

V

PERPETUA AND FELICITAS

“THE noble army of martyrs praise Thee!”—so in all ages has sung, not only the Christian Church, but the pious of every religion, as they contemplated those who suffered for conscience sake. For whether the beliefs for which they suffered were or were not those of the beholder, the steadfast giving of all has won respect and admiration from persecutors as well as friends.

There is hardly a more moving story of martyrdom than is contained in “The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas”; an account, the historicity of which is confirmed by scholars, of the deaths of two women and three men in North Africa in the year 202 (or 203) A.D. That the women only are named in the title may be owing to the unusualness at this time of female martyrdom; indeed, this was probably the first case then known to the Church in Africa, though Blandina and her mistress had suffered shortly before in the persecution at Lyons and Vienne, and Agathonike at Pergamos. But this account is in one respect unique. We have often wished we could converse with the martyrs before their end and learn how they regarded it. That is what we do in this document. For it contains

a journal written by Perpetua from the time of her arrest up to the day before her execution, with a short narration of a vision of his by Saturus, another of the martyrs, while an eye-witness gives an account of the execution itself.

The history is found in different versions in several Latin MSS, whose text suggests that they have all been taken from a Greek original. A document which may have been such an original has recently been discovered and edited by Dr. J. Rendel Harris. The Greek text, together with a longer and a shorter version of two Latin texts, has been published by him in the Haverford College Studies, No. 3, while a translation by Seth K. Gifford is published in the same series of Studies, No. 4. A translation by Reverend R. E. Wallis may be found in Appendix 5, Volume III, of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

Vibia Perpetua was a resident of the town of Thuburbo near Carthage. She was of noble family and good education, twenty-two years old, married, and the mother of a boy, at this time apparently less than a year old. Judging from a mosaic portrait of her in the archbishop's palace at Ravenna, she must have been beautiful.¹ Felicitas was her maid-companion, that relation which we find common in Shakespeare's plays. She too was young and married, and became a mother while in prison before her

¹ Copies of these mosaic portraits of Perpetua and Felicitas are given by Dr. Harris in Haverford College Studies, No. 3.

execution. Their husbands are not referred to, which may suggest that they were not Christians, or even that it was they who first gave information against the women. Together with the women there were arrested three men — Revocatus, possibly a brother of Felicitas, Saturninus, and Secundus. The last-named died in prison before the games were celebrated, but his place was filled by the voluntary surrender of Saturus, a deacon, who was absent when the arrests were made. We are inclined to ask why he should have given himself up when he was apparently safe from the demands of the law. But many of the early Christians regarded martyrdom from a point of view opposite to ours. To us it is an experience of dread, a necessary duty perhaps, but to be feared and avoided whenever honestly possible. To the early Christian it was an opportunity to be coveted and eagerly seized, for it ensured not only high honor in the Christian community but certain entrance into heaven. What were a few minutes or hours of bodily pain compared with seeing the shining gates of Paradise flung wide, and hearing the "Well done, good and faithful servant"? So Saturus, on his return from his absence, may well have hastened to the authorities and denounced himself, demanding to be included in the little band for whom arrest was plainly known to mean death. Before all of them was the sight of the great multitude which the Seer of the Revelation beheld in

heaven, when one of the Elders asked him, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" and I said unto him, 'Sir, thou knowest.' And he said to me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. . . . They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, . . . for the Lamb . . . shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'"¹

The technical charge against Perpetua and her friends was refusing to burn incense in honor of the emperor. Since the time of the first emperor, Augustus, the divine right of kings had been established in a form essentially the same as that which it had in Europe in later centuries. While later times, however, were content with asserting that the king can do no wrong, Roman law declared in addition that the emperor was divine by descent. Beneath this apparently materialistic assertion there was, moreover, a truth which enabled the belief to survive for several centuries. That which the Empire stood for, the stable order of things, civilization, law, the peace of the world, this was regarded as an embodiment of the *genius* of the emperor, his spirit. How largely this was thought of as personal it is difficult to say. But it was the bond

¹ Rev., vii, 13-17.

of Roman unity, loyalty to which was the duty of every Roman citizen and subject. To refuse to acknowledge this bond was therefore treason, and the form of public acknowledgment which was adopted was the burning of a few grains of incense on an altar before the statue of the emperor. This was the test which separated those Christians who cast the incense into the fire from those who refused and knowingly went to the beasts and the gladiator's sword. But why should they refuse? one may ask. To burn a few grains of incense was a trivial act, which left the rest of life untouched. Moreover, it was external, it did not involve one's inner attitude. Could not one say, "This no more affects my real self than waving a fan. I can be just as much a Christian after it as before. Christianity is not a gesture of the body but an attitude of soul. Christ, my Lord, I can worship and follow still"? Could not one say that? Many a one did say it and relapsed into safe oblivion here, leaving his full account to be settled at the Day of Judgment. Perhaps they were wise, as many of them were, no doubt, conscientious. But men give their real acclaims, not to wisdom, but to heroism. Of those who listened thus to the persuading arguments of their over-anxious relatives, history has not preserved the names, but it has carefully cherished the name of everyone who turned his back on the altar and proclaimed boldly, "*Christianus sum!*" For it is not the size of

a test which counts, but its weight. If two parties agree to call an act as trivial as tearing a bit of paper a test, then its decision is as weighty and final as the most thunderous sentence of a judge. There was in reality a difference between a Christian and a pagan; their ways, thoughts, ideals, loyalties were different. To confuse a fact with the consequences of the fact, to deny the fact because of its consequences, was not only bad logic but soul-damage. "Can you call that thing there anything but a pitcher?" asked Perpetua of her dissuading father. "No," said he. "Neither can I call myself anything else than what I am, a Christian."

All the members of Perpetua's family seem to have sympathized with her except her father. He came to see her several times after her arrest and besought her with tears and denunciations and entreaties, for the sake of his hoary head, for the sake of her child, for her own sake, to recant and save herself from the dreadful fate which awaited her. But she calmly turned from him with his "devil's arguments," as she called them, and when he gave up coming for a while, she remarked with a touch of humorous satisfaction, "Then I gave thanks to the Lord, and his absence became a source of consolation to me." She is thoroughly feminine, this daintily bred girl, afraid of the dark, repelled by the crowd and the closeness of the prison, anxious for her child. The local church contributed to their support while under arrest, and

two of their friends hired the jailer to transfer them to a milder quarter of the prison and to permit her to have her baby with her. Then the child, which had drooped for lack of his mother's nourishment, revived; "And forthwith I grew strong and was relieved from distress and anxiety about my infant and the dungeon became to me as it were a palace, so that I preferred being there to being elsewhere."

Reading this account, we are struck with the nobility of human character it reveals, the sturdy loyalty to conviction, the courage that rises to joy, the triumphant dominance of the spirit over the body. Yet to the author and those of his time these marvels are not the chief attraction, nor probably the chief motive of the writer in recording the history. To him the centre of interest seemed "the more eminent visions of the blessed martyrs, Saturus and Perpetua, which they themselves committed to writing." Throughout the world of former times visions had a significance which since the coming of the scientific spirit they have largely lost. Wherever dualism influenced thought, as almost everywhere it did, the conviction was deep that God and man were such opposites that what was divine was non-human and what was human must be non-divine. The result was not only that man must empty himself of what was characteristic of him in order to approach God, but that events in which no human agency could be traced were regarded as directly

divine. Visions and dreams were therefore prized as especially significant, since they were immediate communications from God and marks of peculiar favor to those to whom they were vouchsafed. So St. Paul, in going over his credentials as an apostle, enumerates his Hebrew descent and the hardships and sufferings he has undergone in the Christian service. But this, he says, is after all a fool-way of counting, which is "not expedient"; he will come to the real thing, to visions and revelations of the Lord. And then, with the confused utterance with which a man must always try to express his deepest experiences, he tells of one or more visions which he had had, which were so wonderful and precious that there was danger that he should be "exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations."¹ The belief in the significance of dreams is still prevalent to-day. In early ages they were regarded as almost the sole avenue of communication from God, except in case of those especially favored persons whom He endowed with the insight of prophecy. It was long after the days of St. Paul and Perpetua that the discovery that God speaks to men through the channels of ordinary life became the common property of Christian thought, although the Psalmist had thrown out this wealthy knowledge centuries before. "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" he exclaims, "how great is the sum of

¹ 2 Cor., xii, 1-8.

them!" The following verse seems to indicate that he has in mind particularly the dreams which are God's well-known means of communication. Yet these are not for him the sole means, for even in the daytime he and God are together: "When I awake I am still with Thee."¹

But to Perpetua and her friends dreams and visions are of profound significance and comfort. While she is in prison her brother suggests that, as she is now so highly honored as to be within sight of probable martyrdom, it is likely that her request might be granted if she should ask for a vision to tell her whether the result would be in fact a martyrdom. She accepts the suggestion, and is so confident that a vision will be vouchsafed, that she promises to give him the intelligence to-morrow. And the next day she does; it is to be—in the language of the early Church—a passion.

This was not her only vision. But before another came, there came a tremendous reality. One day, while they were at dinner, they were summoned to the office of the proconsul, and there, after refusing to sacrifice, they were condemned to the wild beasts. After which, she notes, "With joy we went down to the prison." Other comforting visions now followed; one in regard to a brother of hers who had died young and for whose welfare in the other world she yearningly prays, and one in which she

¹ Psalm 139, 17-18.

fights with a huge negro and overcomes him, and so has confidence that in the amphitheatre she will overcome her spiritual enemy.

Where that amphitheatre was, is not certain. So small a town as Thuburbo is not likely to have had one. Mention is made of the party of martyrs being previously taken to a camp of soldiers; but in regard to that the same unlikelihood would hold. The probability is that the exhibition took place in Carthage, especially as it was intended to be, not a mere execution, but a high festival in honor of the emperor's birthday. As we walk to-day among the ruins of Carthage we may therefore legitimately see Perpetua and her friends entering the arena.

About fifty years before this time there had appeared in Phrygia Montanus, a Christian reformer. He was the first of that long series of those whom the Church sooner or later declared to be heretics, whose main tenet was that Christianity must be a religion of the spirit. This involved not only the claim of its leaders to inspiration but the corollary that ecclesiasticism with its priests and its ritual was useless and even harmful. If every one could be in continual communion with God, what was the need of intermediaries? While the Church emphasized the worship of Christ, Montanism emphasized the worship of the Holy Spirit. Its influence was now spreading through the Christian world, particularly in Africa. Tertullian of Carthage, the first great writer

only cried aloud and went away vanquished, carried away with his devil's arguments. Then, while he was from home for a few days, I gave thanks to the Lord and his absence became a source of consolation to me. In the meantime we were baptized; and I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to ask nothing from the water of baptism except patient endurance of the flesh.

After a few days we were cast into prison, and I was very much afraid. How dreadful a day! for never had I seen such darkness and excessive heat. For the prison was crowded with a multitude of people, chiefly on account of false accusations of the soldiers. Besides all these things, I was distressed on account of my infant child. Then Tertius and Pomponius, blessed deacons who ministered to us, arranged by paying gratuities that we should be transferred to a milder quarter of the prison. Then all went out and attended to their wants; I suckled my child, which was now enfeebled with hunger; I talked with my mother, I cheered my brother, I commended to them my child. But I was consumed with grief because I saw them grieving on my account. Such solicitude I suffered many days. But I obtained leave for my child to remain in the prison with me; and then I grew strong and was freed from distress and anxiety about my child, and lo! the prison became to me a palace, so that I preferred to be there to being elsewhere.

Then my brother said to me, "My dear sister, you are already in a position of great dignity, and are such that you may ask for a vision, so that you may know whether this is to result in a passion or an escape." And I, who knew that I was privileged to converse with the Lord, whose kindnesses I had found to be so great,

boldly promised him and said, "To-morrow I will tell you." So I asked, and this was what was shown me. I saw a ladder of brass of marvellous size, whose top reached up even to heaven, but so narrow that persons could only ascend it one by one. And on either side of the ladder there were fixed swords and spears and hooks and knives and spikes of every kind, so that, if one went up carelessly without looking, he would be torn to pieces and his flesh would stick on the points. And at the foot of the ladder was a dragon, exceeding great, lying in wait for those going up and terrifying them so that they might not dare to ascend. But Saturnus went up, for he voluntarily surrendered himself on our account, not having been present when we were taken prisoners. Now when he came to the top of the ladder, he turned and said, "Perpetua, I am waiting for you; but be careful that the dragon does not bite you." And I said, "Nay, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall not hurt me." And as if the dragon feared me, he quietly presented his head at the foot of the ladder, and as I trod upon the first step I trod upon his head. And I went up, and I saw a very great garden, and in the midst of the garden a white-haired man of exceeding great stature, sitting in shepherd's dress, milking sheep. And many thousands stood about him, in white raiment. And lifting his head, he beheld me and said, "Welcome, my daughter." And he called me, and as he was milking he gave me a little cake of cheese, and I received it with folded hands and ate it, and all who stood around said, "Amen!" And at the sound of their voices I awoke, still tasting a sweetness which I cannot describe. And I related the vision to my brother, and we perceived

of Latin Christianity, became interested in it. He had been ordained a presbyter by the church in Carthage, and was married, a fact which afterwards caused scandal to Church historians. He had visited Rome, and found conditions there quite different from those which Christian morality and the life of the spirit required and on which Montanism laid the stress of importance. He was now, in 202 A.D., prominent in the church at Carthage and in warm sympathy with Perpetua and her friends, who were Montanists. Very probably addressed to these was a tract, "Ad Martyras," which he put out about this time. And it was about this time also that he himself became a Montanist and the passionate and brilliant champion of that movement. It is not improbable that the stirring scene in the amphitheatre may have been the final argument of convincing weight which led him to set his face against what he regarded as a degenerate form of Christianity.

In his tract "Ad Martyras" he exhorts "the Blessed Martyrs Designate" to fill their minds with the thoughts of things above, and then their prison conditions will be of trifling importance; nay, more, they will be felt as a gain.

Wherefore, O blessed, you may regard yourselves as having been translated from a prison to, we may say, a place of safety. It is full of darkness, but ye yourselves are light; it has bonds, but God has made you free. Unpleasant exhalations are there, but ye are an odor of

sweetness. The judge is daily looked for, but ye shall judge the judges themselves. Sadness may be there for him who sighs for the world's enjoyments. The Christian outside the prison has renounced the world, but in the prison he has renounced a prison too. It is of no consequence where you are in the world — you who are not of it. And if you have lost some of life's sweets, it is the way of business to suffer present loss that afterwards may be larger. . . . Let us drop the name of prison; let us call it a place of retirement. Though the body is shut up, though the flesh is confined, all things are open to the spirit. In spirit then roam abroad; in spirit walk about, not setting before you shady paths or long colonnades, but the way which leads to God. As often as your footsteps are there in spirit, so often you will not be in bonds. Where thy heart shall be, there will be thy treasure.¹

[Perpetua's journal] is so human, so vivid and moving, that it may not be superfluous to give it in full. It is as follows:

While we were still under watch my father attempted to persuade me, for the sake of his affection for me, to renounce my proposed confession. And I said to him, "Father, do you see that household utensil lying there?" and he replied, "I do." "Can you call that thing there anything but a pitcher?" "No," he said. "Neither can I call myself anything else than what I am, a Christian." Then my father, provoked at my words, rushed at me as if he would tear my eyes out. But he

¹ *Ad Martyras*, chap. 2.

that it was to be a passion, and from that time I ceased to have any hope in this life.

After a few days we learned that we were to have a hearing. My father also arrived from his long journey, worn out, and coming to me urged me to abandon my confession, saying, "Have pity, my daughter, on my gray hairs, have pity on your father, if indeed I am worthy to be called father by you. Remember that with these hands I have brought you up to this flower of your age and preferred you to all your brothers. Do not bring shame on me in the sight of men. Have regard to your brothers, have regard to your mother and your mother's sister, have regard to your son, who will not be able to live after you. Lay aside your courage and do not bring us all to destruction, for none of us will ever speak freely again if any harm should come to you."

So said my father in his affection, kissing my hands and throwing himself at my feet, and with tears he called me, not Daughter, but Lady. And I grieved at my father's state, that he alone of my whole family did not rejoice at my suffering. And I comforted him, saying, "At the judge's tribunal whatever God wills will happen, for be sure that we shall be not in our own power but in that of God." And he departed from me in sorrow.

Another day, while we were at dinner, we were suddenly hurried away to our hearing; and when we had come into the market-place, at once a report went about the neighboring parts and there ran together a very great crowd. And when we came to the tribunal, the others were examined, and confessed. And as I was about to be examined, my father appeared with my boy and drew me aside and said in a supplicating tone,

"Sacrifice, out of pity for the babe!" Then Hilarianus, the procurator, who had just received the power of life and death in place of the proconsul Minucius Timinianus, who had died, said, "Spare the gray hairs of your father, spare the infancy of your child; offer sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors." And I replied, "I will not sacrifice." Hilarianus said, "Are you a Christian?" and I answered "I am a Christian."

When my father kept trying to seduce me from the faith, Hilarianus ordered him to be put out, and some of the guards beat him with their rods. And it grieved me as if I had been beaten myself, for I pitied his wretched old age. Then the procurator condemned us all to the beasts, and with joy we went down to the prison. Now since the child was fed at my breast and was accustomed to stay with me in prison, I sent Pomponius the deacon to my father to ask for the babe. But he refused to give it up. Yet, as God ordered, the child from that time did not desire the breast, nor did my breast cause me trouble, in order perhaps that I might not be troubled both by anxiety for the child and pain in the breasts.

After a few days, while we were all praying, suddenly, in the midst of our prayer, I cried out and called the name of Dinocrates. And I was surprised, for that name had not come into my mind until then, and it saddened me to remember his end. But knowing that I was worthy to make a petition for him, I began at once to pray to the Lord for him mightily and with groanings. And immediately that very night there was shown to me this vision. I saw Dinocrates coming forth from a dark place, where there were also many others burning and parched

with thirst, his raiment foul, his countenance pale, and the wound on his face which he had when he died. For this, Dinocrates, my brother according to the flesh, had sickened and died when he was seven years old, his face mortified with gangrene so that his death was loathsome to all. I saw now between him and me a great space, so that neither of us could approach the other. And in the place where my brother was, there was a fountain filled with water, but its rim was higher than the boy could reach. To this Dinocrates was stretching up, trying to drink. And I grieved because, though the fountain was full of water, the child was unable to drink on account of the height of the rim. And I awoke, and knew that my brother was in distress; but I trusted that my prayer would bring help to his sufferings, and I prayed for him every day until we were transferred to the other prison, that of the tribune, for it was near the camp where we were to fight with beasts. For Caesar's birthday was about to be celebrated. So I prayed earnestly for my brother day and night, groaning and weeping that he might be granted to me.

Then in the evening, while we remained in the stocks, there was shown to me this vision. I saw that the place where I had seen Dinocrates was now bright, and Dinocrates was refreshed and in beautiful raiment with his body clean, and where the wound had been I saw a scar; and the rim of the fountain, from which water was flowing continually, was brought down to his waist, and upon the rim was a golden cup full, and Dinocrates came and began to drink from it, and the cup did not become empty. And when he was satisfied, he went away from the water and began to play joyously after

the manner of children. Then I awoke, and understood that he was delivered from the place of punishment.

After a few days Pudens, a soldier, who had charge of the prison, began to regard us with much esteem, perceiving that the great power of God was in us, and he admitted many brethren to see us, so that they and we were mutually refreshed. And when the day of the exhibition drew near, my father came to me worn with grief and began to pluck out his beard and throw himself on the ground, and lying on his face, to reproach his years with such words and accusations as might move all creation. And I grieved for his unhappy old age.

The day before that on which we were to fight, I saw in a vision that Pomponius the deacon came to the gate of the prison and knocked vehemently. And I went out and opened it for him. He was clothed in shining raiment, his loins girded, and many-colored sandals on his feet; and he said to me, "Perpetua, we are waiting for you; come!" and he held out his hand to me, and we began to go through rough and crooked places, and with difficulty came to the amphitheatre. And he led me into the midst of the arena and said, "Fear not; I am here with you and will share your struggle." And lo! I saw a very great throng gazing eagerly upon the spectacle. And knowing that I had been condemned to the wild beasts, I wondered that they were not let loose upon me. Then there came forth against me an Egyptian, horrible in appearance, with his backers, to fight with me. And there came to me a youth most fair in form, radiant with beauty, and with him other beautiful youths, to help and support me; and I was stripped and became a man, and my assistants began to rub me with

oil, as is the custom in contests; and on the other hand I beheld the Egyptian rolling himself in the dust. Then came forth a man of wonderful size, so that he even overtopped the top of the amphitheatre, and he wore a loose tunic and a purple robe with two bands over the middle of the breast; he had also many-colored sandals of gold and silver, and had a rod like a judge or trainer of gladiators and a branch with golden apples. He commanded silence and said, "If this Egyptian conquer this woman, he shall kill her with his sword; but if she shall conquer him, she shall receive this branch." Then he withdrew, and we advanced against each other and began to deal out blows. And when my adversary tried to seize my feet, I kicked him and smote him in the face. And lo! I was lifted up in the air and began to strike him as if I were not treading on the ground. But seeing that I did not even yet hurt him, I clasped my hands so as to lock my fingers together, and seized his head and hurled him face downwards, and I trampled on his head. Then all the throng began to shout and my supporters to exult, and coming to the judge I received the branch, and he kissed me and said, "Daughter, peace be with you!" And we began to go with applause to the so-called Gate of Life. Then I awoke, and perceived that my approaching conflict was to be, not with beasts, but with the devil. And I knew I should conquer him. These things I have written up to the day before the exhibition. What shall take place in the amphitheatre, let him describe who will.

Here ends the journal. There is now nothing to do but wait for the morrow, calmly, confidently,

triumphantly. But before the exhibition Saturus also has a vision. It is now all over, the beasts and the more savage shouting throng, and the martyrs are borne upwards into heaven. There, as they recognize friends and martyrs who have gained glory before them, while they bow before the throne of God, Saturus turns and says, "'Perpetua, you have what you have wished'; and she said to me, 'Thanks be to God that, joyous as I was in the flesh, I am now more joyous'; and we were all fed by an indescribably sweet odor which satisfied us. Then I joyously awoke."

Joyousness! it is the wonderful, triumphant note which runs throughout the whole history. There is more; there is even mirth. For as they are sitting at their last meal, curious crowds press in to gaze at them. But they laugh at the curiosity of the people and Saturus says to the gazers, "Is n't to-morrow enough for you? Look at our faces carefully so that you may recognize them at the Day of Judgment." And when the jailer is inclined to skimp their fare for fear they may poison themselves through the connivance of friends, Perpetua says to him, "Why don't you allow us to get strong? Is n't it to your credit, the fatter we come to the arena?" How many a one to-day who is facing a surgical operation with the blessing of anæsthetics and the promise of renewed health, goes to the operating room without a tithe of the calmness and cheer with which these

martyrs faced the arena! For "the day of their victory shone forth, and they went out from the prison to the amphitheatre as if to heaven, glad and radiant in countenance, their hearts beating with joy rather than with fear." Perpetua followed "with placid look and with step and gait as a matron of Christ, casting down the lustre of her eyes from the gaze of all." She sang psalms while the men exchanged words with the spectators. As they passed before the seat of the procurator who had been their judge, they shouted at him, "Thou us, and thee God!" This enraged the crowd, who demanded that they should be scourged; and as the whips fell, they rejoiced that thereby their kinship with their Lord's sufferings was more fully established.

When the beasts were admitted, they were slow to attack and the spectacle languished. Saturus and Revocatus were teased by a bear, and when a wild boar was brought up against them, it turned upon its keeper and wounded him so that he died the next day. Then Saturus was bound and laid on the ground close to the cage of the bear; but the animal refused to leave its cage. Perpetua and Felicitas were stripped of their clothes and led in. But this stirred in the multitude some sense of shame and protesting murmurs, so that they were withdrawn and brought in dressed in underclothes but with nets wrapped around them, rendering them helpless for defence. Then a savage cow was turned loose upon them.

Perpetua was tossed and fell on her side; but when she saw that her tunic was torn and left her body exposed, she sat up, fumbled for a pin, and, woman-like, pinned the rent together. Then she bound up her hair; for it was not becoming for a martyr to suffer with hair disheveled, lest in her glory she should seem to be mourning. Meanwhile Felicitas had been tossed, and Perpetua went to her and lifted her up. The crowd now clamored that this was enough for them, and they were led toward the gate of exit. And while standing here, Perpetua, rousing herself from a daze or an ecstasy of spirit, said, "When are we to be thrown to that cow?" and when she was told what had happened, she could not believe it until her own wounds and the rents in her dress were pointed out to her. She then turned to her brother and a friend who was with him — for they were allowed to speak to the prisoners — and said, "Stand fast in the faith and love one another, all of you, and don't be dismayed by my sufferings."

The intermission was not a pardon; it was only a short reprieve. For while they waited there, Saturus said to one of the soldiers who guarded him, "I have not been touched by any of the beasts, but I hope I shall be destroyed by one bite of the leopard." It was as he wished; for he was immediately thrown to the leopard, which with one bite drenched him with so much blood that the spectators derisively

called it a baptism and shouted, "Washed and saved, washed and saved!"

But the exhibition could not end without the death of the martyrs. So as the beasts had refused to be executioners, the professional gladiators were called in. When the condemned group heard what was next to be required of them, they walked of their own accord to the middle of the arena, that the whole populace might see. Standing there, they all kissed one another, recalling the kiss of peace with which the worship of the Christians was always concluded, and then awaited the thrust of the gladiator's sword. When the executioner came to Perpetua, his hand fumbled, either because he was unskilled or because he was unmanned by her beauty and her bearing, and his sword barely pierced her ribs. In her pain she cried out, and seized his hand and brought it to her throat, where it finally did its office.

Here ends the touching and inspiring history. But the author must break out into a panegyric on the heroic men and women whose triumphal progress he has been narrating:

"O most brave and blessed martyrs! O truly called and chosen unto the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! How shall we extol or bless you, most noble soldiers! Surely if ancient writings are read to the edification of the Church, not less worthy to be read is the all-virtuous course of the blessed martyrs,

that it may testify to the continual operation of one and the same Holy Spirit even until now — those blessed martyrs through whom we ascribe glory to the Father of the worlds, together with His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, to whom be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

HERETICS, SAINTS
AND MARTYRS

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