THE ACTS AND MONUMENTS

OF JOHN FOXE:

A NEW AND COMPLETE EDITION:

WITH A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION,

BY THE

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The Condemnation of Master George Wisehart,[[1]](#footnote-1) Gentleman.

WHO SUFFERED MARTYRDOM FOR THE FAITH OF CHRIST JESUS

AT ST. ANDREW’S IN SCOTLAND, A.D. 1546, MARCH THE

FIRST; WITH THE ARTICLES OBJECTED AGAINST

HIM, AND HIS ANSWERS TO THE SAME.

With most tender affection and unfeigned heart consider, gentle reader, the uncharitable manner of the accusation of Master George Wisehart, made by the bloody enemies of Christ’s faith. Note also the articles whereof he was accused, by order digested, and his meek answers so far as he had leave and leisure to speak. Finally, ponder with no dissembling spirit the furious rage and tragical cruelness of the malignant church, in persecuting of this blessed man of God; and, on the contrary, his humble, patient, and most godly answers made to them suddenly without all fear, not having respect to their glorious menacings and boisterous threats, but charitably and without stop answering, not moving his countenance, nor changing his visage, as in his accusation hereafter following manifestly shall appear.

But before I enter into his articles, I thought it not impertinent somewhat to touch concerning the life and conversation of this godly man, according as of late it came to my hands, and certified in writing by a certain scholar of his, some time named Emery Tylney, whose words of testimonial, as he wrote them to me, here follow.

Emery Tylney’s Account of Master George Wisehart.

About the year of our Lord 1543, there was, in the university of Cambridge, one Master George Wisehart, commonly called Master George of Benet’s college, who was a man of tall stature, polled-headed, and on the same a round French cap of the best; judged to be of melancholy complexion by his physio­gnomy, black haired, long bearded, comely of personage, well spoken after his country of Scotland, courteous, lowly, lovely, glad to teach, desirous to learn, and was well travelled; having on him for his habit or clothing, never but a mantle or frieze gown to the shoes, a black millian fustian doublet, and plain black hosen, coarse new canvass for his shirts, and white falling bands and cuffs at his hands. All the which apparel he gave to the poor, some weekly, some monthly, some quarterly, as he liked, saving his French cap, which he kept the whole year of my being with him.

He was a man modest, temperate, fearing God, bating covetousness; for his charity had never end, night, noon, nor day; he forbare one meal in three, one day in four for the most part, except something to comfort nature. He lay hard upon a puff of straw and coarse new canvass sheets, which, when he changed, he gave away. He had commonly by his bed-side a tub of water, in the which (his people being in bed, the candle put out and all quiet) he used to bathe himself, as I, being very young, being assured, often heard him, and, in one light night, discerned him. He loved me tenderly, and I him, for my age, as effectually. He taught with great modesty and gravity, so that some of his people thought him severe, and would have slain him; but the Lord was his defence. And he, after due correction for their malice, by good exhorta­tion amended them and went his way. Oh that the Lord had left him to me, his poor boy, that he might have finished that he had begun! for in his religion he was as you see here, in the rest of his life, when he went into Scotland with divers of the nobility, that came for a treaty to king Henry the Eighth. His learning was no less sufficient than his desire; always pressed and ready to do good in that he was able, both in the house privately, and in the school pub­licly, professing and reading divers authors.

If I should declare his love to me and all men; his charity to the poor, in giving, relieving, caring, helping, providing, yea, infinitely studying how to do good unto all, and hurt to none, I should sooner want words, than just cause to commend him.

All this I testify with my whole heart and truth, of this godly man. He that made all, governeth all, and shall judge all, knoweth that I speak the truth, that the simple may be satisfied, the arrogant confounded, the hypocrite disclosed.

Τέλος.

Emery Tylney.

A SERMON BY DEAN JOHN WINRYME

Dogmata ejusdem Georgii.

Fides sola sine operibus justificat.

Opera ostendunt et ostentant fidem.

Romana ecclesia putative caput mundi.

Lex canonica caput papæ.

Missæ ministerium, mysterium iniquitatis.

To the said Master George, being in captivity in the castle of St. Andrews, the dean of the same town was sent by the commandment of the cardinal,[[2]](#footnote-2) and by his wicked counsel, and there summoned the said Master George, that he should, upon the morning following, appear before the judge, then and there to give account of his seditious and heretical doctrine. To whom Master George thus answered:

*Wisehart:* ‘What needeth,’ said he, ‘my lord cardinal to summon me to answer for my doctrine openly before him, under whose power and dominion I am thus straitly bound with irons? May not my lord compel me to answer of his extort power? or believeth he that I am unprovided to render account of my doctrine? To manifest yourselves what men ye are, it is well done that ye keep your old ceremonies and constitutions made by men.’

Upon the next morning, the lord cardinal caused his servants to address themselves in their most warlike array, with jack,[[3]](#footnote-3) knapskal, splent, spear, and axe, more seeming for the war, than for the preaching of the true word of God. And when these armed champions, marching in warlike order, had conveyed the bishops into the abbey church, incontinently they sent for Master George, who was conveyed unto the said church by the captain of the castle, accompanied with a hundred men, addressed in manner aforesaid. Like a lamb led they him to sacrifice. As he entered into the abbey-church door, there was a poor man lying, vexed with great infirmities, asking of his alms, to whom he flung his purse. And when hecame before the lord cardinal, by and by the sub-prior of the abbey, called dean John Winryme, stood up in the pulpit, and made a ser­mon to all the congregation there then assembled, taking his matter out of Matthew xiii.

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SERMON OF DEAN JOHN WINRYME.

The sermon was divided into four principal parts. The first part was a brief and short declaration of the evangelist. The second part, of the interpretation of the good seed. And because he called the word of God the good seed, and heresy the evil seed, he declared what heresy was, and how it should be known; which he defined on this manner: Heresy is a false opinion defended with pertinacity, clearly repugning the word of God.

The third part of the sermon was, the cause of heresy within that realm, and all other realms. ‘The cause of heresy,’ quoth he, ‘is the ignorance of them that have the cures of men’s souls: to whom it necessarily belongeth to have the true understanding of the word of God, that they may be able to win again the false doctors of heresies, with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and not only to win again, but also to overcome them, as saith Paul: A bishop must be faultless, as it becometh the minister of God, not stubborn, nor angry; no drunkard, no fighter, nor given to filthy lucre, but harbourous; one that loveth goodness; sober-minded, righteous, holy, temperate, and such as cleaveth unto the true word of doctrine; that he may be able to exhort with wholesome learning, and to disprove that which they say against him.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The fourth part of his sermon was, how heresies should be known. ‘Heresy,’ quoth he, ‘be known after this manner: as the goldsmith knoweth the fine gold from the unperfect, by the touchstone, so likewise may we know heresy by the undoubted touchstone; that is, the true, sincere and undefiled word of God.’ At last, he added, that heretics should be put down in this present life: to which proposition the gospel appeared to repugn, which he treated of. ‘Let them grow unto the harvest.’ The harvest is the end of the world. Nevertheless, he affirmed that they should be put down by the civil magistrate and law.

THE EXAMINATION OF MASTER GEORGE WISEHART.

And when he ended his sermon, incontinently they caused Master George to ascend into the pulpit, there to hear his accusation and articles. And right against him stood up one of the fed flock, a monster, John Lauder, laden full of cursings written in paper. Of these he took out a roll, both long and also full of cursings, threats, maledictions, and words of devilish spite and malice, saying to the innocent Master George so many cruel and abominable words, and hitting him so spitefully with the pope’s thunder, that the ignorant people dreaded lest the earth then would have swallowed him up quick. Notwithstanding Master George stood still with great patience, hearing their sayings, not once moving or changing his countenance.

When that this fed sow had read throughout all his lying menacings, his face running down with sweat, and frothing at the mouth like a boar, he spit at Master George’s face, saying, “What answerest thou to these sayings, thou runnagate! traitor! thief! which we have duly proved by sufficient witness against thee?” Master George, hearing this, kneeled down upon his knees in the pulpit, making his prayer to God. When he had ended his prayer, sweetly and christianly he answered to them all in this manner:

*Master George Wisehart:* ‘Many and horrible sayings unto me a Christian man, many words abominable to hear, ye have spoken here this day, which not only to receive, but also once to think, I thought ever great abomination. Wherefore I pray your discretions quietly to hear me, that ye may know what were my sayings and the manner of my doctrine.

‘This my petition, my lords, I desire to be heard for three causes. The first is, because, through preaching of the word of God, his glory is made manifest. It is reasonable therefore, for the advancing of the glory of God, that ye hear me, teaching truly the pure word of God, without any dissimulation.

‘The second reason is, because that your health springeth of the word of God; for he worketh all things by his word. It were, therefore, an un­righteous thing, if ye should stop your ears from me, teaching truly the word of God.

‘The third reason is, because your doctrine uttereth many blasphemous and abominable words, not coming of the inspiration of God, but of the devil, with no less peril than of my life. It is just, therefore, and reasonable, that your dis­cretions should know what my words and doctrine are, and what I have ever taught in my time in this realm, that I perish not unjustly, to the great peril of your souls. Wherefore, both for the glory and honour of God, your own health, and safeguard of my life, I beseech your discretions to hear me; and, in the mean time, I shall recite my doctrine without any colour.

‘First and chiefly, since the time I came into this realm I taught nothing but the ten Commandments of God, the twelve Articles of the Faith, and the Prayer of the Lord in the mother tongue. Moreover in Dundee, I taught the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. And I shall show your discretions faith­fully, what fashion and manner I used when I taught, without any human dread, so that your discretions give me your ears benevolent and attent.’

Suddenly then, with a high voice cried the accuser, the fed sow, ‘Thou heretic, runnagate, traitor, and thief! it was not lawful for thee to preach. Thou hast taken the power at thine own hand, without any authority of the church. We forethink that thou hast been a preacher too long.’

Then all the whole congregation of the prelates, with their com­plices, said these words; “If we give him license to preach, he is so crafty, and in the holy Scriptures so exercised, that he will persuade the people to his opinion, and raise them against us.”

Master George, seeing their malicious and wicked intent, appealed from the lord cardinal to the lord governor, as to an indifferent and equal judge. To whom the accuser, John Lauder aforesaid, with hoggish voice answered, “Is not my lord cardinal the second person within this realm, chancellor of Scotland, archbishop of St. Andrews, bishop of Mirepois,[[5]](#footnote-5) commendator of Aberbroshok,[[6]](#footnote-6) legatus natus, legatus a latere?” And so, reciting as many titles of his unworthy honours as would have laden a ship, much sooner an ass, “Is not he,” quoth John Lauder, “an equal judge apparently unto thee? Whom else desirest thou to be thy judge?”

To whom this humble man, answering, said thus:

*Wisehart:* ‘I refuse not my lord cardinal, but I desire the word of God to be my judge, and the temporal estate, with some of your lordships mine auditors, because I am here my lord governor’s prisoner.’

Hereupon the prideful and scornful people that stood by mocked him, saying,“ Such man, such judge!” speaking seditious and reproach­ful words against the governor and other the nobles; meaning them, also, to be heretics. And incontinent, without all delay, they would have given sentence upon Master George, and that without further process, had not certain men there counselled the cardinal to read again the articles, and to hear his answers thereupon, that the people might not complain of his wrongful condemnation.

And shortly to declare, these were the articles following, with his answers, as far as they would give him leave to speak: for when he intended to mitigate their leasings, and to show the manner of his doctrine, by and by they stopped his mouth with another article.

First Article. ‘Thou false heretic, runnagate, traitor, and thief, deceiver of the people! thou despisest the holy church’s, and in like case contenmest my lord governor’s authority. And this we know for surety, that when thou preachedst in Dundee, and wast charged by my lord governor’s authority to desist, nevertheless thou wouldst not obey, but perseveredst in the same; and therefore the bishop of Brechin cursed thee, and delivered thee into the devil’s hands, and gave thee in commandment that thou shouldst preach no more. Yet notwithstanding thou didst continue obstinately.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! I have read in the Acts of the Apostles, that it is not lawful to desist from the preaching of the gospel for the threats and menaces of men. Therefore it is written, We shall rather obey God than man.[[7]](#footnote-7) I have also read in Malachi, I shall curse your blessings, and bless your cursings, saith the Lord:[[8]](#footnote-8) believing firmly, that he will turn your cursings into blessings.’

II. ‘Thou, false heretic! didst say, that the priest, standing at the altar, saying mass, was like a fox wagging his tail in July.’

*Wisehart: ‘*My lords! I said not so. These were my sayings: The moving of the body outward, without the inward moving of the heart, is nought else but the playing of an ape, and not the true serving of God. For God is a secret searcher of men’s hearts: therefore, who will truly adore and honour God, he must in spirit and verity honour him.’

Then the accuser stopped his mouth with another article.

III. ‘Thou, false heretic! preachedst against the sacraments, saying, that there were not seven sacraments.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! if it he your pleasures, I never taught of the number of the sacraments, whether they were seven or eleven. So many as are insti­tuted by Christ, and are showed to us by the evangely, I profess openly. Except it be the word of God, I dare affirm nothing.’

IV. ‘Thou, false heretic! hast openly taught, that auricular confession is not a blessed sacrament. And thou sayest, that we should only confess us to God, and to no priest.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! I say, that auricular confession, seeing that it hath no promise of the evangely, therefore it cannot be a sacrament. Of the confession to be made to God, there are many testimonies in Scripture, as when David saith, I thought I would acknowledge mine iniquity against myself unto the Lord, and he forgave the punishment of my sin.[[9]](#footnote-9) Here confession signifieth the secret acknowledging of our sins before God. When I exhorted the people in this manner, I reproved no manner of confession. And further St. James saith, Acknowledge your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.’[[10]](#footnote-10)

When he had said these words, the bishops and their complices cried, and grinned with their teeth, saying, “See ye not what colours he hath in his speaking, that he may beguile us and seduce us to his opinion?”

V. ‘Thou heretic didst say openly, that it was necessary to every man to know and understand his baptism, and what it was: contrary to general coun­cils and the estate of the holy church.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! I believe there be none so unwise here, that will make merchandise with a Frenchman, or any other unknown stranger, except he know and understand first the condition or promise made by the Frenchman or stranger. So likewise I would that we understood what thing we promise in the name of the infant unto God in baptism. For this cause I believe ye have confirmation.’

Then said Master Blecter, chaplain, that he had the devil within him, and the spirit of error. Then answered him a child,[[11]](#footnote-11) saying, “The devil cannot speak such words as yonder man doth speak.”

VI. ‘Thou heretic, traitor, and thief! thou saidst, that the sacrament of the altar was but a piece of bread baked upon the ashes, and no other thing else; and that all that is there done, is but a superstitious rite, against the commandment of God.’

*Wisehart:* ‘O Lord God! so manifest lies and blasphemies the Scripture doth not teach you. As concerning the sacrament of the altar, my lords! I never taught any thing against the Scripture; which I shall, by God’s grace, make manifest this day, I being therefore ready to suffer death.

‘The lawful use of the sacrament is most acceptable unto God; but the great abuse of it is very detestable unto him. But what occasion they have to say such words of me, I shall shortly show your lordships. I once chanced to meet with a Jew, when I was sailing on the water of Rhine. I did inquire of him what was the cause of his pertinacity, that he did not believe that the true Messias was come, considering that they had seen all the prophecies which were spoken of him to be fulfilled. Moreover, by the prophecies taken away, and the sceptre of Judah, and by many other testimonies of the Scripture, I vanquished him, and proved that Messias was come, whom they called Jesus of Nazareth. This Jew answered again unto me, When Messias cometh, he shall restore all things; and he shall not abrogate the law, which was given to our forefathers, as ye do. For why? we see the poor almost perish through hunger amongst you; yet you are not moved with pity toward them: but, amongst us Jews, though we be poor, there are no beggars found.’

‘Secondly, it is forbidden by the law to feign any kind of imagery of things in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the sea under the earth; but one God only is to be honoured: but your sanctuaries and churches are full of idols.’

‘Thirdly, a piece of bread baken upon the ashes ye adore and worship, and say, that it is your God.—I have rehearsed here but the sayings of the Jew, which I never affirmed to be true.’ Then the bishops shook their heads, and spitted on the earth, and what I meant further in this matter they would not hear.

VII. ‘Thou, false heretic! didst say, that extreme unction was not a sacrament.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! forsooth, I never taught any thing of extreme unction in my doctrine, whether it were a sacrament or no.’

VIII. ‘Thou, false heretic! saidst, that holy water is not so good as wash, and such like. Thou condemnest conjuring, and saidst, holy church’s cursings avail not.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! as for holy water what strength it is of, I taught never ill my doctrine. Conjurings, and exorcisms, if they were conformable to the word of God I would commend them; but, insomuch as they are not conformable to the commandment and word of God, I reprove them.’

IX. ‘Thou, false heretic and runnagate! hast said, that every layman is a priest, and such like. Thou saidst, that the pope hath no more power, than any other man.’

*Wisehart: ‘*My lords! I taught nothing but the word of God. I remember that I have read in some places in St. John and St. Peter, of the which the one saith, He hath made us kings and priests; the other saith, He hath made us a kingly priesthood.[[12]](#footnote-12) Wherefore I have affirmed, that any man, being cunning in the word of God, and the true faith of Jesu Christ, hath his power given him of God, and not by the power or violence of men, but by the virtue of the word of God, which word is called, the power of God, as witnesseth St. Paul evi­dently enough.[[13]](#footnote-13) And again I say, that any unlearned man, and not exercised in the word of God, nor yet constant in his faith, whatsoever estate or order he be of, I say, he hath no power to bind or loose, seeing he wanteth the instrument, by which he bindeth or looseth; that is to say, the word of God.’

After he had said these words, all the bishops laughed, and mocked him. When that he beheld their laughing, “Laugh ye,” saith he, “my lords? Though that these sayings appear scornful, and worthy of derision to your lordships, nevertheless they are very weighty to me, and of a great value, because they stand not only upon my life, but also the honour and glory of God.” In the mean time many godly men, beholding the madness and great cruelty of the bishops, and the invincible patience of Master George, did greatly mourn and lament.

X. ‘Thou, false heretic! saidst, that a man hath no free will, but is like to the Stoics, who say, that it is not in man’s will to do any thing, but that all concupiscence and desire cometh of God, of whatsoever kind it be.’

*Wisehart: ‘*My lords! I said not so, truly. I say, that as many as believe in Christ firmly, unto them is given liberty, conformably to the saying of St. John, If the Son make you free, then shall ye verily be free.[[14]](#footnote-14) On the contrary, as many as believe not in Christ Jesus, they are bondservants of sin; He that sinneth, is bound to sin.’

XI. ‘Thou, false heretic! saidst, it is as lawful to eat flesh upon the Friday’, as on Sunday.’

*Wisehart: ‘*Pleaseth it your lordships, I have read in the epistles of St. Paul, that who is clean, unto him all things are clean. On the contrary, to the filthy man all things are unclean. A faithful man, clean and holy, sanctifieth by the word the creature of God; but the creature maketh no man acceptable unto God. So that a creature may not sanctify any impure and unfaithful man: but to the faithful man all things are sanctified by the word of God and prayer.’[[15]](#footnote-15)

After these sayings of Master George, then said all the bishops with their complices, “What needeth us any witness against him? hath he not here openly spoken blasphemy?”

XII. ‘Thou, false heretic! didst say, that we should not pray to saints, but to God only. Say whether thou hast said this, or no; say shortly!’

*Wisehart:* ‘For the weakness and infirmity of the hearers,’ he said, ‘with­out doubt plainly—saints should not be honoured. My lords,’ said be, ‘there are two things worthy of note. The one is certain, the other uncertain. It is found plain and certain in Scripture, that we should worship and honour one God, according to the saying of the first commandment, Thou shalt only worship and honour thy Lord God, with all thy heart.[[16]](#footnote-16) But, as for praying to and honouring of saints, there is great doubt among many, whether they hear, or not, invocation made unto them: therefore I exhorted all men equally in my doctrine, that they should leave the unsure way, and follow that way which was taught us by our master Christ. He is our only mediator, and maketh intercession for us to God his Father. He is the door by which we must enter in. He that entereth not in by this door, but climbeth another way, is a thief and a murderer. He [Christ] is the verity and life. He that goeth out of this way, there is no doubt but he shall fall into the mire; yea verily, is fallen into it already. This is the fashion of my doctrine, the which I have ever followed. Verily, that which I have heard and read in the word of God, I taught openly, and in no corners. And now ye shall witness the same, if your lordships will hear me. Except it stand by the word of God, I dare not be so bold to affirm any thing.’

These sayings he rehearsed divers times.

XIII. ‘Thou, false heretic! hast preached plainly, saying that there is no purgatory, and that it is a feigned thing, for any man after this life to be pu­nished in purgatory.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! as I have oftentimes said heretofore, without ex­press witness and testimony of the Scripturo I dare affirm nothing. I have oft and divers times read over the Bible, and yet such a term found I never, nor yet any place of Scripture applicable thereunto. Therefore I was ashamed ever to teach of that thing which I could not find in the Scripture.’

Then said he to Master John Lauder his accuser, “If you have any testimony of the Scripture, by which you may prove any such place, show it now before this auditory.” But this dolt had not a word to say for himself, but was as dumb as a beetle in that matter.

XIV. ‘Thou, false heretic! hast taught plainly against the vows of monks, friars, nuns, and priests; saying, that whosoever was bound to such like vows, they vowed themselves to the estate of damnation. Moreover, that it was lawful for priests to marry wives, and not to live sole.’

*Wisehart:* ‘Of sooth, my lords, I have read in the evangely, that there are three kinds of chaste men; some are eunuchs from their mothers’ womb; some are made such by men; and some have made themselves such for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.[[17]](#footnote-17) Verily, I say, these men are blessed by the Scrip­ture of God. But as many as have not the gift of chastity, nor yet for the evangely have overcome the concupiscence of the flesh, and have vowed chas­tity; ye have experience, although I should hold my peace, to what incon­venience they have vowed themselves.’

When he had said these words, they were all dumb, thinking better to have ten concubines, than one wife.

XV. ‘Thou, false heretic and runnagate! sayest, thou wilt not obey our general nor provincial councils.’

*Wisehart: ‘*My lords! what your general councils are, I know not; I was never exercised in them: but to the pure word of God I gave my labours. Read here your general councils, or else give me a book wherein they are contained, that I may read them. If they agree with the word of God, I will not disagree.’

Then the ravening wolves turned unto madness and said, “Where­fore do we let him speak any further? Read forth the rest of the articles, and stay not upon them.” Among these cruel tigers there was one false hypocrite, a seducer of the people, called John ‘Grey-fiend’ Scot, standing behind John Lauder’s back, hastening him to read the rest of the articles, and not to tarry upon his witty and godly an­swers: “For we may not abide them,” quoth he, “no more than the devil may abide the sign of the cross, when it is named.”

XVI. ‘Thou heretic sayest, that it is vain to build to the honour of God costly churches, seeing that God remaineth not in churches made with men’s hands, nor yet can God be in so little space as betwixt the priest’s hands.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! Solomon saith, If that the heaven of heavens cannot comprehend thee, how much less this house that I have builded?[[18]](#footnote-18) And Job consenteth to the same sentence: Seeing that he is higher than the heavens, therefore what canst thou build unto him? He is deeper than hell, then how shalt thou know him? He is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.[[19]](#footnote-19) So that God cannot be comprehended into one place, because that he is infinite. These sayings notwithstanding, I never said that churches should be destroyed, but, on the contrary, I affirm ever, that churches should be sustained and upholden; that the people should be congregated into them, there to hear of God. And moreover, wheresoever is true preaching of the word of God, and the lawful use of the sacraments, undoubtedly there is God himself; so that both these sayings are true together: God cannot be comprehended in any place; and, Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he present in the midst of them.’

Then said he to his accuser, “If you think any otherwise than I say, show forth your reasons before this auditory.” Then he, without all reason being dumb, and not answering one word, proceeded forth in his articles.

XVII. ‘Thou, false heretic! contemnest fasting, and sayest, Thou shouldst not fast.’

*Wisehart:* ‘My lords! I find that fasting is commended in the Scripture; therefore I were a slanderer of the gospel, if I contemned fasting. And not so only, but I have learned by experience, that fasting is good for the health of the body: but God knoweth who fasteth the true fast.’

XVIII. ‘Thou, false heretic! hast preached openly, saying, that the soul of man shall sleep till the latter day of judgment, and shall not obtain life immortal until that day.’

*Wisehart:* ‘God, full of mercy and goodness, forgive them that say such things of me! I wot and know surely by the word of God, that he who hath begun to have the faith of Jesus Christ, and believeth firmly in him, I know surely that the soul of that man shall never sleep, but ever shall live an im­mortal life: which life from day to day is renewed in grace and augmented: nor yet shall ever perish or have an end, but shall live ever immortal with Christ. To the which life all that believe in him shall come, and rest in eternal glory. Amen.

When the bishops with their complices had accused this innocent man in manner and form aforesaid, incontinently they condemned him to be burned as a heretic, not having respect to his godly an­swers and true reasons which he alleged, nor yet to their own con­sciences, thinking verily that they should do to God good sacrifice, conformably to the saying of Christ, “They shall excommunicate you: yea, and the time shall come, that he which killeth you, shall think that he hath done to God good service.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

The Prayer of Master George Wisehart, for the Congregation of God.

‘O Immortal God! how long shalt thou suffer the madness and great crudelity of the ungodly to exercise their fury upon thy servants which do further thy word in this world, seeing they desire to do the contrary, that is, to choke and destroy the true doctrine and verity, by the which thou hast showed thyself unto the world, which was all drowned in blindness and misknowledge of thy name. O Lord we know surely that thy true servants must needs suffer, for thy name’s sake, persecution, affliction and troubles in this present life, which is but a shadow, as thou hast showed to us by thy prophets and apostles. But yet we desire thee heartily, that thou conserve, defend, and help thy congrega­tion, which thou hast chosen before the beginning of the world, and give them thy grace to hear thy word, and to be thy true servants in this present life.’

Then, by and by, they caused the common people to void away, whose desire was always to hear that innocent man to speak. Then the sons of darkness pronounced their sentence definitive, not having respect to the judgment of God. And when all this was done and said, the cardinal caused his warders to pass again with the meek lamb into the castle, until such time as the fire was made ready. When he was come unto the castle, then there came two grey fiends, friar Scot and his mate, saying, “Sir, ye must make your confession unto us.” He answered and said, “I will make no confession unto you. Go fetch me yonder man that preached this day, and I will make my confession unto him.” Then they sent for the sub-prior of the abbey, who came to him with all diligence.” But what he said in this confession, I cannot show.

When the fire was made ready, and the gallows, at the west part of the castle near to the priory, the lord cardinal, dreading that Master George should have been taken away by his friends, com­manded to bend all the ordnance of the castle right against that part, and commanded all his gunners to be ready and stand beside their guns, until such time as he were burned. All this being done, they bound Master George’s hands behind his back, and led him forth with their soldiers from the castle, to the place of their wicked exe­cution. As he came forth of the castle-gate, there met him certain beggars, asking his alms for God’s sake. To whom he answered, “I want my hands, wherewith I should give you alms; but the merciful Lord, of his benignity and abundance of grace, that feedeth all men, vouchsafe to give you necessaries, both unto your bodies and souls.” Then afterwards met him two false fiends, I should say friars, saying, “Master George, pray to our Lady, that she may be media­trix for you to her Son.” To whom he answered meekly, “Cease, tempt me not, my brethren!” After this he was led to the fire with a rope about his neck, and a chain of iron about his middle.

When he came to the fire, he sat down upon his knees, and rose again, and thrice he said these words, “O thou Saviour of the world! have mercy on me. Father of heaven! I commend my spirit into thy holy hands.” When he had made this prayer, he turned him to the people, and said these words:

The Exhortation of Wisehart to the People, at his Death.

‘I beseech you, Christian brethren and sisters! that ye be not offended in the word of God, for the affliction and torments, which ye see already prepared for me: but I exhort you, that you love the word of God, and suffer patiently and with a comfortable heart, for the word’s sake, which is your undoubted salvation, and everlasting comfort.

‘Moreover, I pray you, show my brethren and sisters, which have heard me oft before, that they cease not, nor leave off the word of God which I taught unto them after the grace given to me, for any persecutions or troubles in this world, which lasteth not; and show unto them, that my doctrine was no old wives’ fable, after the constitutions made by men. And if I had taught men’s doc­trine, I had gotten great thanks by men: but, for the word’s sake and true evangely, which was given to me by the grace of God, I suffer this day by men, not sorrowfully, but with a glad heart and mind. For this cause I was sent, that I should suffer this fire, for Christ’s sake. Consider and behold my visage, ye shall not see me change my colour. This grim fire I fear not. And so I pray you to do, if that any persecution come unto you for the word’s sake; and not to fear them that slay the body, and afterwards have no power to slay the soul. Some have said of me, that I taught, that the soul of man should sleep until the last day. But I know surely, and my faith is such, that my soul shall sup with my Saviour Christ this night (ere it be six hours), for whom I suffer this.’

Then he prayed for them that accused him, saying:

‘I beseech thee, Father of heaven! to forgive them that have of any igno­rance, or else have, of any evil mind, forged any lies upon me: I forgive them with all my heart. I beseech Christ to forgive them that have condemned me to death this day ignorantly.’

And last of all he said to the people on this manner:

‘I beseech you, brethren and sisters, to exhort your prelates to the learning of the word of God, that they at the last may be ashamed to do evil, and learn to do good. And if they will not convert themselves from their wicked error, there shall hastily come upon them the wrath of God, which they shall not eschew.’

Many faithful words said he in the mean time, taking no heed or care of the cruel torments, which were then prepared for him. And, at last of all, the hangman, that was his tormentor, sat down upon his knees, and said, “Sir, I pray you forgive me, for I am not guilty of your death.” To whom he answered, “Come hither to me.” When he was come to him, he kissed his cheek, and said, “Lo! here is a token that I forgive thee. My heart, do thine office.” And by and by he was put upon the gibbet and hanged, and there burned to powder. When the people beheld the great tormenting, they might not withhold from piteous mourning and complaining of this innocent lamb’s slaughter.[[21]](#footnote-21)

A NOTE OF THE JUST PUNISHMENT OF GOD UPON THE CRUEL CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF ST. ANDREWS, NAMED DAVID BEATON.

It was not long after the martyrdom of the blessed man of God, Master George Wisehart aforesaid, who was put to death by David Beaton, the bloody archbishop and cardinal of Scotland, as is above specified, a.d. 1546, the first day of March, but the said David Beaton, archbishop of St. Andrews, by the just revenge of God’s mighty judgment, was slain within his own castle of St. Andrew’s, by the hands of one Leslie and other gentlemen, who, by the Lord stirred up, brake in suddenly into his castle upon him, and in his bed murdered him the said year, the last day of May, crying out, “Alas! alas! slay me not! I am a priest!” And so, like a butcher he lived, and like a butcher he died, and lay seven months and more unburied, and at last like a carrion was buried in a dunghill, a.d. 1546, the last day of May.

1. Wishart, Wisehard, or Guiscard.—Ed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Here commences Foxe’s reprint of the pamphlet referred to in the note on p. 636.—Ed. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jack, a leathern vessel for carrying water.—Ed.. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tit. i. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘Mirepoix in the province of Languedoc, to which he was consecrated on the 5th of Decem­ber, 1537; and so I find him styled at home here, ‘Administratoris Episcopatus Mirapicen, in Gallia.’ See Keith’s Scottish Bishops, p. 23.— Ed. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ‘Aberbroshok,’ now Arbroath.—Ed. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Acts v. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Mal. ii. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Psalm xxxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. James v. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. ‘Ex ore infantium.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Apoc. i. & v.; 1 Pet. ii. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Rom. i. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. John viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. I Tim. iv. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Matt. iv. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Matt. xiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 1 Kings viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Job xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. John xvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. ‘Ex Historia impressa.’ [This alludes to a small pamphlet published about the time of cardinal Beaton’s death, the general title of which is ‘*The tragical death of David Beaton Bishoppe of Saint Andrewes in Scotland: wherunto is joyned the martyrdom of Maister Wyseharte,* &c.*; imprinted at London, by John Day, and William Seres.’*The book is in eights, and the tragedy of Beaton is printed in small, and Wishart’s trial in large black letter. The date of printing is not mentioned, but it is probable that it was printed soon after Beaton’s death. Foxe has embodied the whole in his Acts and Monuments. It is remarkable that this pamphlet had become so scarce in Scotland, even in the time of John Knox, a contemporary of Foxe, that the former, in his history of the Reformation, speaks of it, as accessible to the public in Foxe’s work alone; and prefaces his own reprint of the trial with these words: ‘The manner of his (Wishart’s) accusation, proofs, and answers following, as we have received the same from The Book of Martyrs, which, word by word, we have here inserted; and that, because the said book, for the price thereof, is rare to be had.’ Maitland, also, in his ‘Antiquities of Scotland,’ (fol. Edinb. 1757), quotes largely from ‘The Book of Martyrs,’ for his account of this trial. See vol. ii. p. 821.—Also M'Crie’s Life of Knox (notes), vol. i. p, 368. Edit. 1813.–ED.] [↑](#footnote-ref-21)