

as he was dressed in the morning, he knelt in prayer for half an hour in his room. Then he would go to his study where he worked until ten o'clock, at which time he took part in the daily prayers that were held in his house by members of his parish. After a midday dinner, he would sometimes play chess for an hour, and then spend the rest of the afternoon in study. About five o'clock, he would have his supper, spend some time in prayer, then again refresh himself at chess for awhile, and return to his study until eleven, when he would bathe, and retire for the night.

At his manor in Fulham, he taught his family the Scriptures daily. He gave every member of his household who could read a copy of the New Testament. He was extremely careful to see that his family served as good examples of virtue and honesty. In short, he was so godly and virtuous himself that those qualities reigned in his whole household.

One example of the affectionate kindness he showed toward everyone was his treatment of old Mrs. Bonner, the mother of Dr. Bonner, who was the cruel bishop of London in the time of Queen Mary I. Whenever Dr. Ridley was at his residence in Fulham, he always invited Mrs. Bonner to his home for dinner and placed her at the head of his table, treating her like his own mother. He also displayed similar kindness to Bonner's sister and other relatives, and often entertained them with great courtesy and friendship. But when "Bloody Mary" came to power, this same Dr. Bonner became the man responsible for the deaths of many Protestants, including Ridley himself.

HUGH LATIMER MARTYR

HUGH LATIMER was born about 1485, the son of a wealthy farmer with a good reputation. At the age of four, he was sent to school and trained in literature; at fourteen, he entered Cambridge University where he continued in ordinary studies, and then concentrated on studying theology, the kind the ignorance of that age allowed, and was a zealous observer of the Roman Catholic superstitions of the time. He was ordained a priest in 1510.

Latimer was a bitter enemy of the Protestant re-

formers, but God was to intervene. It was surely God's grace that moved the Cambridge reformer, Thomas Bilney, who was burned at the stake for heresy in 1532, to go to Latimer's study and ask him to hear his confession. Latimer willingly agreed, thinking perhaps that Bilney might be returning to the Roman Catholic religion. But during the confession, Latimer was so affected by Bilney's faith in Christ that he began to question him about it, and, by the work of the Holy Spirit, was converted immediately to the true faith. He left his study of the Catholic doctors to learn the true knowledge of Christ.

In 1529 a number of friars and doctors of divinity from all the schools at Cambridge began to preach against Latimer and his new beliefs. Dr. West, Bishop of Ely, forbade him to preach in his church. Like a true disciple, Latimer spent the next three years working to convert his brothers at the university and the parishioners of his church, speaking Latin to the educated and English to the common people.

Latimer and Bilney stayed at Cambridge for some time, having many conversations together; the place they walked soon became known as Heretics' Hill. Both of them set a good Christian example by visiting prisoners, helping the needy, and feeding the hungry.

Some time later King Henry VIII made Latimer the Bishop of Worcester, where he served faithfully, although the dangerous times prevented him from doing everything he wanted to. He wasn't able to rid his diocese of its superstitions, but did what he could within the Catholic Church, helping his parishioners exclude as much superstition as possible from their lives and worship.

When the *Six Articles** were passed, Latimer voluntarily resigned his post. He then went to London for treatment for injuries that he received when a tree fell upon him, nearly killing him. While there he continued preaching, and was soon arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London. He remained there for eight years until Edward VI took the throne. On his release,

* In 1539, King Henry VIII, who had never adopted Protestant doctrines, instituted his *Six Articles Act*, which upheld the Catholic doctrines of transubstantiation, celibacy of priests, vows of chastity, private masses, confessions to a priest, and the needlessness of the laity to receive both the bread and wine in communion. The *Act* was repealed in 1547 when Edward VI became king.

Latimer now sixty-two years old, went back to work preaching twice every Sunday and often on weekdays, still suffering from the injuries he received from the falling tree.

It wasn't long after young King Edward died (of tuberculosis) in 1553 that Latimer was arrested on Queen Mary's command and thrown back into the Tower, where he suffered greatly. He later was transferred to Oxford, along with others, one being Bishop Ridley. While in prison, Latimer prayed about three main concerns, which would all be answered in time:

- Since God had appointed him a preacher, Latimer asked Him for the grace to stand to His doctrine until his death.
- He asked God to restore His gospel to England once again.
- He prayed for the accession of Elizabeth, asking God to make her a comfort to the comfortless realm of England.

RIDLEY AND LATIMER MARTYRED 1555

RIDLEY and **L**ATIMER appeared together on September 30, 1555 in Oxford before a panel of bishops to answer the charges of heresy that had been brought against them. Ridley was examined first. The Bishop of Lincoln began by urging Ridley to recant and submit himself to the Pope. "If you will renounce your errors, recant your heretical and seditious opinions, consent to yield yourself to the undoubted faith and truth of the gospel...authority is given to us to receive you, to reconcile you, and upon due penance to join you into Christ's Church." The bishop stressed three points:

- That the Pope was descended from Peter, who was the foundation of the Church.
- That the early Church fathers confessed the Pope's supremacy in their writings.
- That Ridley once believed this himself.

Ridley replied to the three points. First, he said, it was not Peter who was the Church's foundation, but Peter's confession that Christ was the Son of God. This belief is the foundation of the Church, not a mere man. Secondly, he said, the Bishop of Rome was supreme in the early Church because the city of Rome

was supreme in the world of that day, not because he had any more religious power than other bishops. As long as the diocese of Rome was true to the gospel, its bishop deserved respect from everyone in the Church; but as soon as they began setting themselves above kings and emperors for their own honor, the bishops of Rome became anti-Christian. To the last point, Ridley admitted he did once believe as they did, just as Paul was once a persecutor of Christ.

The Bishop of Lincoln cut Ridley short, reminding him of the panel's power to either accept him back into the Church or excommunicate him. Anything they did would receive the support of the queen, who was a faithful member of the Roman Catholic Church. The following articles were then put forward against him (and Latimer):

- He maintained that the true body of Christ was not present in the bread and wine.
- He taught that the bread and wine remained bread and wine after consecration.
- He believed that the mass is not a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead.

Ridley was asked to reply to the charges with simple yes or no answers and was promised that he could amend his answers the next day, when he'd had more time to think about them.

To the first charge, he said that Christ's body and blood were present spiritually in the bread and wine, but not physically. To the second, he replied that the bread and wine remain bread and wine after consecration. To the third, he said that Christ made one perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Communion was an acceptable sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but saying it removed man's sins implied that Christ's work was not enough.

Ridley was dismissed until the following day and Latimer was brought in. As with Ridley, the bishop urged Latimer to give up his beliefs and rejoin the Roman Catholic Church. He was then asked to reply to the same charges as Ridley.

"I do not deny," he said in answer to the first charge, "that in the sacrament, by spirit and grace, is the very body and blood of Christ. Every man receiving the bread or wine spiritually receives the body and blood of Christ. But I deny that the body and blood of Christ is in the sacrament the way you say it is." To

the second, he replied, “There is a change in the bread and wine, and yet the bread is still bread and the wine is still wine.” On whether the mass is a sacrifice for sins, Latimer replied, “No. Christ made one perfect sacrifice. No one can offer Him up again. Neither can the priest offer Him for the sins of man, which He took away by offering Himself once for all upon the cross. There is no propitiation for our sins except the cross.” Latimer was also dismissed until eight o’clock the next morning.

In the morning Ridley arrived with his answers to the charges written out, asking permission to read them to the crowd that filled St. Mary’s Church. But he was forced to turn his papers over to the bishops first, and they declared them heretical, refusing to read them aloud. In return, Ridley refused to answer their questions. He was condemned as a heretic and turned over to the secular authorities for punishment.

Latimer was brought in. He agreed to answer the panel’s charges again, but his answers were the same as the day before and he refused to recant. He was also condemned and turned over to the authorities.

On the morning of October 15 the Bishop of Gloucester (Dr. Brooks) and the vice-chancellor of Oxford (Dr. Marshall), along with others from the university, arrived at Mayor Irish’s house, where Ridley was being held a prisoner. Ridley was given the opportunity to rejoin the Catholic Church. When he refused, they forced him to go through the ceremony expelling him from the priesthood. The ceremony over, Ridley read a petition to the queen asking that she help his sister and brother-in-law and others who had depended on him for their support. Dr. Brooks promised to forward the petition to the queen, but doubted she would honor it.

That night Ridley’s beard and legs were washed. At supper he invited everyone in the mayor’s house to his burning, as well as his sister and brother. When the mayor’s wife began to cry, he comforted her by saying, “Quiet yourself. Though my breakfast will be somewhat sharp and painful, I’m sure my supper will be pleasant and sweet.”

Ridley and Latimer were to be burned on the north side of Oxford, in a ditch by Baliol College, well guarded by the queen’s orders. When everything was ready, they were brought out by the mayor and bail-

iffs. Ridley wore a furred black gown, velvet night-cap, and a new long shroud hanging down to his feet.

As they walked to the place of execution, Ridley held up both his hands toward heaven. When he saw how cheerful Latimer was, he hurried to his side, embraced him, and kissed him, saying, “But of good cheer, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame or else strengthen us to bear it.” With that he went to the stake, knelt next to it, kissed it, and prayed fervently. Behind him, Latimer also knelt and prayed, calling upon God for them both. They then cheerfully gave away their clothing and other items they possessed.

The executioner then circled Ridley and Latimer with a chain and fastened it to the stake. As he nailed in a staple, Ridley took the chain in his hand and said, “Good fellow, knock it in hard, for the flesh will have its way.” Then his brother brought a bag to tie around his neck. Ridley asked what it was. He said, “Gunpowder.” “Then,” said Ridley, “I take it to be sent of God, therefore I will receive it as being from God. And do you have some for my brother?” Told he did, Ridley sent him to Latimer before it was too late.

When the wood and kindling was piled around them both, they brought a torch and laid it at Ridley’s feet. When Latimer saw it, he said, “Be of good cheer, Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day, by God’s grace, light such a candle in England, as I trust shall never be put out.” When Ridley saw the flames leap up, he cried with a wonderful loud voice, “Lord, Lord, receive my spirit!” Latimer cried as vehemently, “O Father of heaven, receive my soul!”

The fire burned more on Latimer’s side. He received the flames as if embracing them, and was dead after only a short time. But Ridley suffered much longer because the fire did not flare up on his side of the stake, and he called out to them, asking them to let the fire come to him. His brother-in-law, misunderstanding the problem, covered Ridley with even more wood, which made the fire burn stronger on the bottom but kept it from flaring up as it should have. It burned all of Ridley’s lower parts before ever touching his upper body. Even after his legs were consumed, his shirt was still untouched by the flames.

Ridley suffered in terrible pain until one of the guards realized what was happening to him and used

the hook at the blade of his halberd to pull off the wood that was smothering the flames. When Ridley saw the fire flame up, he leaned toward it until the gunpowder exploded. He moved no more after that, falling down at Latimer’s feet. The sight of Ridley and Latimer’s struggle moved hundreds in the crowd to tears, seeing years of study and knowledge, all the godly virtues, and so much dignity and honor – all consumed in one moment.

Well, dead they are, and the world gave them its reward for their work. But the reward they have in heaven will be declared on the day of the Lord’s glory when He comes with all His saints.☐

“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)

These stories are actual and historical accounts of Christian suffering taken from the famous *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*. Born in 1516, John Foxe 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, Foxe’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, Foxe 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 *Foxe’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.☐

2 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)

NICHOLAS RIDLEY MARTYR

NICHOLAS RIDLEY was among those martyred for the true gospel of Christ in Queen Mary’s time. Born in Northumberland, Ridley learned his grammar as a child in Newcastle and attended Cambridge University, where he soon became well-known for his intelligence, and advanced rapidly, becoming a Doctor of Divinity and the head of Pembroke Hall. After that, he traveled to Paris, was made Henry VIII’s chaplain on his return, and appointed Bishop of Rochester by the king. In King Edward’s days he served as the Bishop of London.

People flocked to the church to listen to his sermons, swarming about him like bees to honey, coveting the sweet flowers and wholesome nectar of the doctrines of Christ that he not only preached but demonstrated by his life. He was a bright light to the blind, a heavenly trumpet to the deaf, and a holy voice to lost sinners. He lived and ministered in such purity that not even his enemies could reprove him in the least. Intelligent, wise, artful in dealing with others, Dr. Ridley was such a good, godly, and spiritual man that England may rightly mourn the day that such a treasure was lost.

Ridley was an attractive man who never held a grudge and always forgave any injury done to him. He was kind and affectionate to his relatives but expected as much from them in their daily lives as he did from any other parishioner. Any family member doing evil could expect no special treatment from Ridley; those who lived honest, godly lives were his brothers and sisters, no matter who they were. He was merciful and careful when dealing with Catholics during the reign of King Edward VI, winning many of them over through his gentle teaching.

Ridley lived a well-regulated, strict life. As soon