ and be ye baptized, to the end that thou be prince in the realm perdurable.

And then the brother of the king said: I have seen the palace that thou hast do make to my brother, and I am come for to buy it.

And the apostle said to him: If it be the will of thy brother it shall be done.

And the king said: Sith it pleaseth God, this shall be mine, and the apostle shall make to thee another; and if peradventure he may not, this same shall be common to thee and to me.

And the apostle answered and said: Many palaces be there in heaven which be made ready sith the beginning of the world, that be bought by price of the faith and by alms of your riches, which may well go tofore you to these palaces, but they may not follow you.

THE PREACHING OF ST. THOMAS

And after this, at the end of a month, the apostle made to assemble all them of the province, and when they were assembled he commanded that the feeble and sick should be set apart by themselves. Then he prayed for them, and they that were well enseigned and taught said Amen. And forthwith came a clear light from heaven which descended upon them, and smote down all the people and the apostle to the earth; and they supposed they had been smitten with thunder, and so lay by the space of half an hour. After, the apostle rose and said: Arise ye up for my lord is come as thunder, and hath healed us.

And anon they arose all whole and glorified God and the apostle. Then began the apostle to teach them, and to show to them the degrees of virtue.

The first is that they should believe in God which is one essence, and treble or three in persons, and showed to them examples sensible, how three persons be in one essence. The first example in a man is wisdom, and thereof cometh understanding, memory, and cunning. Cunning is of that thou hast learned the memory or mind, and retainest that thou shouldest forget. And the understanding is that thou understandest this that is taught to thee and showed. The second example is that, in a vine be three things, the stock, the leaf, and the fruit. The third example is that three things be in the head of a man, hearing, seeing, and tasting or smelling.

The second degree [is] that they receive baptism. The third, that they keep them from fornication. The fourth, that they keep them from avarice. The fifth, that they restrain them from gluttony. The sixth, that they keep their penance. The seventh, that they persevere and abide in these things. The eighth, that they love hospitality. The ninth, that in things to be done they require the will of God, and that they require such things by works. The tenth, that they eschew those things that be not for to be done. The eleventh, that they do charity to their enemies and to their friends. The twelfth, that they keep charity, and do work by diligence to keep these things. And after his predication, forty thousand men were baptized, without women and small children.

THE CONVERSION OF MIGDONIA AND THE QUEEN

And incontinent [forthwith] he went into the great India where he shone by miracles innumerable, for he enlumined and made to see Syntice, the friend of Migdonia, which was wife of Carisius, cousin of the king of India. And Migdonia said to Syntice: Weenest thou that I may see him?

Then Migdonia changed her habit by the counsel of Syntice, and put herself among the poor women, and came whereas the apostle preached. And he began to preach of the maleurte [woefulness] and unhappiness of this life, and said that this life is unhappy, wretched and subject to adventures [turns of fortune], and is so slippery and fleeting, that when one weeneth [expects] to hold it, it fleeth away. And after, he began to show to them by four reasons that they should gladly hear the word of God, and likeneth it to four manner of things: first, unto a colour which lighteth the eye of our understanding; secondly, to a syrup or a purgation, for the word of God purgeth our affection from all fleshly love; thirdly, unto an emplaister, because it healeth the wounds of our sins; and fourthly, unto meat, because the word of God nourisheth us, and

delighteth in heavenly love. And in like manner, like as all these things avail not to the sick man but if he take and receive them, in like wise the word of God profiteth nothing to a languishing sick man, if he hear it not devoutly.

And as the apostle thus preached, Migdonia believed in God, and refused the bed of her husband. Then Carisius did so much that he made the apostle to be set in prison. And Migdonia went to him and asked him forgiveness, because he was set in prison for her sake. And he comforted her sweetly, and said he would suffer it debonairly [meekly].

And then Carisius prayed the king that he would send the queen his wife's sister unto her, for to essay if she might turn her, and call her again from the Christian faith. And the queen was sent thither, and when she saw her, and knew of so many miracles as the apostle did, she said: They be accursed of God that believe not in his works.

Then the apostle taught them shortly that were there, four things; first, that they should love the church, honour and worship the priests, assemble them often in prayers, and often to hear the word of God. And when the king saw the queen, he said to her: Why hast thou abided there so long?

And she then answered: I had supposed that Migdonia had been a fool, but she is right wise, for she hath brought me to the apostle, which hath made me to know the way of truth, and they be overmuch fools that believe not the way of truth, that is to say, that they believe in Jesu Christ.

And never after would the queen lie with the king. And then the king was abashed, and said to his cousin: When I would have recovered thy wife I have lost mine, and my wife is worse to me than thine is to thee.

Then the king commanded that the apostle should be brought tofore him, his hands and feet bound; and was commanded that he should reconcile the wives to their husbands. And then the apostle said to the king, in showing to him by three examples that, as long as he should be in the error of the faith they ought not to obey them. That is to wit, by the example of the king, by example of the tower, and by example of the fountain, and said to him: Thou that art king wilt have no services soiled ne foul, but thou hast cleanly servants and neat chamberers. And what weenest thou God loveth? Chastity and clean services. Am I then to blame if I preach to thee to love God and his servants whom he loveth? I have made them clean servants to him; I have founded a tower; and thou sayst to me that I should destroy it. Also I have dolven in the deep earth, and have brought forth a fountain out of the abysm, and thou sayst I should stop it.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. THOMAS

Then the king was angry, and commanded to bring forth pieces of iron burning, and made to set the apostle on them all naked, his feet bound. And anon by the will of our Lord, a fountain of water sourded and sprang up, and quenched it all.

And then the king, by the counsel of his cousin, made him to be set in a burning furnace, which was made so cold that the next day he issued out all safe, without harm.

Said Carisius to the king: Make him to offer sacrifice to one of the gods only, in such wise that he fall in the ire of his God that thus delivereth him. And as they constrained him he said: king, thou art nothing more noble, ne more mighty than be thy painters and how despisest thou very God and worshippes a painting whom thou weenest to be thy God? Like as Carisius hath said to thee, that my God should be angry when that I worshipped thy god. And if he be angered, it should be more to thy god than to me, for when thou shouldest ween [expect] that I worshipped thy God, I should worship mine.

And the king said: Why speakest thou to me such words?

And then the apostle commanded in Hebrew the devil that was within the idol that, as soon as he kneeled tofore the idol, he should anon break it in pieces. And the apostle kneeled and said: Lo! see ye that I worship, but not the idol; I adore, but not the metal; I worship, but not the false image, but I honour and worship my Lord Jesu Christ in the name of whom I command thee, devil, which art hid within this image, that thou break this false idol.

And anon he molt it as wax. And then the priests came lowing as beasts, and the bishop of the temple lift up a glaive [sword] and run the apostle through and said: I shall avenge the injury of my god.

And the king and Carisius fled away, for they saw that the people would avenge the apostle and burn the bishop all quick. And the Christian men bare away the body of the apostle and buried it worshipfully.

A MIRACLE OF ST. THOMAS

Long time after, about the year of our Lord two hundred and thirty, the body of the apostle was borne into Edessa, the city which sometime was said Rages, city of Media; and Alexander the Emperor bare it thither at the request of the Syrians. And in this city no man might harbor Jew, ne paynim, ne tyrant, that should live. After this Abagar, king of this city, desired to have an epistle written with the hand of our Lord, for if any men moved war against this city, they took a Christian child, and set him on the gate, and he should there read the epistle, and the same day, what for the virtue of the writing of our Saviour, as for the merits of the apostle, the enemies fled or else made peace.

THE FATHERS ON ST. THOMAS

Isidore, in the book of the Life of the Saints, saith thus of this apostle: Thomas, apostle and disciple of our Lord Jesu Christ, and like unto our Saviour, preached the Gospel unto miscreants, to them of Persia and of Media, to the Hircanians and Bactrians, and he entering into the parts of the orient, pierced through the entrails of the people. There demened [he continued in] his predication unto the title [time] of his passion, and there was he pierced with a glaive and so died.

And Chrysostom saith that when Thomas came in to the parts of the three kings which came to worship our Lord he baptized them, and they were made helpers and aiders of our Lord and of Christian faith.

Pray we then to this holy apostle, St. Thomas, that he will be moyen [mediator] unto our Lord that we may have grace of him to amend us in this present life, that we may come into his everlasting bliss. Amen.

The [iconography of St. Thomas](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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