

**MEMORIALS OF BAPTIST
MARTYRS;
WITH A PRELIMINARY
HISTORICAL ESSAY**

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Memorials of Baptist Martyrs; With a Preliminary Historical Essay by J. Newton Brown

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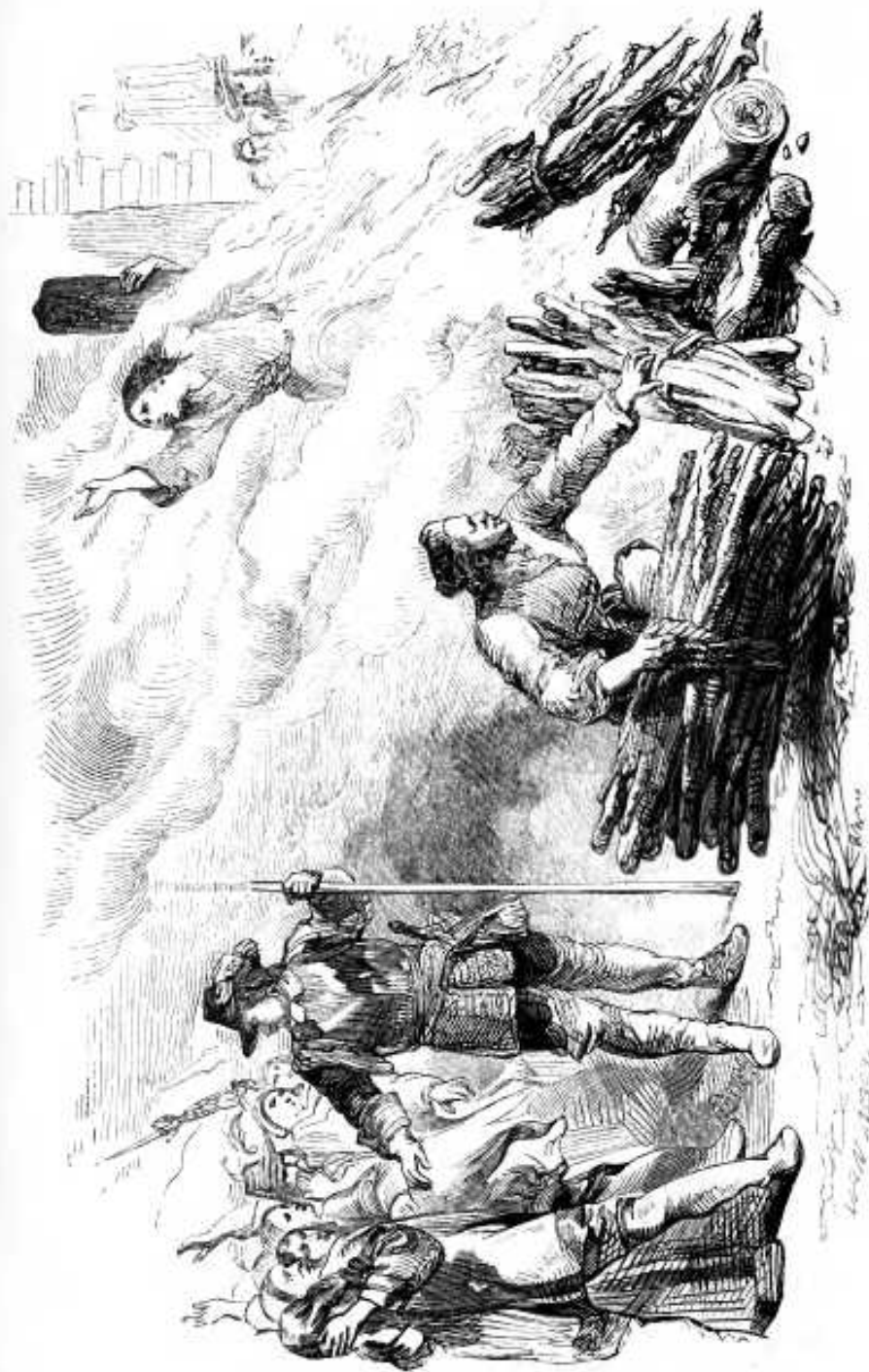
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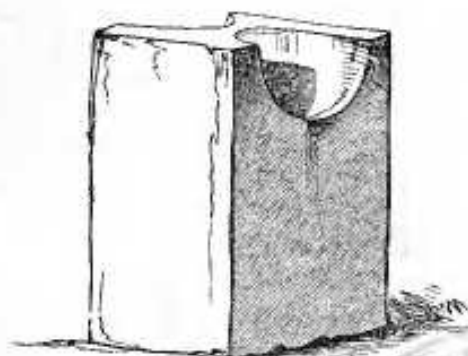
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Burning of Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt.

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PRELIMINARY HISTORICAL ESSAY.

BY J. NEWTON BROWN.

A MARTYR is a witness—a witness for God, for Truth and Righteousness—a witness tried both by action and by suffering, and found faithful to his conscience and to Christ, through every trial. Such, at least, are those who, by the grace of God, are entitled to the name of Christian martyrs. "To you it is *given*," says Paul to the Philippians, "in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to *suffer* for his sake."

By usage, however, this title, which belongs to faithful Christians in general, has come in modern times to be restricted to those who suffer *unto death*. Hence, in our English Bible, the only three examples where the term occurs are of this kind:—Stephen of Jerusalem, Antipas of Pergamos, and the prophetic roll of the "martyrs of Jesus," with whose blood the mystic "Babylon" is drunken. Acts 22: 20. Rev. 2: 13. 17: 6.

Martyrdom, in this restricted sense, may be said to have begun with the first generation of fallen man. Then in the world's fresh morning, the blood of righteous Abel, shed by a brother's hand, cried unto God from the crimsoned earth. The first revealed "heir of the righteousness which is by faith," was thus a martyr—a Christian martyr—typically, but truly—like John the Baptist in later time, bearing witness unto death to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

But it is manifest that the testimony of the true martyr must vary *in degree*, though not in kind, *with the measure of Divine Revelation* in different ages, and under different dispensations. Hence, the martyr from the time of Noah to Abraham might die as a witness to the *new* truth revealed to Noah; and from Abraham to Moses for the *new* revelation to Abraham; and from Moses to Christ for the *new* revelation to Moses, or to any one of the successive prophets, by whose anointed lips, "God, in time past spake unto the fathers." The martyrs down to the time of the Maccabees, are examples cited by Paul. Heb. 11 : 35-38.

On the same principle, it is equally clear that, after the coming of Christ, every faithful martyr was liable to suffer *for the new revelations and institutions introduced by Him*; whether in person, or through his Apostles, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (John 15 : 18-27. 16 : 1-4. 12-15.) Of this, Christians, from the beginning, were fully forewarned, and especially Christian ministers, (Matt. 5 : 10-12. 10 : 16-42. 16 : 21-28.) and appropriate cautions, counsels, and consolations were provided for their guidance and support.

It behooves us, therefore, to examine carefully *what those new revelations and institutions are*, belonging especially to the New Testament dispensation, and binding upon the conscience of every disciple of Christ, "even unto the end of the world." For it is not every *sufferer* that is a martyr—*though he may be a Christian*; for it is possible that even a Christian may suffer for his own faults, and not for righteousness' sake, or for Christ's sake, (1 Peter 4 : 15-16.) A single fault in the temper and tongue of the meekest of men, shut him out of Canaan. Moses, the noblest witness for God in his time, yet died for his own fault—a warning to every succeeding generation of God's witnesses. Still more striking is the case of the

young prophet at Bethel; who died for disobeying the plain command of God, through what might be thought a becoming deference to the authority of a "father" in Israel—a warning too little heeded by those who followed "the traditions of the elders" in after times, and the authority of "the early fathers" in the Christian Church. (1 Kings 13: 20–24.) In like manner, Paul in reproving the Corinthians for their abuse of the Lord's supper, says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (1 Cor. 11: 30).

Nor is it every one that *suffers in a true and righteous cause*, though he may die with indomitable courage, that wins the crown of martyrdom; for "though I *give* my body to be burned," says the Apostle, "and have not charity, (*i.e.*, love), it profiteth me nothing." Thousands also have been slaughtered for their connection with Christianity, like the infants of Bethlehem, who were rather *victims to cruelty* than martyrs for *Truth*.

Much less, even in the judgment of charity, are they to be justly regarded as Christian *martyrs*, who die in the diffusion and defence of *antichristian errors*. We grant that this distinction may be, and has been sadly abused for many hundreds of years, by many pretentious parties in Christendom; still within proper limits, and with due allowance for all Christian freedom of thought, it is a sound one, and must not be ignored. The opposite opinion—however disguised under the name of *liberality*—involves absolute contradiction. Though often grievously misapplied, therefore, the old maxim is essentially true, "There are no martyrs out of the Church." But then the Church is no narrow sectarian organization, no self-assumed infallible patron of orthodoxy, no State Establishment, whether episcopal, presbyterial, or congregational; but *the universal body of evangelical believers*

of every age — the body which recognizes and adores Jesus Christ as "God manifested in the flesh," "the propitiation for our sins," and the unchanging "head of all principality and power."

It may be well to state explicitly what we conceive to be the essential and invariable elements of true EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY. There may be others, but the four following we regard as both fundamental and vital. THE SCRIPTURES ONLY, AS THE SUPREME RULE OF FAITH; FREE JUSTIFICATION IN CHRIST ONLY THROUGH FAITH; SPIRITUAL REGENERATION ONLY, AS THE ORIGIN OF FAITH; PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION ONLY, MANIFESTED BY GOOD WORKS, AS THE EFFECT AND EVIDENCE OF FAITH. These propositions are logically and inseparably linked together, and constitute one self-consistent organic system of revealed Truth. This system is "the Gospel of Christ." No other can be substituted for it. It bears on its front the stamp and seal of the Almighty. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And of this it is the Apostle says to the Galatians, "If we, or an angel from Heaven, preach unto you any other Gospel, let him be accursed." The man who intelligently and honestly believes this—lives for it, and dies for it—wherever found, or whatever name he bears, is worthy to be esteemed by all mankind, as he is by Christ himself, a "faithful martyr."

But we go farther. The above formulas of fundamental truth do not exhaust the distinctive principles of a PURE CHRISTIANITY. There are others that belong to *the institutions of Christ*, under the New Testament economy. Such, for example, are the following. UNIVERSAL FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE ONLY AS A CONDITION OF FAITH; BAPTISM ONLY ON A CONSCIENTIOUS PROFESSION OF FAITH; IMMERSION ONLY, AS THE PRESCRIBED BAPTISM OF FAITH; BAPTIZED BE-