

## Woodcut photos from John Foxe's 1596 Book of Martyrs.

Second only to the Bible and Book of Common Prayer, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, known as the *Book of Martyrs*, was the most influential book published in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most complex and best-illustrated English book of its time, it recounted in detail the experiences of hundreds of people who were burnt alive for their religious beliefs.

### John Foxe (1516-1587)

#### *Actes and Monuments*

Mary Tudor's attempt to restore the Roman Catholic Church in England during her five-year reign (1553-1558) may have enjoyed widespread sympathy in some parts of the country but was doomed by her early death and the accession of her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth. Though Elizabeth's return to Protestantism showed little of the intense zeal of her brother Edward's reign (1547-1553), reformers under her, many of whom returned from Marian exile, were highly successful in shaping a lasting picture of "Bloody Mary" and her Church, a picture which played an important part in making and keeping England a Protestant nation.

John Foxe was born at Boston in Lincolnshire, England, in 1516, and was educated at Magdalen School and College, Oxford. He joined the more extreme Reformers early in life and under Edward VI acted as tutor to the children of the recently beheaded Earl of Surrey. In Mary's reign he fled to Germany and joined the exiles at Frankfort. In the controversy which arose there he took sides with Knox and the extremists and after the break up of the Frankfort colony he went to Basle where poverty compelled him to take service with the Protestant printer Oporinus. In 1559 he returned to England and entered the ministry; he was helped by his old pupil the Duke of Norfolk and was mainly occupied with his martyrology. He still belonged to the extremists and objected to the surplice. His opinions interfered with his prospects, but he was not an ambitious man. Though violent and dishonest in controversy, he was personally of a kind and charitable temper. Besides his "Acts and Monuments" he published a number of sermons, translations, and controversial attacks on Catholicism. He died in 1587.

The book now known as "Foxe's Book of Martyrs" was the most important and popular of these Elizabethan accounts. It profoundly shaped the history and meaning of English Protestantism—and indeed provoked its Catholic adversaries like Giovanni Battista Cavalleri and Richard Verstegan to produce their own "martyr books" in response. Though much less well known today than it once was, Foxe's book was one of the key texts through which popular Protestantism in England recognized itself and its heritage. The popular name is at once accurate and misleading: it tells us a great deal about the ways the book came to be circulated and used, yet it also conceals some important things, in particular the collaborative character of the book's production, and its larger intellectual intentions in displaying the English Church.

Deriving from two earlier Latin prototypes published outside England, the first English version of the book was published by its author, John Foxe, in 1563. He titled it *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, touching Matters of the*

*Church*, a title which, with various elaborations, persisted through the nine editions of the work until 1684. Based on Foxe's own research and collection of eye-witness accounts, the book painted a set of vivid pictures of the attack on the reformed Church and its faithful under Mary, supplementing its stirring prose with an astonishing series of woodcuts specially commissioned by its printer, John Day, who became in effect Foxe's collaborator during both their lives.

Almost immediately Foxe's martyrology became a key official text of the Elizabethan propaganda war against Rome; to this end Foxe went so far as to recuperate the religiously pragmatic Henry VIII. Copies of the book were ordered placed in every cathedral in England and were to be found in many private houses, both ecclesiastical and lay. The details of Foxe's more stirring narratives—for example the deaths of Cranmer, Bilney, Latimer and Ridley—were very widely known. Because of the book's popularity, Foxe's villains, such as the fat, sadistic Bishop Bonner, took on the lineaments of popular stereotype. Enterprising writers produced several abbreviated versions of Foxe's book, suitable for more ordinary use than the huge tomes of the main edition. One poet, John Taylor, even managed to squeeze his Foxe into mnemonic rhyming couplets cut down to fit a single printer's sheet and produced as a tiny 64mo text, which was also called *The booke of martyrs*.

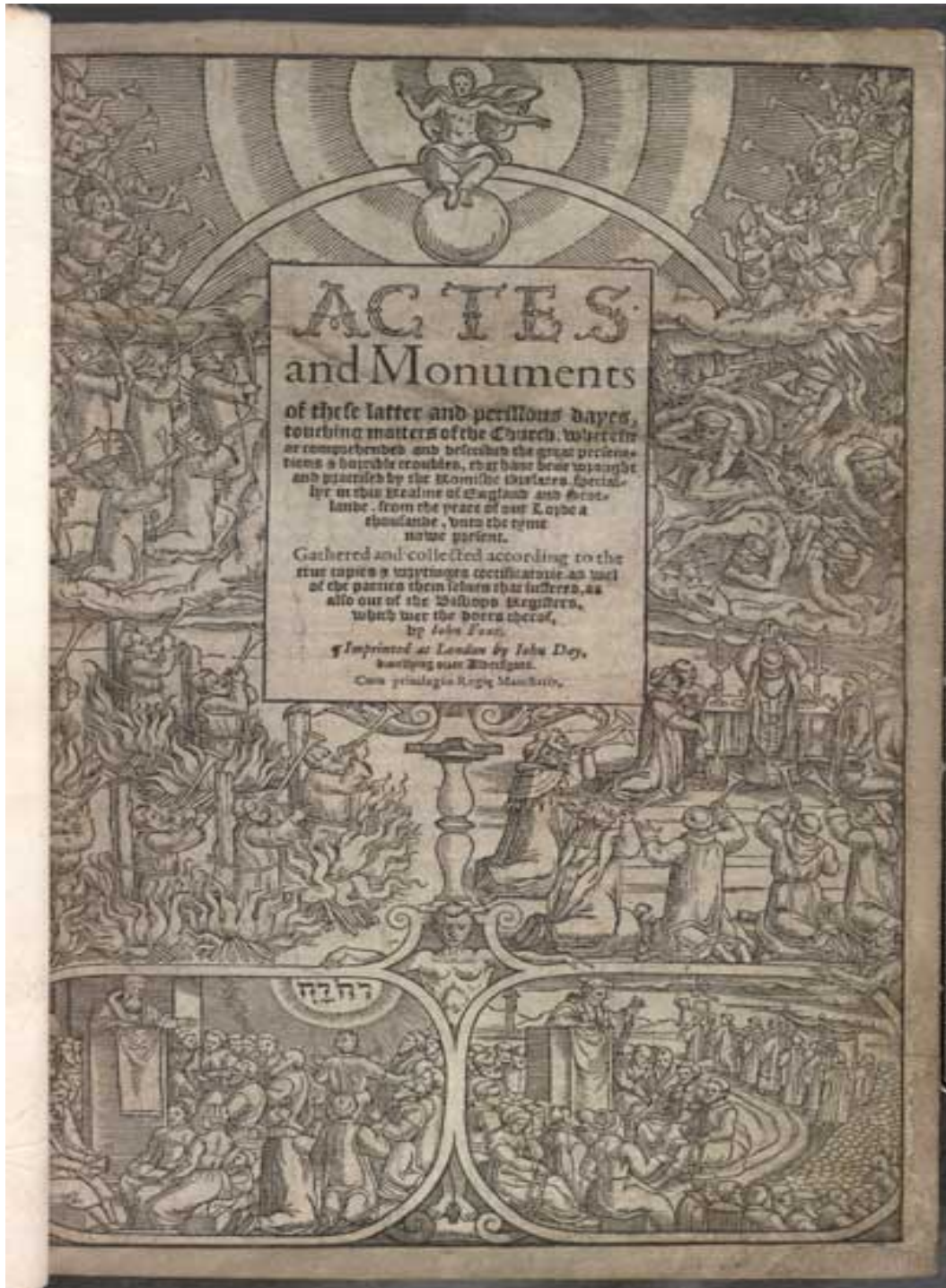
Though the Marian persecution was thus clearly the center of the book from the first, the second and greatly expanded edition of 1570 made a larger sense of recent events by attaching them to a vast narrative portraying the Christian Church as a persecuted Church from the very beginning. The book became therefore much more than a list of local deaths; it was an attempt at a universal history of the shape of Christianity itself, with England the most recent example of the perennial sufferings of Christ's faithful at the hands of the ungodly. Accordingly, without at all relinquishing its contemporary polemic function, the 1570 edition was titled *The...Ecclesiastical History, conteynning the Actes and Monuments of Martyrs...*, in effect a justification of the English Church on historical and theological grounds.

Even before leaving England in 1554 Foxe had begun the story of the persecutions of the Reformers. The result was the publication of a little Latin work dealing mainly with Wyclifism. While at Basle he was supplied by Grindal with reports of the persecution in England and in 1559 he published a large Latin folio of 740 pages which began with Wyclif and ended with Cranmer. After his return to England he began to translate this book and to add to it the results of fresh information. The "Acts and Monuments" were finally published in 1563 but came almost immediately to be known as the "Book of Martyrs". The criticism which the work called forth led to the publication of a "corrected" edition in 1570. Two more (1576 and 1583) came out during his life and five (1596, 1610, 1632, 1641, 1684) within the next hundred years.

Foxe continued to revise and expand his work throughout his life, adding new sources as he found them or as new events succeeded, visiting Day's print shop every Monday to consult on production. In the first four editions produced during Foxe's lifetime, the work became in an important sense a corporate cultural enterprise, central to the ongoing message of English Protestantism. After Foxe's death in 1587 it continued to

grow under the hands of his successors. Foxe's prose was supplemented by new researches, and Day's dramatic woodcuts were carefully re-used for each edition until they had to be recut for that of 1641, which also included a biography of Foxe himself.

**Foxe's Book of Martyrs 1563 edition title page.**



I have collected many of Foxe's old woodcut photos of the martyrs thought out history, and I am delighted to share them with you now. In addition, there are a few woodcuts from other books recording the death of Gods children in history.

**Three godly Martyrs burned at Norwich.**



Foure burned at S. Edmondsbury.





¶ The Picture of xxij. godly and faythfull Christians, apprehended  
about Colchester, prisoned together in one band, and so with three  
leaders at the most, brought vp to London.





32 The right Picture and true Counterfet of Boner, and  
his crueltie, in scourging of Gods Sainctes, in his  
Orcharde at Fulham.



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¶ The martyrdome of three men and three women at Colchester, burned in the forenoone, besides 4 other burned at after noone.



¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶. iiii.

fmilinar

A Lamentable Spectacle of three women, with a sely infant brasting  
 out of the Mothers Wombe, being first taken out of the fire, and cast in agayne,  
 and so all burned together in the Isle of Garneley.  
 1558. July. 18.



✱ The cruell burning of 5. Martyrs in Smithfield,



¶ The burnyng of sixe godly Martyrs in  
one fire.



¶ The burning of sixe Martyrs at Caunterbury.





¶ The burning of x. Martyrs at Lewes.



¶ The burnyng of xiiij. perſones at Stratford the Bowe neare  
London, whereof the two women went in among them  
to the ſlake vnyed.



J. Gou

¶ The cruell burning of a woman at  
Exeter.



The Martyrdome of a blinde man, and  
a lame man, at Stratford the Bowe.



¶ The burnyng of the Archbishop of Caunterbury Doctor Thomas  
Cranmer, in the Towneditch at Oxforde, with his hand first thrust into the fire, wherewith  
he subscribed before.





¶ The cruell burning of George Marsh, Martyr.



✠ The description of the burning of M. Iohn Bradford  
Preacher, and Iohn Leafe a Prentise.



The burnyng of Iohn Kurde Martyr, at  
Northhampton.



The burning of M. Iohn Hooper, Bishop at Glocester. An. 1555. Februarie 9.





✠ A table describing the burning of Bishop Ridley and Father Latimer at  
 Oxford, D. Smith there preaching at the time of their martirdome.





The burning of M. Iohn Rogers, Vicar of S. Pulchers,  
and Reader of Paules in London.



**The order and maner of burning M. Martin Bucers and Paulus Pha-  
gius bones, and also their bookes, with a solemne generall procesion,  
At Cambridge. Anno. 1557. February. 16.**



\* The burning of Margaret Thurston, and Agnes  
Bongeor, at Colchester.



The Martyrdome of Margery Polley.





✞ The burning of Mayster Laurence Saunders at Couentry.





¶ The burning of Raulins, Martyr.



✞ The burning of Rose Allins hand, by Edmund Tyrrell, as she  
was going to fetch drinke for her Mother, lying  
sic ke in her bedde.



Edmund Tyrrell.

Edmund

The burning of Thomas Tomkins hand by Bishop  
Boner, who not long after burnt also his body.





The burning of the blessed Martyr,  
Thomas Tomkyns.





The burning of William Hunter Martyr.



✠ Certayne Bishops talking with Maister Bradford in prison.



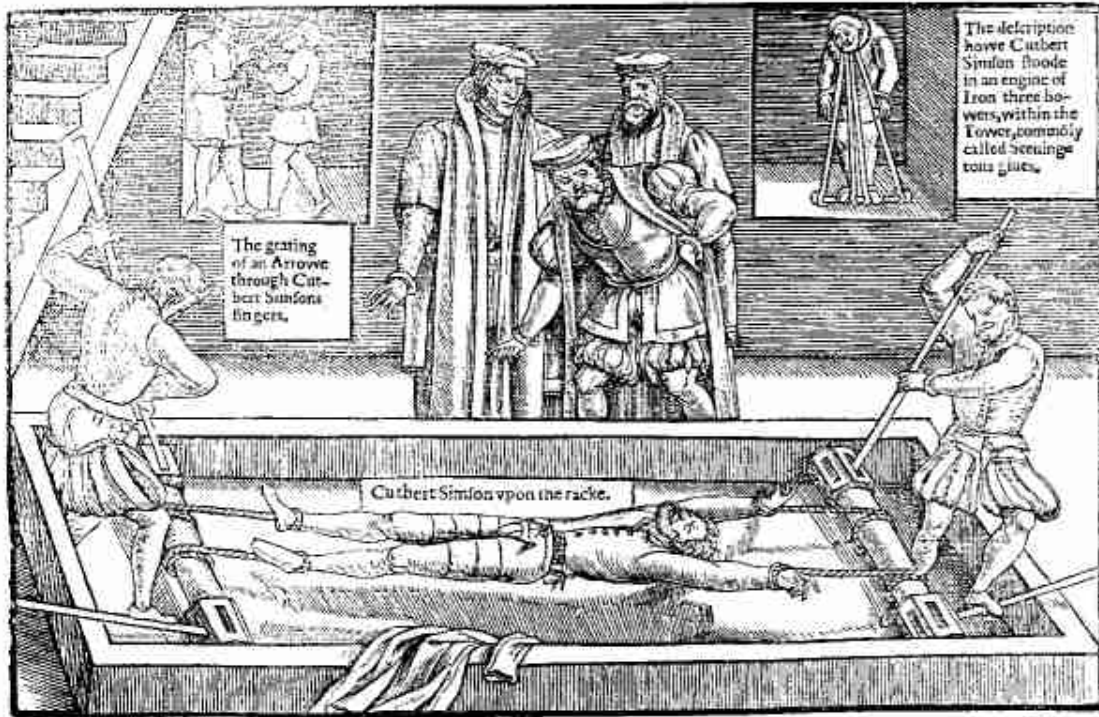
The cruell burning of Iohn Laurence  
Martyr.



¶ The cruell burnyng of Maister Farrar,  
Martyr.



50 A true description of the racking and cruell handeling  
of Cutbert Simfon in the Tower.

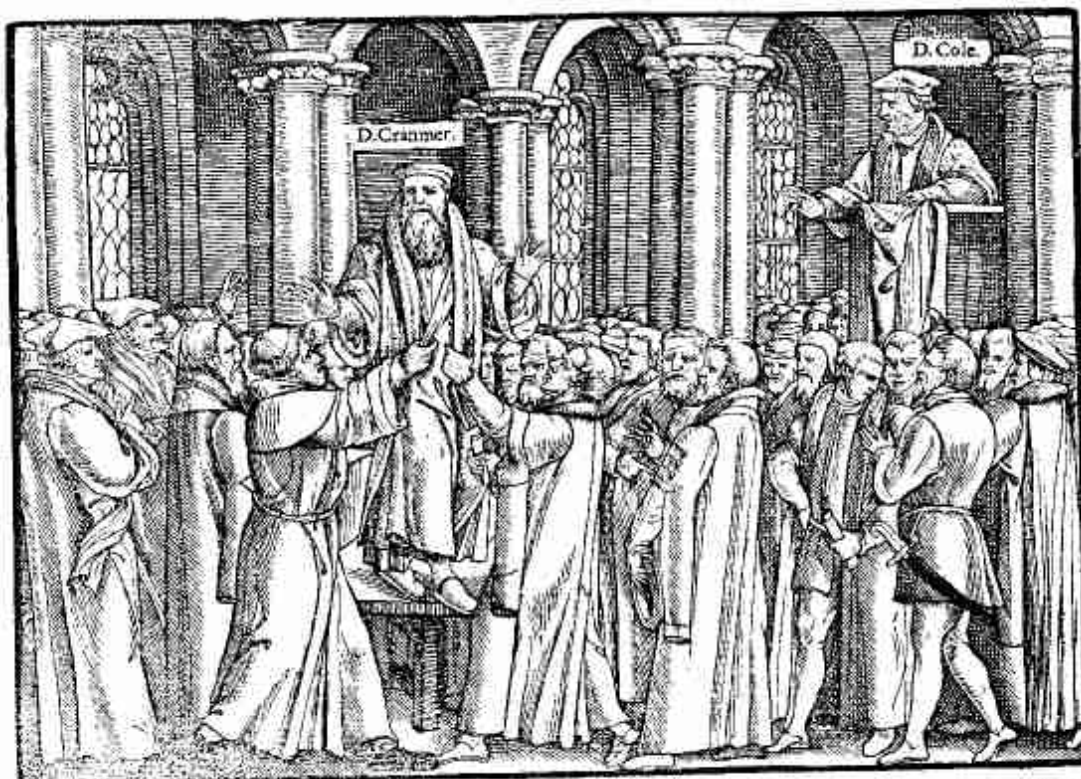


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¶ The description of Doctour Cranmer, howe he was  
plucked downe from the stage, by Friers and Papists,  
for the true Confession of hys Faith.





**John Hus Burned at the Stake July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1415.**





**Jerome of Prague, John Huss's companion burned almost one year later.**

§ The Martyrdome of Doctour Taylour, burned at Hadley for the  
testimony of the Gospell. February. 9. Anno. 1555.



50 The martirdome of maister Iohn Philpot Archdeacon, with the manner of his kneeling, and praying at the stake.





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The picture describing the straight handling of the cloafe prissonners in Lollardes Tower.



✱ The Description of a Popish Priest, who when he  
had taken away the glory and office of Christ, fell  
downe suddenly, and dyed.



32 The maner of the Popish Spaniardes, in carying Nicholas Burton a  
bleſſed Martyr of Chriſt, after moſt ſpitefull ſort, to the burning.





**THE BURNING OF LORD COBHAM.**

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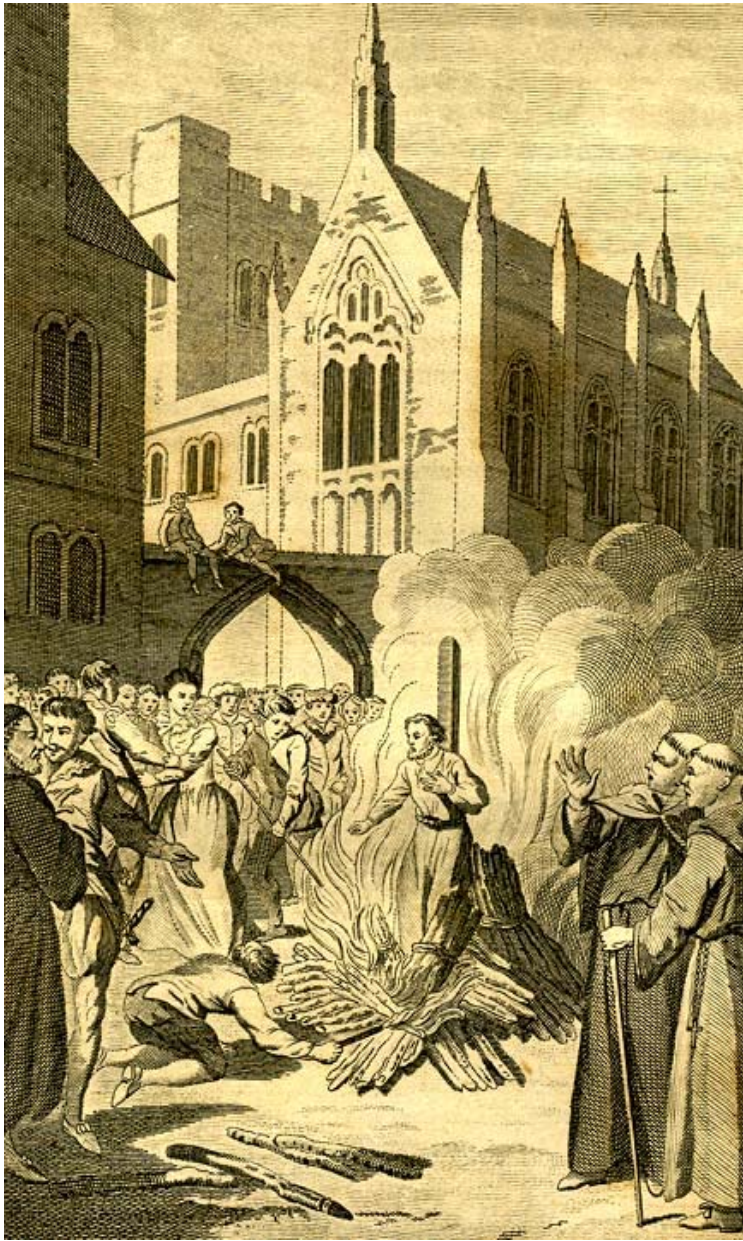
**Spanish Inquisition**



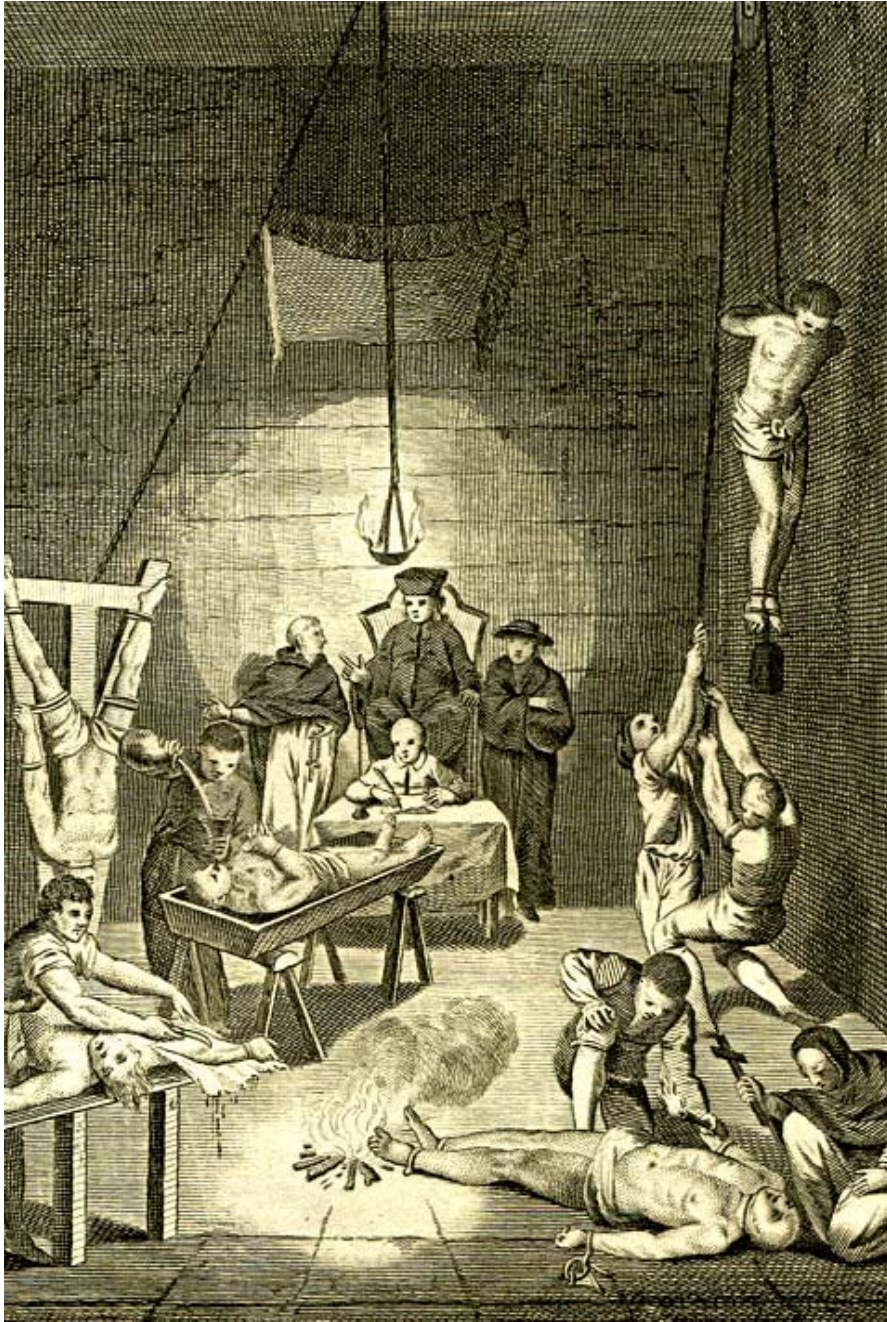
Wycliffe bones was dug up, and burned some 40 years after his death.





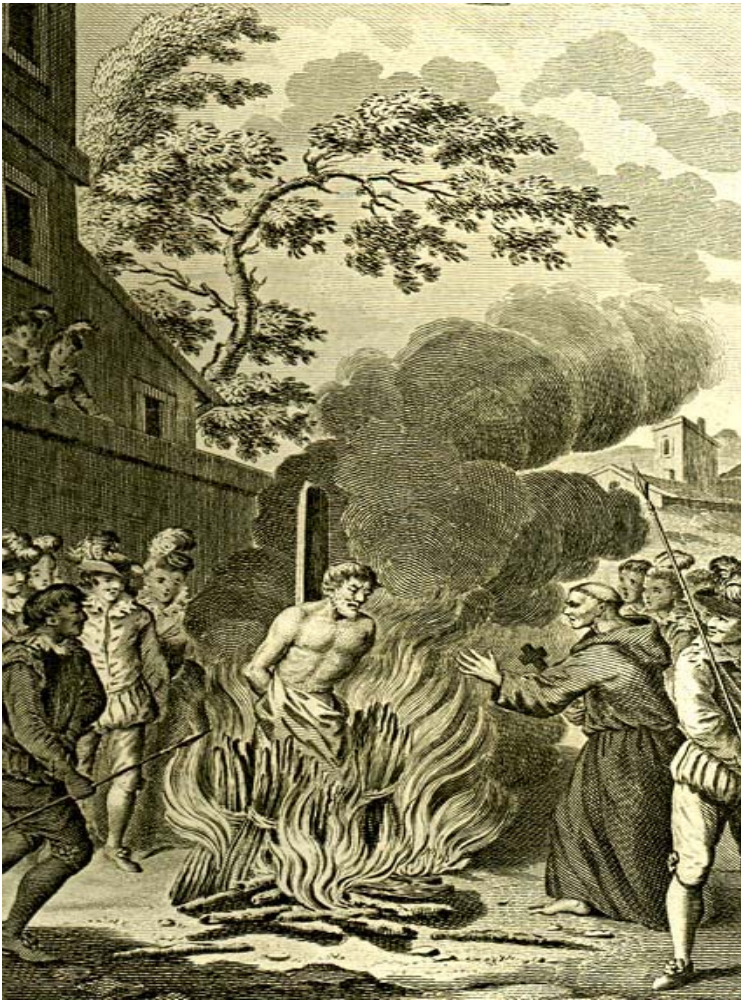
















**Here is a photocopy of Tyndale's letter he wrote while in prison waiting for his death. In addition, the English translation of it.**

Credo non latere te, vir praestantissime, quod de me statutum sit. Quam ob rem, tuas benivolentiam rogatam habeo, idque per dominum Iesum ut si mihi per hunc meum manendum sit, placito apud dominum transierim, si tibi dignum videbitur, de rebus meis quas habeo, militare, cultiorum amicum, spem cum patris in capite minime optime spectus carissimi, tui pro te perfundere non solum augeat. Cultiorum quam triticum, me facit quam gratia ad vobis venis et per penam ad collegas referendos. Duplois debita est. Amice debita sunt etiam. Causam amam quod si mittere velit. Gratia est apud me, etiam collegas ex passioni penam ad fugiunt adducunt. Nocturna furata cultiorum gratia deus vobis vespere hunc facere deat, rediit quod est et tenetis solentem perire. Maxime ante omnia, hanc clementiam rogo, atque oro, ut ex me agere velit apud dominum transierim, quatenus dignum velit, mihi concedere debeat gratiam, gratiam gratiam gratiam et vobis etiam si maxime optas, modo in me tunc saluti fiat. Veni si aliud responsum de me capta est, me hunc gratiam gratiam gratiam mei, Iesu Christi, omni pro meum sanguine rogat per dominum Iesum.



### WILLIAM TYNDALE'S LETTER IN PRISON

"I believe, right worshipful, that you are not ignorant of what has been determined concerning me [by the Council of Brabant]; therefore I entreat your Lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here [in Vilvoorde] during the winter, you will request the Procurer to be kind enough to send me from my goods, which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a perpetual catarrh, which is considerably increased in the cell. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin; also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings: my overcoat has been worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will be kind enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth for the putting on above; he also has warmer caps for wearing at night. I wish also his permission to have a candle in the evening, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. "But above all, I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procurer that he may "kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study. And in return, may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always it be consistent with the salvation of your soul. But if any other resolutions have been come to concerning me, before the conclusion of the winter, I shall be patient, abiding the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen."

W. Tindalus

**I hope you have enjoyed the presentation. It is a very sad reminder recorded in history of the terrible ordeals Gods children have endured. In Gods Holy writ, we are told that in the last days of earths history. It will the worst time since the beginning of time...**

