

His armor was invulnerable. His accusers might destroy the body, but they had no power over the soul. Ah, what an assurance! What a fortress behind which to dwell! Here, indeed, is security—buttressed about by truth. Of all that assailing mob Stephen alone was unmoved by a disturbing emotion.

Under the clear light of Stephen's martyrdom we may all look at life. Professor Peabody says that "we may look upon life as a gift of power and its willing acceptance by us as the acceptance of a hazardous adventure. We may use it, or we may be mastered by it. If we rightly use it, it is our safeguard; if we wrongly use it, it is our destruction." To live well requires knowledge—knowledge that comes from study, knowledge that comes from experience, knowledge that comes from divine illumination. Stephen had all these. He was an expert in the philosophy of living. He interpreted life rightly, used it rightly. His triumph was therefore assured. When one lives rightly the thing he need fear least is death.

It is hardly possible to study this lesson without noting the points of similarity and dissimilarity between the crucifixion of Jesus and the martyrdom of Stephen: The enemies of the truth "stirred up the people" against Jesus so also did they against Stephen; they brought false witnesses against Jesus, they did the same against Stephen; they accused Jesus of blasphemy against the temple, of this they accused Stephen also; they accused Jesus of breaking the law, so they did Stephen; they crucified Jesus, they stoned Stephen; before the council Jesus made no defense, Stephen a long and able one; the face of Jesus showed calmness and repose, that of Stephen was "as the face of an angel;" Jesus, hanging upon the cross, said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Stephen, looking "steadfastly into heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God;" Jesus said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" of his accusers Jesus said, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do," Stephen said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

The death of Jesus was the sublime tragedy. But how like it was that of Stephen! Surely Stephen had "partaken of the divine nature." How great he was! how magnanimous! No petty resentments, no imprecatory prayers upon his lips; but pity, forgiveness, love. But these were not the sudden outcropping of new virtues; they were the manifestations of the life that was within him. He died as he

had lived. If his death was like that of Jesus it was because his life had been like his. He was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." It is not how we are to die that should chiefly concern us, but how we are living. If we live like Jesus, like him shall we triumph in death; but if we do not so live, then the contemplation of death can bring nothing but dread, terror, and despair.

Just how much persecution and martyrdom have had to do with the progress and stability of the Church it is, of course, impossible to know. But that it has had much no one will for a moment question. Fortunately, except in isolated cases, the days of persecution and martyrdom are past. But sad will be the day—if it ever comes—when the spirit of which martyrs are made is with us no more. Its essential spirit is that of truth for which one is willing to sacrifice, willing even to die. Heroic devotion to a noble cause; the willingness to give life's energies, to become tired and weary; the willingness to give both *self and substance*—these abiding in the Church, she will never cease to be the most beneficent power the world can know. But when *they* die, she dies—aye, is already dead.

But this lesson cannot be dismissed without noting one other thing: Saul, who was "consenting" to Stephen's death, who "made havoc of the church," who was striking terror to the hearts of Christians everywhere, who was laying upon them burdens too grievous to be borne, is the same who afterward became the great burden-bearer of the Church. For the Church he suffered, for the Church he worked, for the Church he endured, for the Church he cared. Hear the recital of it all: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, *the care of all the churches.*" What a transformation! Does it not all suggest how the Church should seek to win and to guide to better uses the misdirected zeal of sinners? We know not how many Sauls may become Pauls; we know not how much misdirected zeal may be turned to holy uses. Wordy arguments may