

The Golden Legend or Lives Of The Saints
Compiled by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, 1275
Englished by William Caxton, First Edition 1483
From the Temple Classics Edited by F.S. Ellis

112// HERE FOLLOWETH THE INVENTION [DISCOVERY] OF ST. STEPHEN, PROMARTYR

The invention of the holy body of St. Stephen, promartyr, was made in the year of our Lord four hundred and seventeen, in the seventeenth year of Honorius the emperor. The invention [discovery] of him, the translation [moving of his body to another place], and the conjunction, were made to order.

THE DISCOVERY OF ST. STEPHEN'S BODY

For a priest named Lucian of the country of Jerusalem, of whom Gennadius recounteth among the noble men and writeth thus, that on a Friday when he was in his bed and rested and unmethe [hardly] awoke, he saw an ancient man of noble stature with a long beard, with a seemly visage environed in a white mantle in which there were little ouches [settings for gems] or crosses of gold tissued [woven]. He was hosed with hosen broidered with gold above, which held in his hand a rod of gold with which he touched him, and said: Go and with great diligence open our tombs, for we be laid in a place dishonest and of despite. Go thou therefore unto John the bishop of Jerusalem and say to him that he lay us in a more honourable place. And because that drought and tribulation is through the world, God hath ordained to be debonair [mild] and merciful to the world by our suffrages and prayers.

And Lucian said to him: Sir, who art thou?

I am, said he, Gamaliel, which nourished the apostle Paul and enseigned [taught] him the law of my fathers, and he that lieth with me is St. Stephen, which was stoned of the Jews and cast out of the city for to be devoured of the beasts and birds, but he kept him, to whom he kept his faith, without hurting, and I with great diligence took up the body and with great reverence buried it in my new tomb. And that other that lieth with me is Nicodemus, my nephew, which went by night to Jesu Christ and received baptism of Peter and John, and therefore the princes of priests were angry with him and would have slain him, but that they left at reverence of us. Nevertheless they took away all his substance and deposed him from his principate, and beat him strongly and let him lie for dead. And then I led him into my house, where he lived after but a few days, and when he was dead I buried him at the feet of St. Stephen. And the third that is with me is Abibas, my son, which in the twentieth year of his age received baptism with me and was a clean virgin, and learned the law of God with my disciple Paul. And Ethea my wife and Selimus my son, which would not receive the faith of Jesu Christ, were not worthy to be in our sepulture, thou shalt find them buried in another place, and shalt find their tombs void and idle.

And when he had said all this St. Gamaliel vanished away, and then Lucian awoke and prayed to God if this vision were true that it might be showed yet the second time and the third time. And the next Friday after following, he appeared like as he did tofore, and said to him: Wherefore hast thou disdained to do that which I have required thee?

And he said to him: Sir, I have no disdain, but I have prayed God if it be in his name that it appear to me yet once again.

And Gamaliel said to him: Because thou hast thought in thy courage [heart] that if martyr thou find us how thou mightest devise the relics of each of us, I shall enseign thee of every each by similitude to know the tombs and relics of each of us.

And then he showed three paniers [baskets] of gold, and the fourth of silver, of the which that one was full of red roses, the other twain of white roses, and the fourth, which was of silver, was full of saffron. And Gamaliel said to him: These paniers be our tombs, and these roses be our reliques, and the first full of red roses is the tomb of St. Stephen, which only of us all deserved the crown of martyrdom. The other twain, full of white roses, be the tombs of me and Nicodemus which persevered with a clean heart in the confession of Jesu Christ, and the fourth of silver, which is full of saffron, is of Abibas my son, which shineth by whiteness of virginity, and issued out of this world pure and net.

And this said he vanished away. And the Friday after that week following, he appeared to him again all angry, and blamed him grievously of his delayment and negligence. And anon Lucian went to Jerusalem and recounted all by order to John the bishop, and called the other bishops, and went to the place that was showed to Lucian, and when they had begun to delve, and moved the earth, a right sweet savour was felt. And by the marvellous flavour and sweetness; and by the merits of the saints, seventy sick men were healed of their infirmities. And thus the reliques of these saints were transported into the church of Sion which is in Jerusalem, in the which St. Stephen used the office of the archdeacon. And there were they ordained for right honourably. In the same hour descended from heaven much rain.

And of this vision and invention Bede maketh mention in his chronicle. And this invention, saith St. Bede, was in the same day that his passion is hallowed, and his passion as it is said was the same day also. But the feasts have been changed by double reason.

The first reason is because that Jesu Christ was born in earth that man should be born in heaven, therefore it appertaineth [is proper] that the feast of St. Stephen should follow the nativity of Christ. For he was first martyred for Christ for to be born in heaven, and so it signifieth that the one follow that other, and therefore it is sung in the church: Yesterday Christ was born in earth, that this day Stephen should be born in heaven.

The second reason is that the feast of the invention is more solemnly made than the feast of his passion, and that is only for the nativity of our Lord Jesu Christ. Nevertheless our Lord hath showed many miracles in the invention of him. And because his passion is more worthy than his invention, therefore ought it to be more solemn, and therefore the church hath transported his passion to the time in which it is had in greater reverence.

THE TRANSLATION OF STEPHEN'S BODY TO CONSTANTINOPLE

And as St. Austin [Augustine] saith: The translation of him was in this manner. Alexander, senator of Constantinople, went with his wife to Jerusalem and made there a fair oratory

[chapel] to St. Stephen the first martyr, and after his death he did him to be buried by his body [i.e. he had himself buried beside Stephen's body]. And seven years after, Juliana his wife would return into her country because that the princes did to her wrong, and would carry with her the body of her husband. And when she had made long request to the bishop with many prayers, the bishop showed to her two tombs of silver and said to her: I wot [know] not which of these twain [two] is thy husband.

And she said to him, "I wot well," and went hastily and embraced the body of Stephen. And thus by case of fortune, when she weened to have taken the body of her husband, she took the body of the promartyr. And when she was within the ship with the body, there were heard hymns and songs of angels, and a right sweet odour, and the devils cried and moved great tempest saying: Alas! alas! for the first martyr Stephen passeth here by, which beateth us cruelly with fire.

And the mariners were in great doubt and cried on St. Stephen, and anon he appeared to them and said, "I am here, doubt [fear] ye nothing." And anon great peace was, and fair weather in the sea.

Then were there heard the voice of devils crying: Felon prince, burn this ship, for Stephen our adversary is within it. With that, the prince of devils sent five devils for to burn the ship, but the angel of our Lord plunged them down in the ground of the sea. And when they came to Chalcedon the devils cried, saying: The servant of God cometh which was stoned to death of the felon Jews.

THE CONJUNCTION OF THE BODIES OF SAINTS STEPHEN AND LAURENCE IN ROME

Then came they in safety in to Constantinople, and the body of St. Stephen was brought with great reverence in to a church. And this saith St. Austin: The conjunction of the body of St. Stephen with the body of St. Laurence was made by this ordinance. It happed that Eudoxia, daughter of Theodosius the emperor, was greatly tormented with a devil, and when it was told to her father, which was at Constantinople, he commanded that his daughter should be brought thither, and that she should touch the relics of St. Stephen the first martyr.

And the devil cried within her: If Stephen come not to Rome I shall not issue out of her, for it is the will of the apostles.

And when the emperor heard that, he impetrated and gat of [requested and got from] the clergy and people of Constantinople that they gave to the Romans the body of St. Stephen, and they should have therefore the body of St. Laurence. And the emperor wrote to St. Pelagius the pope, upon which the pope, by the council of the cardinals, consented to the request of the emperor, and then went the cardinals to Constantinople and brought to Rome the body of St. Stephen. And the Greeks came for to have the body of St. Laurence. The body of St. Stephen was received into Capua, which gat by their devout prayers the right arm, and builded their church metropolitan, that is to say the archbishop's see, in the honour of him. And when the Romans were come to Rome, they would have borne the body of St. Stephen unto the church of St. Peter ad vincula. They that bare it stood still and might go no further, and the devil which was

in the maid cried: Ye travail you for naught, for he shall not be here, but with Laurence his brother, whereas he is.

And for this cause was the body borne thither, and the maid touched the body and was all whole. And St. Laurence, as enjoying him of [rejoicing at] the coming of his brother and smiling, turned him into that other part of the sepulchre, and made place and left half the place void. And when the Greeks set their hands for to have borne away Laurence, they fell down to the earth as they had been dead. But the pope and the clerks prayed for them and all the people, and yet unnethe [with difficulty] with great pain came they to life again at evensong time. Nevertheless they were all dead within ten days after, and the Latins, and all they that so consented, entered into frenzy and might not be whole unto the time that the two bodies were entombed together, and then was there a voice heard from heaven that said: O blessed Rome which hast enclosed in one tomb the glorious jewels, the bodies of St. Laurence of Spain and of St. Stephen of Jerusalem. This conjunction was made about the year of our Lord nine hundred and twenty-five.

MIRACLES OF ST. STEPHEN

St. Austin recounteth in the twenty-second book of the City of God, that six dead bodies were raised by the invocation and prayers of St. Stephen, that is to wit, that there was one that lay dead and the name of St. Stephen was called over him and he was anon raised to life.

Also there was a child which was slain with a cart, whom his mother bare to the church of St. Stephen and was anon raised to life.

And there was a nun which was at her last end, and was borne to the church of St. Stephen, and there died in the sight of all the people, and after she arose all whole.

Also a maid of Hippo, of whom her father bare her coat to the church of St. Stephen, and after laid it on the body of the dead maid, and anon she arose.

And a young man of Hippo died, and anon as the body of him was anointed with the oil of St. Stephen he arose to life.

Another child was borne dead to the church of St. Stephen, and by the merits of St. Stephen was anon re-established to life.

REMARKS OF ST. AUGUSTINE ON ST. STEPHEN

And of this precious martyr, saith St. Austin: Gamaliel, master of the school, and with a stole about his neck, made revelation of him. Saul despoiled [disrobed] and stoned him, Jesu Christ, wrapped in poor clothes, enriched him, and crowned him with his precious blood and stones. And St. Stephen shone in beauty of body, in flower of age, in fair speech of reason, wisdom of holy thought, in works of divinity. He was a strong pillar of the faith of God, for when he was taken and holden with tongs among the hands of them that stoned him, in the furnace of the fire of faith, he was distrainted [subdued], smitten, demeaned, and beaten, the faith increased and was not vanquished.

And St. Augustine saith in another place upon this authority: He was not flattered but put out, he was not tasted but hurt, he feared ne trembled not, but was chauffed [warmed, inflamed]. And in another place he saith thus: Behold Stephen thy fellow, he was a man as thou art, and of the mass of sin as thou art, and bought with the same price that thou wert, he was deacon and read the gospel that thou readest or hearest. There he found written: Love your enemies. And this blessed promartyr St. Stephen, learned in reading, and profited and accomplished in obeying.

Then let us pray devoutly to him that he pray for us to that blessed Lord for whom he suffered death, and prayed for them that pursued him, that he pray for us, and that we may feel the effect of his prayer like as Saul did, which after was called Paul, the holy doctor and apostle. Amen.

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

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

Scanned by Robert Blackmon. bob_blackmon@mindspring.com.

This text was taken from the [Internet Medieval Source Book](#). The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts related to medieval and Byzantine history.

Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use.

E-text © Paul Halsall, September 2000
halsall@fordham.edu

Reformatted with paragraphs, rubrics, italics, and explanatory insertions by Richard Stracke, rstracke@aug.edu