

BOOK OF MARTYRS.

AN

ACCOUNT OF HOLY MEN

WHO DIED FOR THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.



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WHO DIED FOR THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BISHOP RIDLEY.

HE was born in Northumberland, and became Master of Pembroke Hall. He was converted to our Religion by reading a famous Book on the Sacrament, and confirmed in his belief by a conversation he had with the pious Bishop Cranmer. The good King Edward the sixth made him Bishop of London. In the beginning of bloody Queen Mary's reign, he was among the first, who for the faith of the Gospel was imprisoned in the Tower;

A 2 from

from whence he was sent to Oxford with his two dear and good friends Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Latimer, and there kept with them in the common gaol ; till after some time, being separated from them, he was committed to the custody of one Irish, with whom he remained till the day of his martyrdom.

In a letter of his to Bishop Latimer in prison, is the following passage---“ I pray you, good Father, let me have something more from you to comfort me ; for except the Lord assist me in his service, I shall play but a very poor part ; but he can make a coward, in his cause, to fight like a man.”

In a letter to another friend he wrote thus---“ As far as London is from Oxford, yet thence we have received both meat, money and shirts, not only from our acquaintance, but from some strangers also. I know for whose sake they do it.”

Again he wrote---“ Ever since I heard of our dear Brother Rogers’s stout confession

cession and departing; blessed be God for it! I have never felt any heaviness in my heart as sometimes I did before. Blessed be God, notwithstanding our hard restraints, and the evil reports raised of us, we are joyful in God: and all our care is, and shall be, by God's grace, to please and serve him; from him we expect, after these short and momentary miseries, to have eternal joy and perpetual felicity with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.'

"As yet never a learned man, scholar or other hath visited us since our coming here, but I dare say every one is well contented with his portion; which is our heavenly Father's good and gracious gift. Farewel.---We shall, by the grace of God, one day meet, and be happy together; which day assuredly approaches. God grant it may shortly come."

The night before he suffered, he had his beard shaved, and his feet washed, and invited Mrs. Irish, his landlady, and the others about him to his wedding. By

which this good man meant his entrance on everlasting glory. Mrs. Irish on this, falling into tears, he said,---“ O Mrs. Irish, I see now that you love me not ; for in that you weep, it appears that you will not be at my marriage, nor are there-with content. I see you are not so much my friend as I thought. But quiet yourself. Though my breakfast be somewhat sharp and painful, yet I am sure my supper shall be more pleasant.”

His Brother offering to sit up with him, he would not suffer any such thing, but said---“ I intend to go to bed, and sleep as quietly as ever I did in my life. Such a calmness did this holy man’s faith give him. The next morning he came out dressed in a black gown, and looking behind him he saw his dear and godly friend, Bishop Latimer coming forward, on which he said to him,---“ O, are you there ?” Yea, said Latimer, coming after as fast as I can follow.

Being come to the stake, he lift up
his

his eyes and hands towards heaven; and then with a cheerful countenance, he ran to Bishop Latimer, and said, embracing and kissing him---“Be of good heart, Brother, for God will either alluage the violence of the flame, or give us strength to bear it.” To which Latimer replied with an amiable countenance, in which was the very picture of comfort---“God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able.” When the fire was brought, he added, “Be of good comfort, Brother, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.” And so it has hitherto proved, and will I trust prove to the end.

Ridley then turning to the stake and kissing it, prayed fervently. After which setting himself to speak to the spectators, some persons ran to him and stopped his mouth with their hands, barbarously refusing to let this holy man utter a few

parting words. Being afterwards stripped, he stood on a stone near the stake, and offered up the following prayer :---“ O heavenly Father, I give thee hearty thanks, for that thou hast called me to be a professor of thee, even unto death, I beseech thee, Lord God, have mercy on this kingdom of England, and deliver it from all its enemies.”

As a smith was knocking in the staple which held the chain that was to fasten him to the stake, he said to him---“ Good fellow ! knock it in hard, for the flesh will have its course ;” and when he saw the flame approaching him, he cried with a loud voice---“ Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit,---Lord, receive my soul.”

Thus perished in the flames this holy Martyr, leaving behind him a glorious testimony to the truth of the Gospel, and a memorable instance of the power of the grace of God in supporting his true and faithful servants, not only through all the
 trials

trials and troubles of this mortal life, but in the most unjust, cruel, and abominable death.

HISTORY

OF

Mr. GEORGE WISHEART,

ANOTHER MARTYR.

HE was born in Scotland, about the same time with Bishop Ridley, and brought up at a Grammar-school, from whence he went to the University; after which he travelled into several counties, and at last came to Cambridge, where he was admitted into Bennet College. In many places of Scotland through which he preached, many proofs of the power of his preaching, which had wrought such a change in the lives and conversation of numbers of people

ple, were brought to him, and though he was hotly persecuted every where by the wicked popish Cardinal Beton, he still continued to teach the truth in public, and persevered in going about, like his blessed Master, to do good. He was at length apprehended by Earl Bothwell and at the desire of Queen Mary, by him delivered up to be the subject of this bloody man's cruelty and revenge. When he was going to the place of execution two men met him to make him pray in their false way. To whom he meekly said,---“ Cease, tempt me not, I entreat you, and so with a rope about his neck, and a chain about his middle he was led to the stake, where falling on his knees he thrice repeated the following words. “ O thou, Saviour of the world, have mercy upon me. Father of heaven, I commend my spirit into thy holy hands.” Then turning to the people, he said---“ Christian Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you be not offended at the word of God, for the torments which you
see

see prepared for me. I exhort you that you love the word of God for your salvation, and suffer patiently and with a comfortable heart; for the Bible's sake, which is your undoubted salvation, and everlasting comfort. I pray you also, shew my Brothers and Sisters, who have often heard me preach, that they cease not to learn the word of God, which I taught them, according to the measure of grace given me; for no persecution or trouble in this world ought to move us, or stagger our faith; and shew them that the doctrine we preach is no old fable, but the truth of God; for if I had taught men's doctrines, I had had greater thanks from men; but for the word of God's sake I now suffer, not sorrowfully, but with a glad heart and mind. For this cause I was sent into the world, that I should suffer this fire for Christ's sake. Behold my face, I hope you will not see me change my countenance, I fear not the fire. If persecution come to you for

the Bible's sake, I pray you fear not them that can kill the body." He then prayed for them that accused him saying---" I beseech thee, Father of heaven, forgive them that have in ignorance, or of any evil mind, forged this of me: I forgive them with all my heart, I beseech God to forgive them that have condemned me this day ignorantly."

Turning to the people, he said,---" I beseech you, Brethren, to learn the Word of God, that you may be ashamed to do evil, and learn to do good, or else there shall come upon you the wrath of God which you will not be able to escape."

Then the executioner falling upon his knees, said, " Sir, I pray you forgive me, for I am not the cause of your death:" and he, calling him to him, kissed his cheeks, saying, " Lo! here is a token that I forgive thee, my friend, do thine office."

And so he was tied to the stake, and the fire kindled---The Captain of the
Castle

Castle going near him, bade him be of good courage, and prayed him to beg for him the pardon of his sins : to whom Mr. Wisheart said,---“ This fire torments my body, but no whit abates my spirits.” Then looking towards the wicked Cardinal Beton, who was at a high window, feasting his eyes on the execution, he said, “ He who in high state, from that high place, feeds his eyes with my torments, within a few days, may possibly be hanged out at the same window, to be seen with as much ignominy, as he now leans there with pride,” which came exactly to pass. And then, his breath being stopped, he was consumed by the fire.

To his surviving friends, a little before his departure, almost in the spirit of prophecy, he said, “ God shall send you comfort after me. This kingdom shall be, I trust, illuminated with the light of the Gospel, as clearly as any kingdom since the days of the Apostles. The house of God shall be built in it ; yea, it shall not lack,

lack, in despite of all enemies, the top-stone; neither, I hope, will it be long before this be accomplished. Many shall not suffer after me, before the glory of God, I trust, shall appear, and triumph, in despite of Satan; but, alas! if the people should prove unthankful, then let them beware that fearful and terrible troubles may not follow."---An ungrateful return for signal mercies and favors will always bring any nation into great danger, and expose it to the fearful judgments of Almighty God.

THE DEATH

OF

The FIRST MARTYR,

STEPHEN.

STEPHEN, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and of power, did great wonders among the people. They that
disputed

disputed with him concerning the truth, were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake; but they got together some wicked men who said.—“We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God;” And they stirred up the people, and the Elders and the Scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the Council; and set up false witnesses, which said,—“This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law; for we heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and the law; and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.”

And all that sat at the Council looking steadfastly on him, saw his face, as it had been the face of an Angel. And the high Priest said unto him, “are these things so?” But Stephen spake unto them with boldness, and said, “Ye stiff necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do

do ye, which of the Prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the true Saviour, of whom ye have been even the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the disposition of Angels and have not kept it." And when the people heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus Christ standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the City, and stoned him, and the witnesses laid down their cloaths at a young man's feet named Saul, (afterwards the great St. Paul.) And they stoned Stephen; who called upon God and said, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice — "Lord lay not this sin to their charge," and when he had said this he fell asleep. Thus

Thus perished Stephen the first Martyr who died for the truth of the Gospel. This fine story may be found in the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles ; which besides its being a part of Holy Scripture, is looked upon as one of the finest histories, and the most entertaining book of travels in the world ; containing an account of Conversions, Shipwrecks, and Escapes, as miraculous and true, as they are pleasing and delightful.



THE DEATH
OF
P O L Y C A R P,
THE MARTYR,

BISHOP of S M Y R N A.

POLYCARP was a Disciple of St. John, that great St. John, who wrote the Gospel, and three Epistles. He was almost the only Apostle, who was not put to death for his

his religion ; however he was banished by a wicked heathen Roman Emperor to the Isle of Patmos, where he likewise wrote the book of the Revelations. Three days before Polycarp was apprehended, having retired after prayer to rest, and fallen asleep, he saw, in a vision by night, the pillow under his head set on fire, and suddenly consumed to ashes ; which, when he awoke, he interpreted to those about him, to be a sign that his life was at an end, and that his body would be burnt for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Being seized and brought before the Governor who urged him, saying, “swear, and I will let thee go : blaspheme, and deny Christ ; and thou shalt be safe.” Polycarp answered, “fourscore and six years have I served Christ ; neither hath he ever offended me in any thing ; and how then can I revile my King, who hath thus kept me ?” Then said the Governor, “I have wild beasts to devour thee, unless thou repentest.” Polycarp answered.—“ Bring them out ;
for

for we have determined with ourselves not to repent; not to turn from the better to the worse. 'Tis more fit for you to turn from evil to that which is good and just."—"I will said, the wicked Governor, tame thee with fire, if thou settest nought by the wild Beasts and wilt not repent." To which the pious Bishop replied, "you threaten me with fire, which lasts but an hour, and is quickly quenched; but thou art ignorant of the everlasting fire at the day of judgment, and of those endless torments which are reserved for the wicked. But why make you all these delays? appoint me to what death you please."

The pile being prepared, when they would have nailed him to the stake, he said,—"Nay let me be even as I am; for he who gave me strength to come to this fire, will also give me patience to abide in it, without your fastening my body with nails."—When they bound him, he prayed thus. "O Father of thy well beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have known,
Thee,

Thee; O God of Angels, powers, and of every living creature, and of just men who live in thy presence; I thank thee that thou hast graciously vouchsafed this day and this hour, to allot me a portion in the number of Martyrs; that I should drink of the cup of Christ, for the resurrection to everlasting life, both of body and soul, through the operation of the Holy Spirit; among whom I shall this day be received into thy sight as an acceptable sacrifice. And as thou hast prepared and revealed this beforehand, so thou hast now accomplished and fulfilled it. O thou most true God, who canst not lie, wherefore for all these things I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, through the everlasting Bishop and Shepherd of our Souls, Christ Jesus; to whom, with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

In the midst of the flames he made the following excellent prayer.

O God the Father of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received

ved the knowledge of thee; O God, the creator of all things, upon thee I call; thee I confess to be the true God; thee I glorify: O Lord receive me, and make me a companion of the resurrection of the Saints, through the merits of our great high Priest, thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and God the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory for ever." Amen.

The pious Polycarp suffered for the true Religion when he was eighty-six years old and was a Bishop about sixty-three years.

The blood of the Martyrs, said the first Christians, is the seed of the Church; and indeed no seed ever produced such a glorious harvest.

A great man, I think it was the famous Archbishop Usher, used to say *the Catechism and the book of Martyrs are the two grand pillars of the Protestant Religion*.—We hope to present our readers with many more Histories of the glorious army of Martyrs.

THE MARTYR'S HYMN.

THESE glorious minds how bright they shine !
 Whence all their white array ?
 How came they to the happy seats
 Of everlasting day ?

From tort'ring pain to endless joys
 On fiery wheels they rode,
 And strangely washed their garments white
 In JESU'S dying blood.

Now they approach a spotless GOD,
 And bow before his throne,
 Their warbling harps and sacred songs
 Adore the Holy One.

Th' unveiled glories of his face
 Amongst his saints reside,
 While the rich treasures of his grace
 See all their wants supply'd.

Tormenting thirst shall leave their souls,
 And hunger flee as fast ;
 The fruit of Life's immortal tree,
 Shall be their sweet repast.

Their GOD shall lead his heavenly flock
 Where living fountains rise,
 And love divine shall wipe away
 The sorrows of their eyes.

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