

THE ACTS AND MONUMENTS OF JOHN FOXE:

A NEW AND COMPLETE EDITION:

WITH A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE TOWNSEND, M.A.

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
PREBENDARY OF DURHAM,
AND VICAR OF NORTHALLERTON, YORKSHIRE.

EDITED BY THE

REV. STEPHEN REED CATTLEY, M.A.

OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
RECTOR OF BAGTHORP, NORFOLK,
AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF SCARBROUGH.

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John Foxe (1516-1587AD)

Protestant Martyrologist.



Engraved by George Glover, 1641AD,
from an oil portrait of 1587AD by unknown artist.

ACTS AND MONUMENTS.

CONTINUATION OF BOOK VIII.

PERTAINING TO

THE LAST THREE HUNDRED YEARS FROM THE LOOSING OUT OF SATAN.

CONTINUING THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH MATTERS APPERTAINING TO BOTH STATES,
AS WELL ECCLESIASTICAL, AS CIVIL AND TEMPORAL.¹

The Story, Examination, Death And Martyrdom Of John Frith.

AMONGST all other chances lamentable, there hath been none a long time which seemed unto me more grievous, than the lamentable death and cruel handling of John Frith, so learned and excellent a young man; who had so profited in all kind of learning and knowledge, that there was scarcely his equal amongst all his companions; and who besides, withal, had such a godliness of life joined with his doctrine, that it was hard to judge in which of them he was more commendable, being greatly praiseworthy in them both: but as touching his doctrine, by the grace of Christ we will speak hereafter.

Of the great godliness which was in him, this may serve for experiment sufficient, for that notwithstanding his other manifold and singular gifts and ornaments of the mind, in him most pregnant, wherewithal he might have opened an easy way unto honour and dignity, notwithstanding he rather chose wholly to consecrate himself unto the church of Christ, excellently showing forth, and practising in himself, the precept so highly commended of the philosophers, touching the life of man: which life, they say, is given unto us in such sort, that how much the better the man is, so much the less he should live unto himself, but unto others, serving for the common utility; and that we should think a great part of our birth to be due unto our parents, a greater part unto our country, and the greatest part of all to be bestowed upon the church, if we will be counted good men. First of all he began his study at Cambridge; in whom nature had planted, being but a child, marvel-

¹ Edition 1563, p. 497. Ed. 1570, p. 1173. Ed. 1576, p. 1004. Ed. 1583, p. 1031. Ed. 1597, p. 941. Ed. 1684, vol. ii. p. 250.—ED.

lous instincts and love unto learning, whereunto he was addicted. He had also a wonderful promptness of wit, and a ready capacity to receive and understand any thing, insomuch that he seemed not only to be sent unto learning, but also born for the same purpose. Neither was there any diligence wanting in him, equal unto that towardness, or worthy of his disposition; whereby it came to pass, that he was not only a lover of learning, but also became an exquisite learned man; in which exercise when he had diligently laboured certain years, not without great profit both of Latin and Greek, at last he fell into knowledge and acquaintance with William Tyndale, through whose instructions he first received into his heart the seed of the gospel and sincere godliness.

At that time Thomas Wolsey, cardinal of York, prepared to build a college in Oxford, marvellously sumptuous, which had the name and title of Frideswide, but is now named Christ's-church, not so much (as it is thought) for the love and zeal that he bare unto learning, as for an ambitious desire of glory and renown, and to leave a perpetual name unto posterity. But that building, he being cut off by the stroke of death (for he was sent for unto the king, accused of certain crimes, and in the way, by immoderate purgations, killed himself), was left partly begun, partly half ended and imperfect, and nothing else save only the kitchen was fully finished. Whereupon Rodolph Gualter, a learned man, being then in Oxford, and beholding the college, said these words in Latin: "*Egregium opus, cardinalis iste instituit collegium, et absolvit popinam.*" How large and ample those buildings should have been, what sumptuous cost should have been bestowed upon the same, may easily be perceived by that which is already budded, as the kitchen, the hall, and certain chambers, where there is such curious graving and workmanship of stonecutters, that all things on every side did glisten for the excellency of the workmanship, for the fineness of the matter, with the gilt antics and embossings; insomuch that if all the rest had been finished to that determinate end as it was begun, it might well have excelled not only all colleges of students, but also palaces of princes. This ambitious cardinal gathered together into that college whatsoever excellent thing there was in the whole realm, either vestments, vessels, or other ornaments, beside provision of all kind of precious things. Besides that, he also appointed unto that company all such men as were found to excel in any kind of learning and knowledge; to recite all whose names in order would be too long. The chief of those who were called from Cambridge were these: Master Clerk, master of arts, of thirty-four years of age; Master Frier, afterwards doctor of physic, and after that a strong papist; Master Sumner, master of arts; Master Harman, master of arts, afterwards fellow of Eton college, and after that a papist; Master Bettes, master of arts, a good man and zealous, and so remained; Master Cox, master of arts, who conveyed himself away

toward the north, and after was schoolmaster of Eton, and then chaplain to doctor Goodrich, bishop of Ely, and by him preferred to king Henry, and, of late, bishop of Ely; John Frith, bachelor of arts; Bayly, bachelor of arts; Goodman, who being sick in the prison with the others, was had out, and died in the town; Drumme, who afterwards fell away and forsook the truth; Thomas Lawney, chaplain of the house, prisoner with John Frith.

To these join also Taverner of Boston, the good musician,¹ besides many others called also out of other places, most picked young men, of grave judgment and sharp wits; who, conferring together upon the abuses of religion, being at that time crept into the church, were therefore accused of heresy unto the cardinal, and cast into a prison, within a deep cave under the ground of the same college, where their salt fish was laid; so that, through the filthy stench thereof, they were all infected, and certain of them, taking their death in the same prison, shortly upon the same being taken out of the prison into their chambers, there deceased.

The troublers and examiners of these good men, were these: Dr. London; Dr. Higdon, dean of the said college; and Dr. Cottesford, commissary.

Master Clerk, Master Sumner, and sir Bayly, eating nothing but salt fish from February to the midst of August, died all three together within the compass of one week.

Master Bettes, a witty man, having no books found in his chamber, through entreaty and surety got out of prison, and so remaining a space in the college, at last slipped away to Cambridge, and afterwards was chaplain to queen Anne, and in great favour with her.

Taverner, although he was accused and suspected for hiding of Clerk's books under the boards in his school, yet the cardinal, for his music, excused him, saying that he was but a musician: and so he escaped.

After the death of these men, John Frith with others, by the cardinal's letter, who sent word that he would not have them so straitly handled, were dismissed out of prison, upon condition not to pass above ten miles out of Oxford; which Frith, after hearing of the examination of Dalaber² and Garret, who bare then faggots, went over the sea, and after two years he came over for exhibition of the prior of Reading (as is thought), and had the prior over with him.

Being at Reading, it happened that he was there taken for a vagabond, and brought to examination; where the simple man, who could not craftily enough colour himself, was set in the stocks. After he had sitten there a long time, and was almost pined with hunger, and would not, for all that, declare what he was, at last he desired that the schoolmaster of the town

¹ This Taverner repented him very much that he had made songs to popish ditties, in the time of his blindness.

² Of this Dalaber, read more in the story of Thomas Garret.

might be brought to him, who at that time was one Leonard Cox, a man very well learned. As soon as he came unto him, Frith, by and by, began in the Latin tongue to bewail his captivity.

The schoolmaster, by and by, being overcome with his eloquence, did not only take pity and compassion upon him, but also began to love and embrace such an excellent wit and disposition unlooked for, especially in such a state and misery. Afterwards, conferring more together upon many things, as touching the universities, schools, and tongues, they fell from the Latin into the Greek, wherein Frith did so inflame the love of that schoolmaster towards him, that he brought him into a marvellous admiration, especially when the schoolmaster heard him so promptly by heart rehearse Homer's verses out of his first book of the Iliad; whereupon the schoolmaster went with all speed unto the magistrates, grievously complaining of the injury which they did show unto so excellent and innocent a young man.

Thus Frith, through the help of the schoolmaster, was freely dismissed out of the stocks, and set at liberty without punishment. Albeit this his safety continued not long, through the great hatred and deadly pursuit of sir Thomas More, who, at that time being chancellor of England, persecuted him both by land and sea, besetting all the ways and havens, yea, and promising great rewards, if any man could bring him any news or tidings of him.

Thus Frith, being on every part beset with troubles, not knowing which way to turn him, seeketh for some place to hide him in. Thus fleeing from one place to another, and often changing both his garments and place, yet could he be in safety in no place; no not long amongst his friends; so that at last, being traitorously taken (as ye shall after hear), he was sent unto the Tower of London, where he had many conflicts with the bishops, but especially in writing with sir Thomas More. The first occasion of his writing was this: Upon a time he had communication with a certain old familiar friend of his, touching the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; the whole effect of which disputation consisted specially in these four points:

I. First, That the matter of the sacrament is no necessary article of faith under pain of damnation.

II. Secondly, That forasmuch as Christ's natural body in like condition hath all properties of our body, sin only except, it cannot be, neither is it agreeable unto reason, that he should be in two places or more at once, contrary to the nature of our body.

III. Moreover, thirdly, it shall not seem meet or necessary, that we should in this place understand Christ's words according to the literal sense, but rather according to the order and phrase of speech, comparing phrase with phrase, according to the analogy of the Scripture.

IV. Last of all, how that it ought to be received according to the true and right institution of Christ, albeit that the order which at this time is crept into the church, and is used now-a-days by the priests, do never so much differ from it.

And forasmuch as the treatise of this disputation seemed somewhat long, his friend desired him that such things as he had reasoned upon he would briefly commit unto writing, and give unto him for the help of his memory. Frith, albeit he was unwilling, and not ignorant how dangerous a thing it was to enter into such a contentious matter, at last, notwithstanding, he, being overcome by the entreaty of his friend, rather followed his will, than looked to his own safeguard.

There was at that time in London a tailor named William Holt, who, feigning a great friendship towards this party, instantly required of him to give him license to read over that same writing of Frith's; which when he unadvisedly did, the other, by and by, carried it unto More, being then chancellor: which thing, afterwards, was occasion of great trouble, and also of death, unto the said Frith; for More, having not only gotten a copy of his book of this sycophant, but also two other copies, which at the same time, in a manner, were sent him by other promoters, he whetted his wits, and called his spirits together as much as he might, meaning to refute his opinion by a contrary book.

The Sum of John Frith's Book of the Sacrament.

This in a manner was the whole sum of the reasons of Frith's book; first, to declare the pope's belief of the sacrament to be no necessary article of our faith; that is to say, that it is no article of our faith necessary to be believed under pain of damnation, that the sacrament should be the natural body of Christ: which he thus proveth; for many so believe, and yet in so believing the sacrament to be the natural body, are not thereby saved, but receive it to their damnation.

Again, in believing the sacrament to be the natural body, yet that natural presence of his body in the bread, is not that which saveth us, but his presence in our hearts by faith. And likewise, the not believing of his bodily presence in the sacrament, is not the thing that shall damn us, but the absence of him out of our heart, through unbelief. And if it be objected, that it is necessary to believe God's word under pain of damnation: to that he answereth that the word taken in the right sense, as Christ meant, maintaineth no such bodily presence as the pope's church doth teach, but rather a sacramental presence. And that, saith he, may be further confirmed thus:

Argument.

None of the old fathers before Christ's incarnation were bound under pain of damnation to believe this point.

All we be saved by the same faith that the old fathers were,

Ergo, None of us are bound to believe this point under pain of damnation.

The first part, saith he, is evident of itself; for how could they believe that which they never heard nor saw?

The second part, saith he, appeareth plainly by St. Augustine, writing to Dardanus, and also by a hundred places more; neither is there any thing that he doth more often inculcate than this, that the same faith that saved our fathers, saveth us also. And therefore upon the truth of these two parts, thus proved, must the conclusion, saith he, needs follow.

Another Argument.

None of the old fathers before Christ's incarnation, did eat Christ corporally in their signs, but only mystically and spiritually, and were saved.

All we do eat Christ even as they did, and are saved as they were.

Ergo, None of us do eat Christ corporally, but mystically and spiritually in our signs, as they did.

For the probation of the first part, Frith, proceeding in his discourse, declareth as follows:—

The ancient fathers, before Christ's incarnation, did never believe any such point of this gross and carnal eating of Christ's body; and yet, notwithstanding, they did eat him spiritually, and were saved; as Adam, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, and other godly Israelites besides. All which, saith he, did eat the body of Christ, and did drink his blood as we do. But this eating and drinking of theirs was spiritual, pertaining only to faith, and not to the teeth: 'For they were all under the cloud, and drank of the rock which followed them; this rock was Christ,'¹ who was promised them to come into the world. And this promise was first made unto Adam, when it was said unto the serpent, 'I will put hatred between thee and the woman, between her seed and thy seed,'² &c. And afterwards again unto Abraham: 'In thy seed shall all people be blessed,'³ &c.: adding also the sacrament of circumcision, which was called the covenant; not because it was so indeed, but because it was a sign and a token of the covenant made between God and Abraham; admonishing us thereby, how we should judge and think touching the sacrament of his body and blood; to wit, that albeit it be called the body of Christ, yet we should properly understand thereby the fruit of our justification, which plentifully floweth unto all the faithful by his most healthful body and blood. Likewise the same promise was made unto Moses, the most meek and gentle captain of the Israelites, who did not only himself believe upon Christ, who was so often promised, but also did prefigure him by divers means, both by the manna which came down from heaven, and also by the water which issued out of the rock, for the refreshing of the bodies of his people.

Neither is it to be doubted, but that both manna and this water had a prophetical mystery in them, declaring the very self-same thing then, which the bread and the wine do now declare unto us in the sacrament. For this saith St. Augustine, 'Whosoever did understand Christ in the manna, did eat the spiritual food that we do. But they, who by that manna sought only to fill their bellies, did eat thereof, and are dead.' So, likewise, saith he of the drink: 'For the rock was Christ.'⁴ And, by and by after, he inferreth thus: Moses did eat manna, and Phinehas also; and many others also did eat

¹ 1 Cor. x.

² Gen. iii.

³ Gen. xxvi.

⁴ 1 Cor. x.

thereof, who pleased God, and are not dead. Why? because they did understand the visible meat spiritually. They did spiritually hunger, and did spiritual taste of it, that they might be spiritually satisfied. They all did eat the same spiritual meat, and all did drink the same spiritual drink: all one spiritual thing, but not all one corporal matter (for they did eat manna, and we another thing), but the self-same spiritual thing that we do; and although they drank the same spiritual drink that we do, yet they drank one thing, and we another: which nevertheless signified all one thing in spiritual effect. How did they drink all one thing? The apostle answereth, 'Of the spiritual rock which followed them, for the rock was Christ.' And Bede also, adding these words, saith, 'Behold the signs are altered, and yet the faith remaineth one.' Thereby a man may perceive that the manna which came down from heaven, was the same unto them, that our sacrament is unto us; and that by either of them is signified, that the body of Christ came down from heaven; and yet, notwithstanding, never any of them said that manna was the very body of Messiah; as our sacramental bread is not indeed the body of Christ, but a mystical representation of the same. For like as the manna which came down from heaven, and the bread which is received in the supper, do nourish the body, even so the body of Christ coming down from heaven, and being given for us, doth quicken up the spirits of the believers unto life everlasting. Then, if the salvation of both people be alike, and their faith also one, there is no cause why we should add transubstantiation unto our sacrament, more than they believed their manna to be altered and changed. Moreover because they are named sacraments, even by the signification of the name they must needs be signs of things, or else of necessity they can be no sacraments.

But some may here object and say, If only faith, both unto them and also unto us, be sufficient for salvation, what need then any sacraments to be instituted? He answered, that there are three causes why sacraments are instituted. The first St. Augustine declareth in these words, writing against Faustus: 'Men,' saith he, 'cannot be knit together into one name of religion, be it true or be it false, except they be knit by the society of signs and visible sacraments, the power whereof doth wonderfully prevail, in so much that such as contemn them are wicked: for that is wickedly contemned, without which godliness cannot be made perfect, &c. Another cause is, that they should be helpers to graft and plant faith in our hearts, and for the confirmation of God's promises. But this use of sacraments many are yet ignorant of, and more there be who do preposterously judge of the same, taking the signs for the thing itself, and worshipping the same: even by like reason in a manner, as if a man would take the bush that hangeth at the tavern door, and suck it to slake his thirst, and will not go into the tavern where the wine is. Thirdly, they do serve unto this use, to stir up the minds and hearts of the faithful to give thanks unto God for his benefits.

And these in a manner are the principal points of Frith's book.

When More (as is aforesaid) had gotten a copy of this treatise, he sharpened his pen all that he might, to make answer unto this young man (for so he calleth him throughout his whole book), but in such sort, that when the book was once set forth, and showed unto the world, then he endeavoured himself, all that he might, to keep it from printing: peradventure lest that any copy thereof should come unto Frith's hands. But notwithstanding, when at last Frith had gotten a copy thereof, by means of his

friends, he answered him out of the prison, omitting nothing that any man could desire to the perfect and absolute handling of the matter. And as it were a great labour, so do I think it not much necessary to repeat all his reasons and arguments, or the testimonies which he had gathered out of the doctors; especially forasmuch as Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, in his apology against the bishop of Winchester, seemed to have collected them abundantly, gathering the principal and chiefest helps from thence that he leaned unto against the other; and I doubt much whether the archbishop ever gave any more credit unto any author of that doctrine, than unto this aforesaid Frith.

What dexterity of wit was in him, and excellency of doctrine, it may appear not only by his books which he wrote of the sacrament, but also in those which he entitled *Of Purgatory*. In that quarrel he withstood the violence of three most obstinate enemies; that is to say, of Rochester, More, and Rastal, whereof the one by the help of the doctors, the other by wresting of the Scripture, and the third by the help of natural philosophy, had conspired against him. But he, as a Hercules, fighting not against two only, but even with them all three at once, did so overthrow and confound them, that he converted Rastal to his part.

Besides all these commendations of this young man, there was also in him a friendly and prudent moderation in uttering of the truth, joined with a learned godliness; which virtue hath always so much prevailed in the church of Christ, that, without it, all other good gifts of knowledge, be they ever so great, cannot greatly profit, but oftentimes do very much hurt. And would to God that all things, in all places, were so free from all kind of dissension, that there were no mention made amongst Christians of Zuinglians and Lutherans, when neither Zuinglius nor Luther died for us; but that we might be all one in Christ. Neither do I think that any thing more grievous could happen unto those worthy men, than for their names so to be abused to sects and factions, who so greatly withstood and strove against all factions. Neither do I here discourse which part came nearest unto the truth, nor so rashly intermeddle in this matter, that I will detract any thing from either part, but rather wish of God I might join either part unto the other.

But now, forasmuch as we treat of the story of John Frith, I cannot choose, but must needs earnestly and heartily embrace the prudent and godly moderation which was in that man, who, maintaining his quarrel of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, no less godly than learnedly (and so as no man in a manner had done it more learnedly and pithily), yet he did it so moderately, without any contention, that he would never seem to strive against the Papists, except he had been driven to it even of necessity. In all other matters, where necessity did not move him to contend, he was ready to grant all things for quietness' sake, as his most modest reason and an-

swers did declare. For when More, disputing in a certain place upon the sacrament, laid against him the authority of doctor Barnes, for the presence of the body and blood in the sacrament, he answered unto More and his companions, that he would promise under this condition, that if the sentence of Luther and Barnes might be holden as ratified, he would never speak more words of it:¹ for in that point they did both agree with him, that the sacrament was not to be worshipped; and that idolatry being taken away, he was content to permit every man to judge of the sacrament, as God should put into their hearts: for then there remained no more poison, that any man ought or might be afraid of. Wherefore, if they did agree in that which was the chief point of the sacrament, they should easily accord and agree in the rest.

Thus much he wrote, in the treatise entitled “The Exile,” of Barnes against More; which words of this most meek martyr of Christ, if they would take place in the seditious divisions and factions of these our days, with great ease and little labour men might be brought to a unity in this controversy; and much more concord and love should be in the Church, and much less offence given abroad than there is.

But² I know not what cruel pestiferous fury hath secretly intermeddled herself in these matters, so corrupt in all things, that there is almost none so light a cause or occasion wherein one man can bear with another, if he dissent or disagree from his opinion. And while every man doth seek, even by the teeth, to defend his own quarrel, many men would rather seek to give occasion, than, in any case, seek to relent or remit. There are also some, who will seek to assuage the matter, but others will willingly take the bellows in hand to blow the fire, and but few there are that will seek to quench it. But if we had but a few like this John Frith, these factions, peradventure, would easily be accorded, or at least if the opinions could not be agreed, their minds, notwithstanding, might be united and joined. Albeit I do not think their opinions to be of so great force and effect that they should seem to be worthy of all these tragedies, for so much as they do not of necessity touch either the damnation or salvation of souls: and again, they are not so far discrepant amongst themselves, but that they may by reason be reconciled, so that there be some temperature of Frith’s moderation adhibited thereunto, which may something impetrate and obtain on their part.

Those who judge the reason of the sacrament to be spiritually understood, do think well, and, peradventure, do draw near to Christ’s mind and institution; but, notwithstanding, they be never a whit better men than they, who, following the letter together with them, do take away the superfluity

¹ John Frith, speaking according to that time, showed the opinion of Luther might be received.

² See Edition 1563, pp 500, 501.—ED.

of the ceremonies. They do take away transubstantiation from the sacrament; the like do the others also. They take away the sacrifice of the private mass; the same also do the others. These men put away all false worshiping; the others also do not suffer it, but both parts do affirm the presence of Christ in the mystical supper. Hitherto they both have agreed in these articles: what cause is there then of discord, when they both, as I said, do confess the presence of Christ, and disagree only upon the manner of the presence, which the one part do affirm to be real, and the other spiritual? But how much were it better, in my opinion, if that, by a common consent of either party, they would come to this point; that every man being contented with his own opinion, we should all simply agree upon the presence of Christ, that, even thus, as touching the manner of his presence, all manner of disputation should cease for a time, and so, by little and little, all controversies be turned into truce and quietness; until that time should breed more love and charity amongst men, or that love and charity should find a remedy for these controversies.

But this shall now suffice for this present, being more than I was determined to speak; and, brought hither by occasion of John Frith, I know not myself by what wind or weather, and peradventure somewhat too far passed into the German seas, now, casting the helm about, we will hold our course which we had begun, into England, and treat of the death and examination of John Frith.

John Frith, after he had now sufficiently contended in his writings with More, Rochester, and Rastal, More's son-in-law, was at last carried to Lambeth, first before the bishop of Canterbury, and afterwards unto Croydon, before the bishop of Winchester, to plead his cause. Last of all, he was called before the bishops, in a common assembly at London, where he constantly defended himself, if he might have been heard.

The order of his judgment, with the manner of his examination and the articles which were objected against him, are comprised and set forth by himself in a letter written and sent unto his friends, whilst he was prisoner in the Tower.

A Letter¹ of John Frith to his Friends, concerning his Troubles; wherein, after he had first with a brief preface saluted them, entering then into the matter, thus he writeth:—

¹ This letter is to be seen in the end of that excellent and worthy work which he made in the Tower, concerning the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. [The title of this letter is. 'A Boke made by Johan Fryth, prysonner in the Tour of London, answering unto M. Mores letter against the treatyse Johan Fryth made concerning the sacrament, &c. printed at London by Anthony Scoloker, 1548; and afterwards by R. Jugge, 8vo. 1548. Ames' Typographical Antiquities, by Dibdin, vol. iv. p. 197.—ED.]

I doubt not, dear brethren, but that it doth some deal vex you, to see the one part to have all the words, and freely to speak what they list, and the others to be put to silence, and not be heard indifferently. But refer your matters unto God, who shortly shall judge after another fashion. In the mean time I have written unto you, as briefly as I may, what articles were objected against me, and what were the principal points of my condemnation, that ye might understand the matter certainly.

The whole matter of this my examination was comprehended in two special articles, that is to say, Of Purgatory, and Of the substance of the Sacrament.

And first of all, as touching purgatory, they inquired of me whether I did believe there was any place to purge the spots and filth of the soul after this life? But I said, that I thought there was no such place: for man, (said I) doth consist and is made only of two parts, that is to say, of the body and the soul, whereof the one is purged here in this world, by the cross of Christ, which he layeth upon every child that he receiveth; as affliction, worldly oppression, persecution, imprisonment, &c. The last of all, the reward of sin, which is death, is laid upon us: but the soul is purged with the word of God, which we receive through faith, to the salvation both of body and soul. Now if ye can show me a third part of man besides the body and the soul, I will also grant unto you the third place, which ye do call purgatory. But because ye cannot do this, I must also of necessity deny unto you the bishop of Rome's purgatory. Nevertheless I count neither part a necessary article of our faith, to be believed under pain of damnation, whether there be such a purgatory or no.

Secondly, They examined me touching the sacrament of the altar, whether it was the very body of Christ or no?

I answered, that I thought it was both Christ's body and also our body, as St. Paul teacheth us in 1 Cor. x. For in that it is made one bread of many corns, it is called our body, which, being divers and many members, are associated and gathered together into one fellowship or body. Likewise of the wine, which is gathered of many clusters of grapes, and is made into one liquor. But the same bread again, in that it is broken, is the body of Christ; declaring his body to be broken and delivered unto death, to redeem us from our iniquities.

Furthermore, in that the sacrament is distributed, it is Christ's body, signifying that as verily as the sacrament is distributed unto us, so verily are Christ's body and the fruit of his passion distributed unto all faithful people.

In that it is received, it is Christ's body, signifying that as verily as the outward man receiveth the sacrament with his teeth and mouth, so verily doth the inward man, through faith, receive Christ's body and the fruit of his passion, and is as sure of it as of the bread which he eateth.

Well (said they) dost thou not think that his very natural body, flesh, blood, and bone, is really contained under the sacrament, and there present without all figure or similitude? No (said I), I do not so think: notwithstanding I would not that any should count, that I make my saying (which is the negative) any article of faith. For even as I say, that you ought not to make any necessary article of the faith of your part (which is the affirmative), so I say again, that we make no necessary article of the faith of our part, but leave it indifferent for all men to judge therein, as God shall open their hearts, and no side to condemn or despise the other, but to nourish in all things brotherly love; and one to bear another's infirmity.

After this they alleged the place of St. Augustine, where he saith, 'He was carried in his own hands.'¹

Whereunto I answered, that St. Augustine was a plain interpreter of himself; for he hath in another place, 'He was carried as it wherein his own hands:'² which is a phrase of speech not of one that doth simply affirm, but only of one expressing a thing by a similitude. And albeit that St. Augustine had not thus expounded himself, yet, writing unto Boniface, he doth plainly admonish all men, that the sacraments do represent and signify those things whereof they are sacraments, and many times even of the similitudes of the things themselves, they do take their names. And therefore, according to this rule, it maybe said, he was borne in his own hands, when he bare in his hands the sacrament of his body and blood.

Then they alleged a place of Chrysostome, which, at the first blush, may seem to make much for them, who, in a certain Homily upon the Supper, writeth thus: 'Dost thou see bread and wine? Do they depart from thee into the draught, as other meats do? No, God forbid! for as in wax, when it cometh to the fire, nothing of the substance remaineth or abideth; so likewise think that the mysteries are consumed by the substance of the body,' &c.

These words I expounded by the words of the same doctor, who, in another Homily, saith on this manner; 'The inward eyes,' saith he, 'as soon as they see the bread, they flee over all creatures, and do not think of the bread that is baked by the baker, but of the bread of everlasting life, which is signified by the mystical bread.' Now confer these places together, and you shall perceive that the last expoundeth the first plainly. For he saith, Dost thou see the bread and wine? I answer by the second, Nay. For the inward eyes, as soon as they see the bread, do pass over all creatures, and do not any longer think upon the bread, but upon him that is signified by the bread. And after this manner he seeth it, and again he seeth it not: for as he seeth it with his outward and carnal eyes, so with his inward eyes he seeth it not; that is to say, regardeth not the bread, or thinketh not upon it, but is otherwise occupied. Even as when we play or do any thing else negligently, we commonly are wont to say, we see not what we do; not that indeed we do not see that which we go about, but because our mind is fixed on some other thing, and doth not attend unto that which the eyes do see.

In like manner may it be answered unto that which followeth; 'Do they avoid from thee,' saith he, 'into the draught as other meats do?' I will not so say, for other meats, passing through the bowels, after they have of themselves given nourishment unto the body, be voided into the draught: but this is a spiritual meat, which is received by faith, and nourisheth both body and soul unto everlasting life, neither is it at any time avoided as other meats are.

And as before I said that the external eyes do behold the bread, which the inward eyes, being otherwise occupied, do not behold or think upon, even so our outward man doth digest the bread, and void it into the draught; but the inward man doth neither regard nor think upon it, but thinketh upon the thing itself that is signified by that bread. And therefore Chrysostome,³ a little before the words which they alleged, saith; 'Lift up your minds and hearts whereby he admonisheth us to look upon and consider

¹ 'Ferabatur in manibus propriis.'

² 'Ferabatur tanquam in manibus suis.'

³ The argument from Chrysostome: the belly of man cannot avoid any part of Christ's body: the belly of man avoideth some part of every thing that the mouth receiveth: ergo, the mouth of man receiveth not the body of Christ.

those heavenly things which are represented and signified by the bread and wine, and not to mark the bread and wine itself.

Here they said, that was not Chrysostome's mind; but that by this example he declareth that there remained no bread nor wine. I answered, that was false: for the example that he taketh tendeth to no other purpose, but to call away our spiritual eyes from the beholding of visible things, and to transport them another way, as if the things which are seen were of no force. Therefore he draweth away our mind from the consideration of these things, and fixeth it upon him who is signified unto us by the same. The very words which follow, sufficiently declare this to be the true meaning of the author, where he commandeth us to consider all things with our inward eyes; that is to say, spiritually.

But whether Chrysostome's words do tend either to this or that sense, yet do they indifferently make on our part against our adversaries, which way soever we do understand them. For if he thought that the bread and wine do remain, we have no further to travel: but if he meant contrariwise, that they do not remain, but that the natures of the bread and wine are altered, then are the bread and wine falsely named sacraments and mysteries, which can be said in no place to be in the nature of things: for that which is in no place, how can it be a sacrament, or supply the room of a mystery? Finally, if he speak only of the outward forms and shapes (as we call them), it is most certain that they do continually remain, and that by the substance of the body they are not consumed in any place: wherefore it must necessarily follow that the words of Chrysostome be to be understood in such sense as I have declared.

Here peradventure many would marvel,¹ that forasmuch as the matter touching the substance of the sacrament, is separate from the articles of faith, and bindeth no man of necessity either unto salvation or damnation, whether he believe it or not, but rather may be left indifferently unto all men, freely to judge either on the one part or on the other, according to his own mind, so that neither part do condemn or despise the other, but that all love and charity be still holden and kept in this dissension of opinions: what then is the cause, why I would therefore so willingly suffer death? The cause why I die is this: for that I cannot agree with the divines and other head prelates, that it should be necessarily determined to be an article of faith, and that we should believe, under pain of damnation, the substance of the bread and wine to be changed into the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the form and shape only not being changed. Which thing if it were most true (as they shall never be able to prove it by any authority of the Scripture or doctors), yet shall they not so bring to pass, that that doctrine, were it ever so true, should be holden for a necessary article of faith. For there are many things, both in the Scriptures and other places, which we are not bound of necessity to believe as an article of faith. So it is true, that I was a prisoner and in bonds when I wrote these things, and yet, for all that, I will not hold it as an article of faith,² but that you may, without danger of damnation, either believe it, or think the contrary.

But as touching the cause why I cannot affirm the doctrine of transubstantiation, divers reasons do lead me thereunto: first, for that I do plainly see it to be false and vain, and not to be grounded upon any reason, either of the Scriptures, or of approved

¹ A question is here asked, with the cause declared, why that, seeing the matter of the sacrament itself importeth neither salvation nor damnation, Frith offereth himself to death for the same?

² This is to be weighed with the time when Frith wrote.

doctors. Secondly, for that by my example I would not be an author unto Christians to admit any thing as a matter of faith, more than the necessary points of their creed, wherein the whole sum of our salvation doth consist, especially such things, the belief whereof hath no certain argument of authority or reason. I added moreover, that their church (as they call it) hath no such power and authority, that it either ought or may bind us, under the peril of our souls, to the believing of any such articles. Thirdly, because I will not, for the favour of our divines or priests, be prejudicial in this point unto so many nations, of Germans, Helvetians, and others, which, altogether rejecting the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, are all of the same opinion that I am, as well those that take Luther's part, as those that hold with Œcolampadius. Which things standing in this case, I suppose there is no man of any upright conscience, who will not allow the reason of my death, which I am put unto for this only cause, that I do not think transubstantiation, although it were true indeed, to be established for an article of faith.

And thus much hitherto as touching the articles and whole disputation of John Frith, which was done with all moderation and uprightness. But when no reason would prevail against the force and cruelty of these furious foes, on the 20th day of June, A.D. 1533, he was brought before the bishops of London, Winchester, and Lincoln, who, sitting in St. Paul's, on Friday the 20th day of June, ministered certain interrogatories upon the sacrament of the supper, and purgatory, unto the said Frith, as is above declared; to which when he had answered, and showed his mind in form and effect, as by his own words above doth appear, he afterwards subscribed to his answers with his own hand, in these words:¹ "I Frith, thus do think; and as I think, so have I said, written, taught, and affirmed, and in my books have published."

But when Frith by no means could be persuaded to recant these articles aforesaid, neither be brought to believe that the sacrament is an article of faith, but said, "Fiat judicium et justitia" he was condemned by the bishop of London to be burned, and sentence given against him; the tenor whereof here ensueth.

The Sentence given against John Frith.

In the name of God, Amen. We, John, by the permission of God, bishop of London, lawfully and rightly proceeding with all godly favour, by the authority and virtue of our office, against thee, John Frith, of our jurisdiction, before us personally here present, being accused and detected, and notoriously slandered of heresy; having heard, seen, and understood, and with diligent deliberation weighed, discussed, and considered, the merits of the cause, all things being observed which by us in this behalf, by order of law, ought to be observed, sitting in our judgment seat, the name of Christ being first called upon, and having God only before our eyes,² because by the acts enacted, propounded, and exhibited in this manner, and by thine own confession judicially made before us, we do find, that thou hast taught, holden, and affirmed, and

¹ 'Ego Frithus ita sentio, et quemadmodum sentio, ita dixi, scripsi, asserui, et affirmavi,' &c.

² As they had, which crucified Christ.

obstinately defended, divers errors and heresies, and damnable opinions, contrary to the doctrine and determination of the holy church, and especially against the reverend sacrament; and albeit that we, following the example of Christ, 'which would not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should convert and live,' have oftentimes gone about to correct thee, and by all lawful means that we could, and most wholesome admonitions that we did know, to reduce thee again to the true faith, and the unity of the universal catholic church, notwithstanding we have found thee obstinate and stiff-necked, willingly continuing in thy damnable opinions and heresies, and refusing to return again unto the true faith and unity of the holy mother church, and as the child of wickedness and darkness, so to have hardened thy heart, that thou wilt not understand the voice of thy shepherd, who, with a fatherly affection, doth seek after thee, nor wilt be allured with his godly and fatherly admonitions: We therefore, John, the bishop aforesaid, not willing that thou who art wicked, shouldest become more wicked, and infect the Lord's flock with thy heresy, which we are greatly afraid of, do judge thee, and definitively condemn thee, the said John Frith, thy demerits and faults being aggravated through thy damnable obstinacy, as guilty of most detestable heresies, and as an obstinate impenitent sinner, refusing penitently to return to the lap and unity of the holy mother church; and that thou hast been and art, by law, excommunicated, and do pronounce and declare thee to be an excommunicated person: Also we pronounce and declare thee to be a heretic, to be cast out from the church, and left unto the judgment of the secular power, and now presently so do leave thee unto the secular power, and their judgment; most earnestly requiring them, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, that this execution and punishment, worthily to be done upon thee, may be so moderated, that the rigour thereof be not too extreme, nor yet the gentleness too much mitigated, but that it may be to the salvation of thy soul, to the extirpation, terror, and conversion of heretics, to the unity of the catholic faith, by this our sentence definitive, or final decree, which we here promulgate in this form aforesaid.

This sentence thus read, the bishop of London directed his letter to sir Stephen Peacock, mayor of London, and the sheriffs of the same city, for the receiving of the aforesaid John Frith into their charge; who, being so delivered over unto them the 4th day of July, in the year aforesaid, was by them carried into Smithfield to be burned. And when he was tied unto the stake, there it sufficiently appeared with what constancy and courage he suffered death; for when the faggots and fire were put unto him, he willingly embraced the same; thereby declaring with what uprightness of mind he suffered his death for Christ's sake, and the true doctrine, whereof that day he gave, with his blood, a perfect and firm testimony. The wind made his death somewhat the longer, which bare away the flame from him unto his fellow that was tied to his back: but he had established his mind with such patience, God giving him strength, that even as though he had felt no pain in that long torment, he seemed rather to rejoice for his fellow, than to be careful for himself.

This truly is the power and strength of Christ, striving and vanquishing in his saints; Who sanctify us together with them, and direct us in all things to the glory of his holy name! Amen.

The day before the burning of these worthy men of God, the bishop of London certified king Henry VIII. of his worthy, yea, rather wolfish, proceeding against these men: the tenor whereof hereunder ensueth:

The Letter of John, Bishop of London, to certify the King of the
Condemnation of John Frith and Andrew Hewet.

Unto¹ the most noble prince and lord in Christ, our lord Henry the eighth, by the grace of God king of England and of France, and lord of Ireland, defender of the faith: John, by the permission of God, bishop of London, with all manner of reverence, honour, and subjection. Whereas we, in a certain business of inquisition of heresy against certain men, John Frith and Andrew Hewet, heretics, have judged and condemned either of them, as obstinate, impenitent, and incorrigible heretics, by our sentence definitive, and have delivered the said John and Andrew unto the honourable man, sir Stephen Peacock, mayor of your city of London, and John Martin, one of your sheriffs of the same city (being personally present with us in judgment, according to the order of the law); and therefore all and singular the premises so by us done, we notify and signify unto your highness, by these presents sealed with our seal.

Dated the third day of July, in the year of our Lord 1533, and in the third year of our consecration.

Andrew Hewet burned with Master Frith.

Andrew Hewet, born in Feversham, in the county of Kent, a young man of the age of four and twenty years, was apprentice with one Master Warren, a tailor in Watling-street. And as it happened that he went upon a holy-day into Fleet-street, towards St. Dunstan's, he met with one William Holt, who was foreman with the king's tailor, at that present called Master Malte; and being suspected by the same Holt, who was a dissembling wretch, to be one that favoured the gospel, after a little talk had with him, he went into an honest house about Fleet-bridge, which was a bookseller's house. Then Holt, thinking he had found good occasion to show forth some fruit of his wickedness, sent for certain officers, and searched the house, and finding the same Andrew, apprehended him, and carried him to the bishop's house, where he was cast into irons; and being there a good space, by the means of a certain honest man, he had a file conveyed unto him,² wherewith he filed off his irons, and when he spied his time, he got out of the gate. But being a man unskilful to hide himself, for lack of good acquaintance, he went into

¹ See Edition 1563, p. 505; where it is also given in Latin.—ED.

² The man that gave him this file was Valentine Freese, the painter's brother, who was afterwards, with his wife, burned in York.

Smithfield, and there met with one Withers, who was a hypocrite, as Holt was. This Withers, understanding how he had escaped, and that he knew not whither to go, pretending a fair countenance unto him, willed him to go with him, promising that he should be provided for; and so kept him in the country where he had to do, from Low-Sunday till Whitsuntide, and then brought him to London, to the house of one John Chapman in Hosier-lane beside Smithfield, and there left him for the space of two days.

Then he came to the said Chapman's house again, and brought Holt with him. And when they met with the said Andrew, they seemed as though they meant to do him very much good; and Holt, for his part, said that if he should bring any man in trouble (as the voice was that he had done the said Andrew), it were pity but that the earth should open and swallow him up: insomuch that they would needs sup there that night, and prepared meat of their own charges. At night they came, and brought certain guests with them, because they would have the matter to seem as though it had come out by others. When they had supped, they went their way, and Holt took out of his purse two groats, and gave them to the said Andrew, and embraced him in his arms. As they were gone out, there came in one John Tibauld, who was banished from his own house by an injunction, for he had been four times in prison for Christ's cause. And within an hour after that Holt and Withers were gone, the bishop's chancellor, and one called sergeant Weaver, came, and brought with them the watch, and searched the house, where they found the said John Chapman and the beforenamed Andrew, and John Tibauld, whom they bound with ropes which sergeant Weaver had brought with him, and so carried them to the bishop's house: but Andrew Hewet they sent unto the Lollards' tower, and kept Chapman and Tibauld asunder, watched by two priests' servants. The next day bishop Stokesley came from Fulham, and after they were examined with a few threatening words, Chapman was committed to the stocks, with this threat, that he should tell another tale, or else he should sit there till his heels did drop off, &c.: and Tibauld was shut up in a close chamber; but, by God's provision, he was well delivered out of prison, albeit he could not enjoy his house and land because of the bishop's injunction, but was fain to sell all that he had in Essex; for the tenor of his injunction was, that he should not come within seven miles of his own house. And the aforesaid Chapman, after five weeks' imprisonment (whereof three weeks he sat in the stocks), by much suit made unto the lord chancellor, who at that time was lord Audley, after many threatenings was delivered: but the said Andrew Hewet, after long and cruel imprisonment, was condemned to death, and burned with John Frith. The examination of Hewet here followeth.

On the 20th day of the month of April, Andrew Hewet was brought before the chancellor of the bishop of London, where was objected against

him, that he believed the sacrament of the altar, after the consecration, to be but a signification of the body of Christ, and that the host consecrated was not the very body of Christ. Now, forasmuch as this article seemed heinous unto them, they would do nothing in it without the consent of learned counsel: whereupon the bishop of London, associated with the bishops of Lincoln and Winchester, called him again before them; where, it being demanded of him what he thought as touching the sacrament of the last supper; he answered, "Even as John Frith doth." Then said one of the bishops unto him, "Dost thou not believe that it is really the body of Christ, born of the Virgin Mary?" "So," saith he, "do not I believe." "Why not?" said the bishop. "Because," said he, "Christ commanded me not to give credit rashly unto all men, who say, 'Behold, here is Christ, and there is Christ; for many false prophets shall rise up, saith the Lord.'"

Then certain of the bishops smiled at him; and Stokesley, the bishop of London, said, "Why, Frith is a heretic, and already judged to be burned; and except thou revoke thine opinion, thou shalt be burned also with him." "Truly," saith he, "I am content therewithal." Then the bishop asked him if he would forsake his opinions; whereunto he answered, that he would do as Frith did: whereupon he was sent unto the prison to Frith, and afterwards they were carried together to the fire. The bishops used many persuasions to allure this good man from the truth, to follow them: but he, manfully persisting in the truth, would not recant. Wherefore on the 4th day of July, in the afternoon, he was carried into Smithfield with Frith, and there burned.

When they were at the stake, one doctor Cook, a parson in London, openly admonished all the people, that they should in no wise pray for them, no more than they would do for a dog; at which words Frith, smiling, desired the Lord to forgive him. These words did not a little move the people unto anger, and not without good cause. Thus these two blessed martyrs committed their souls into the hands of God.