

# RAWLINS WHITE MARTYRED 1555

**R**AWLINS WHITE fished for many years in the town of Cardiff, a man who was well-liked by his neighbors. During the reign of King Henry VIII, he was a good Catholic, but when Edward VI came into power, White became a great searcher of the truth. He was a totally uneducated man, unable to read. So he sent his young son to school; and when the boy had learned to read, his father had him read the Bible and other books to him every evening.

White enjoyed studying Scripture so much that he soon gave up his fishing to travel from place to place and instruct others, taking his son everywhere with him. Although he never learned to read, White did have a remarkable memory and was able to cite from Scripture more accurately than many educated men. He soon became a well-known professor of the truth.

Five years after White began this work, Queen Mary took the throne. White gave up preaching openly, but continued to do so privately, bringing a great number of people to Christ. As the persecutions increased, his friends urged him to sell his goods, give the money to his wife and children, and go into hiding, but White refused to deny Christ.

The town's officers soon captured White, taking him to the Catholic Bishop of Llandaff, who imprisoned him in the castle of Cardiff for a whole year. Even though White knew he was doomed, and his family would suffer terribly when he was gone, he continued to preach to the friends who regularly visited him. At the end of this time, White was tried before the same bishop, who made a long speech explaining why White was being tried, to which he replied, "My lord, I thank God I am a Christian, and I hold no opinions against the Word of God. If I do, I want to be corrected by the Word of God, as a Christian should be."

After discussing the charges back and forth for some time, the bishop suggested they take time to pray that God would change White's mind. "Ah, now you're doing the right thing!" White exclaimed. "If your request is godly and lawful, and you pray as you

Winchester greeted Taylor in his usual manner, calling him a "traitor, heretic" and other names. "My lord," Taylor replied, "I am not a traitor or heretic, but a true subject and Christian. I came here at your command. Why did you send for me?"

"Are you come, villain? How do you dare look me in the face? Don't you know who I am?"

"Yes," answered Taylor, "I know who you are. You're Dr. Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, lord chancellor – but still a mortal man. If I should fear your lordly looks, why don't you fear God? How can you look any Christian in the face? You have forsaken the truth, denied our Saviour Jesus Christ and His word, and gone against your oaths. How will you look when you appear before the judgment sent of Christ and answer to the oaths you made to King Henry VIII and King Edward VI?"

"I did well in breaking those oaths and coming home again to our mother, the Catholic Church of Rome. I want you to do the same."

Taylor spent the next two years in prison, reading, preaching, and exhorting the great number of godly ministers that filled the country's prisons at that time. So many of them were locked up together that the jails began to resemble universities. This was an intense era of persecution for God's true sheep by the Roman Catholic regime headed by Queen Mary.

About the end of January 1555, Taylor and others were called before the bishops of Winchester, Norwich, London, Salisbury, and Durham and charged with heresy. Given the opportunity to submit to the Pope and confess their errors, they all refused. On February 4, 1555, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, came to the prison to strip Taylor of his church offices. Told to put on his vestments, Taylor refused, so he was dressed by force, in order that the ceremony might continue.

The next night, Taylor's wife and son were allowed to eat dinner with him, since the king's jailors tried to be as kind as possible, unlike the bishops. His wife suspected that he would be taken away that night, so she watched the prison until he and his guards appeared at 2:00 A.M. The sheriffs allowed them a few minutes together to say good-bye, and Taylor encouraged them all to stay firm in their faith. That night he

was taken to an inn named the Woolpack, where he stayed until the sheriff of Essex arrived at eleven the next morning. Taylor was put on a horse and led out of the inn's courtyard, where his servant, John Hull, and Taylor's son met them. Taylor was allowed to hold the boy, bless him, and say good-bye to his servant before being led off.

All the way, Taylor was joyful and happy, busily preaching to his guards seeking to convert them. In a few days, they arrived in Hadleigh, where Taylor was to be burned. The streets of the town were lined with townspeople crying and lamenting their pastor's fate. Taylor's head was hooded until they reached the common; he wasn't sure where he was until a guard told him. "Thanks be to God!" he exclaimed. "I'm home!" He was taken off his horse and unhooded.

When the people saw his ancient face and long white beard, they began calling out encouragement, but Taylor had promised not to speak – probably under the threat of having his tongue cut out. After he gave away his clothing, he looked up and said two sentences: "Good people, I have taught you nothing but God's Holy Word, and those lessons I took out of the Holy Bible. Today I come to seal it with my blood." He was promptly hit in the head by one of the guards.

After a time in private prayer, Taylor stepped into the pitch barrel, folded his hands in prayer, and stood against the stake. A man in the crowd hurled a piece of wood at him, hitting him in the head and bloodying his face. "O friend," Taylor said, "I have harm enough. What needed that?" Then he recited the fifty-first Psalm until Sir John Shelton hit him in the mouth. "Speak in Latin!" he demanded, "I will make you."

At last they kindled the fire; and Taylor holding up both his hands, calling upon God, said, "Merciful Father of heaven! for Jesus Christ my Saviour's sake, receive my soul into Thy hands!" So he stood still without either crying or moving, until one of the papists, with a halberd struck him on the head until his brains fell out, and his corpse fell into the fire.

Thus rendered up this man of God his blessed soul into the hands of his merciful Father, and to his dear Saviour Jesus Christ, whom he most entirely loved, faithfully and earnestly preached, obediently followed in life, and finally glorified in death. □

Catholicism to the town of Hadleigh. They hired John Averth, a money-grubbing, immoral man, to come to Hadleigh and reinstitute the mass. They hastily constructing an altar in the town's church; but it was torn down the following day. They rebuilt the altar, this time setting guards to protect it overnight. The next day Foster, Clerk, and Averth brought in all the necessary implements and garments for the mass, setting armed guards to prevent anyone from interfering.

Hearing the church bells ringing, Dr. Taylor assumed he was needed at his office, but found the church doors to be tightly locked. Gaining entrance through the chancel door, he saw Averth celebrating the mass, surrounded by guards with drawn swords.

"You devil!" Taylor shouted. "How do you dare enter this church of Christ and profane and defile it with this abominable idolatry?" Foster stood up. "You traitor! Why are you disturbing the queen's proceedings?" "I'm no traitor," Taylor called back. "I'm the shepherd of this flock, with every right to be here. I order you – you popish wolf – in the name of God, leave! Don't poison Christ's flock with your idolatry."

"Are you going to make a commotion and violently resist the queen's proceedings?" Foster demanded. "I'm not making a commotion. You papists do that. I only resist your idolatries, which are against God's Word and the queen's honor, and subvert the country. Furthermore, you're breaking the law that says no mass may be said at an unconsecrated altar."

When Averth heard that, he began to move away from the altar. John Clerk commanded him to continue the mass while Foster's guards forcibly led Taylor out of his church. Mrs. Taylor saw her husband being pushed out, fell to her knees, and said loudly, "I beg God, the righteous Judge, to avenge the injury this popish idolater does to the blood of Christ!" They threw her out, too, and locked the doors against the people who were gathering outside.

A day or two later, Foster and Clerk complained about Roland Taylor to Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester. When he was summoned to appear before the bishop, the townspeople begged Taylor to run away, knowing he was doomed if he went to London, but Taylor took his servant and obediently appeared before Winchester.

should, God will hear you. So go ahead. You pray to your God, and I'll pray to mine. I know my prayer will be answered." When they were done, the bishop said, "How do you stand? Will you revoke your opinions or not?" "Surely, my lord," White replied, "Rawlins you left me, and Rawlins you find me. By God's grace, Rawlins I will continue to be. Certainly, if your prayers had been just and lawful, God would have heard them, but you honor a false God and pray incorrectly, so God didn't answer your prayers. I'm only one poor, simple man, but God has heard my prayer and will strengthen me in His cause."

As the furious bishop was about to condemn White, someone suggested they have a mass, to see if that worked a miracle in the man. Rawlins White left to pray in private while they went about their mass, returning when he heard the elevation bell ring – the principle point in the mass's idolatry. "Good people," he cried to the congregation, "bear witness on the day of judgment that I did not bow to this idol" [the host].

White was condemned and returned to prison in the Castle of Cardiff – a dark, horrible place. He was brought to his execution wearing his wedding shirt, an old russet coat, and an old pair of leather pants. On the way to the stake, he met his weeping wife and children, the sight of them making him cry, too, until he hit his chest with his hand and said, "Flesh, you're in my way! You want to live? Well, I told you, do what you can, you won't win."

White went cheerfully to the stake, leaning against it for a while, then motioning to a friend in the crowd. "I feel my body fighting against my spirit and am afraid it will win. If you see me tempted, hold a finger up to me so I'll remember myself." As the smith chained him to the stake, White told him to tighten it well in case his body struggled with his soul.

They piled the straw and wood around White, and lit the fire. White held his hands in the flames until his sinews shrunk and the fat dropped away, only taking them out once to wipe his face. All the while he was suffering – which was longer than usual – he cried loudly, "O Lord, receive my spirit!" until he could no longer open his mouth. At last the fire consumed his legs, and his whole body fell over into the flames. Rawlins White died for testifying of God's truth, and is now rewarded with the crown of eternal life. □

## JOHN HOOPER MARTYRED 1555

**J**OHAN HOOPER was a graduate of the University of Oxford. He served as bishop under the reign of King Edward VI, always acting as Paul instructed bishops to act in his epistle to Timothy. He never looked for personal gain, only for the care and salvation of his flocks, giving away any money that came his way. Twice I [Foxye] saw Hooper's house filled with beggars and poor people who were eating at a table filled with meat, an event a servant told me took place every evening before Hooper sat down to eat his own dinner.

When King Edward died and Mary was crowned queen, Hooper was one of the first ordered to report to London and imprisoned. He remained there for eighteen months, gravely ill most of the time, forced to spend his own money to obtain food. On March 19, 1554, Hooper was called before the bishops of Winchester, London, Durham, Llandaff, and Chichester and deprived of his bishoprics. On January 22, 1555, the Bishop of Winchester called him in to demand he forsake his Protestant beliefs and accept the Pope as the head of the Church of England. If he did so, he would be pardoned. Hooper refused.

On January 28, Hooper appeared before Winchester and others and was given another chance to accept the Catholic Church. Again he refused. He was returned to Newgate Prison until February 4 when the Bishop of London stripped him of all church offices, and Hooper was transported to Gloucester to be burned.

On February 5, Hooper was brought to the stake. He was given packages of gunpowder by the guard, to hasten his death and lessen his suffering. These he put under his arms and between his legs. Three irons were brought to fasten him to the stake – one for his neck, one for his waist, one for his legs – but Hooper said they were not necessary. Just the one around his waist was used.

After Hooper forgave the man who made the fire, it was lit, but the fire builder had used green wood,

and even when it finally caught, the wind blew the flames away from Hooper. A second fire was lit, but it only burned low, not flaring up as it should have. When the fire was lit the third time, the gunpowder went off, but even that didn't do much good because of the wind.

Even when Hooper's mouth was black and his tongue swollen, his lips continued to move until they shrank to the gums. He knocked on his breast with his hands until one of his arms fell off. Then he knocked with the other – fat, water, and blood dropping off the ends of his fingers – until his hand stuck to the iron around his waist.

Hooper was in the fire for over forty-five minutes, suffering patiently even when the lower part of his body burned off and his intestines spilled out. He now reigns as a blessed martyr in the joys of heaven that are prepared for the faithful in Christ Jesus. □

***"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11)***

**T**hese stories are actual and historical accounts of Christian suffering taken from the famous *Foxye's Book of Martyrs*. Born in 1516, John Foxye of England, professor of Oxford University, wrote his book to document the persecution against Christ's Church by pagans and by those who called themselves Christians but were not. It's a book about God's grace and Christian faithfulness. First published in English in 1563, Foxye's book has endured for over four-hundred years as a memorial to the martyrs, and a legacy of inspiration and courage to the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Before he died in 1587, Foxye had the joy of seeing four large editions of his book published. The Council of Bishops ordered it placed in every cathedral church in England, and like the Bible, it was often chained to the pulpit.

Eventually there came a time, not only in England, but all over the English-speaking world, when a home wasn't considered to be Christian unless it openly displayed a Bible and *Foxye's Book of Martyrs*. Years later, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, published in 1678, had the honor of being included with those two books as basic and essential Christian reading. □

## 3 ENGLISH MARTYRS

***"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev 17:6)***

## ROWLAND TAYLOR MARTYRED 1555

**R**OLAND TAYLOR was pastor in the town of Hadleigh, in Suffolk, England. He was a man of eminent learning, a doctor of both civil and church law. Pastors in his day generally received a house and land to support themselves. Most of them, however, rented the land out to farmers and appointed an uneducated priest to serve the town, living elsewhere and not really helping the people in their care. But Roland Taylor lived in the town with his congregation, fulfilling the charge that Christ gave to Peter, "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." He took every opportunity to gather his people together and teach them the doctrine of salvation.

Taylor's whole life was a blessing to the town. He was an humble man, easily approachable by the poor who came to him for help. He never hesitated to correct the rich, either, as a good pastor should. He was always a gentle man, without rancor or ill-will, ready to do good unto all men, forgiving his enemies, and never sought to do evil to any. Anyone who was poor, blind, lame, sick, or had many children to support found Taylor to be a faithful provider, much like a father. He saw that his parish contributed generously to the poor among them, and made a generous contribution himself every year.

Taylor served the town of Hadleigh all the days of King Edward VI. But after Edward's death, Mary, a staunch Roman Catholic, took the throne of England, and the Catholics openly ignored the reformations made under Henry VIII and Edward. They overthrew the doctrine of the gospel, and persecuted everyone who refused to abandon Reformation teachings, and accept the Pope as head of the Church of England.

Soon a lawyer named Foster, an unskilled court steward, conspired with John Clerk to return Roman