

Rowland Taylor: Martyr

By John Foxe and C.B. Tayler

(The account of the life and martyrdom of Rowland Taylor is taken from two books: *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, by John Foxe, and *Memorials of the English Martyrs*, by C.B. Tayler, London, 1853. It has been somewhat edited and revised for inclusion here. His name was sometimes spelled "Taylor" and sometimes "Tayler", and in this article both spellings have been used, as the quotations are taken from two books. Taylor was a martyr for Christ in England in the sixteenth century, during the time of the Protestant Reformation. What an immense tragedy that in the present day the lying spirit of ecumenism has convinced multitudes that this abominable religion of Rome is a part of the Christian Church, and that its subjects should be embraced as brothers and sisters in Christ! Men such as Rowland Taylor laboured under no such delusion, and were prepared to oppose Roman Catholicism even unto death! They laid down their very lives for Christ, praying for an end to the tyranny of the Papacy; and yet today's "Protestants" join in unholy union with the servants of Antichrist, and as much as in them lies, stomp upon the martyrs' graves and deride the price they paid!)

(Excerpted from *Memorials of the English Martyrs*)

I wish to awaken an interest in the subject [of Rowland Tayler], in those who are not already acquainted with it; and to induce them to read that story, word for word in "Foxe's Acts and Monuments." It has been reckoned by many to be one of the most beautiful and affecting records ever written, of the holy life, and cruel sufferings, and faithful death of a truly godly pastor. In every relation of life, Rowland Tayler appears to have adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour. Bold and unflinching in his opposition to error, true to his trust, and faithful to his flock, walking simply and stedfastly in the path of duty, wherever it led; undismayed by danger or difficulty. He was devout, solemn, and grave, even to tenderness, when he spoke of parting from those he loved on earth, and going to meet a Master, for whose dear sake he suffered death: but about the mere putting off of the body of his death, and the circumstances that attended it, he was calm and fearless, and could even jest, though without levity, on the indignities which would be offered to his mortal frame.

Rowland Taylor was truly one of those remarkable men, whom the Lord God has raised up from time to time to fight the good fight of faith in the forefront of the battle, a man who might be classed in the list of those warriors, as one of the three mightiest was among David's captains. He would have said with the Psalmist, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." Never did his dauntless and masculine courage forsake him.

Let those who think little of the danger to which the church of England is exposed in the present day, from the designs of the enemies of the Church of Christ, consider the life and death of Rowland Tayler; and let them pause, before they conclude too hastily, that Popery has changed its character; and ask themselves, if for any other fault than that which Romanists call heresy, but which the Word of God declares to be the truth as it is in Jesus, this most learned, godly, and faithful pastor of Christ suffered martyrdom. Heretics, as seen from the notes in the Roman Catholic Bible, may be punished with death.

Indifference, though utterly unlike prejudice, is alike the child of ignorance; and alas! where we find prejudice against the vital principles of the Christian faith, and indifference as to the fact of its essential difference from Romanism, we may usually trace them both back to one and the same source – ignorance – a deplorable and disgraceful ignorance of Christian truth.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs is truly a book for the present times, and for all times, till Babylon the great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, which did corrupt the earth with her fornications, and was clothed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls: in whom is found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth, is fallen, is fallen. The book commends itself to every unprejudiced reader, and bears in itself internal evidence to the truth of the writer's statements, and the soundness of his views. It proves to us by facts, which are the best

arguments, that Popery, while it “forms manacles and mufflers for the human mind,” forges weapons to destroy the happiness of God’s creatures. And it insults Christianity, by the monstrous caricature which it presents of its principles and its institutions.

(Excerpted from *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*)

Dr Rowland Taylor made his parsonal abode in Hadley, among the people committed to his charge; where he, as a good shepherd, dwelling among his sheep, gave himself wholly to the study of holy Scriptures. This love of Christ so wrought in him, that whenever he might get the people together he preached to them the Word of God, the doctrine of their salvation.

Not only was his word a preaching unto them, but all his life and conversation was an example of unfeigned Christian life and true holiness. He was void of all pride, humble and meek, as any child: so that none were so poor but they might boldly, as unto their father, resort unto him; neither was his lowliness childish or fearful, but, as occasion, time, and place required, he would be stout in rebuking the sinful and evil doers; so that none was so rich but he would tell them plainly his fault, with such earnest and grave rebukes as became a good curate and pastor. He was a man very mild, void of all rancour, grudge or evil will; ready to do good to all men; readily forgiving his enemies; and never sought to do evil to any.

To the poor that were blind, lame, sick, bedrid, or that had many children, he was a very father, a careful patron, and diligent provider; insomuch that he caused the parishioners to make a general provision for them: and he himself (beside the continual relief that they always found at his house) gave an honest portion yearly to the common alms-box. His wife also was an honest, discreet, and sober matron, and his children well nurtured, brought up in the fear of God and good learning.

He was a good salt of the earth, savourily biting the corrupt manners of evil men; a light in God’s house, set upon a candlestick for all good men to imitate and follow.

Thus continued this good shepherd among his flock, governing them and leading them through the wilderness of this wicked world, all the days of the most innocent and holy King of blessed memory, Edward the Sixth. But after it pleased God to take King Edward from this vale of misery unto his most blessed rest, to live with Christ, and reign in everlasting joy and felicity, the Papists violently overthrew the true doctrine of the Gospel, and persecuted with sword and fire all those that would not agree to receive again the Roman Bishop as supreme head of the universal Church, and allow all the errors, superstitions, and idolatries, that before by God’s Word were disproved and justly condemned.

In the beginning of this rage of Antichrist, a certain petty gentleman, called Foster, conspired with one John Clerk, to bring in the Pope and his idol-worship again into Hadley Church. For Dr Taylor had most faithfully and earnestly preached against the popish corruptions, which had infected the whole country round about.

Therefore the foresaid Foster and Clerk hired one John Averth, parson of Aldham, a Popish idolater, to come to Hadley, and there to begin again the Popish mass. To this purpose they builded up with all haste possible the altar, intending to bring in their mass again about Palm Monday. But this their device took none effect; for in the night the altar was beaten down: wherefore they built it up again the second time, and laid diligent watch, lest any should again break it down. On the day following came Foster and John Clerk, bringing with them their Popish sacrificer, who brought with him all his implements and garments to play his Popish pageant, whom they and their men guarded with swords and bucklers, lest any man should disturb him in his missal sacrifice.

When Dr Taylor, who, according to his custom, sat at his book studying the Word of God, heard the bells ringing, he arose and went into the church, supposing something had been there to be done, according to his pastoral office: and he found the church doors shut and fast barred, saving [except] the chancel door, which was only latched. Where he, entering in, and coming into the chancel, saw a Popish sacrificer in his robes, with a broad new shaven crown, ready to begin his Popish sacrifice, beset round about with drawn swords and bucklers, lest any man should approach to disturb him.

Then said Dr Taylor, “Who made thee so bold to enter into this church of Christ to profane and defile it with this abominable idolatry?” With that started up Foster, and with an ireful and furious countenance said to Dr Taylor, “Thou traitor! what dost thou here, to let [hinder] and perturb the

Queen's [the Papist Queen Mary's] proceedings?" Dr Taylor answered, "I am no traitor, but I am the shepherd that God, my Lord Christ, hath appointed to feed this flock: wherefore I have good authority to be here; and I command thee, in the name of God, to avoid hence, and not to presume here to poison Christ's flock."

Then said Foster, "Wilt thou, traitorly heretic, make a commotion, and resist violently the Queen's proceedings?"

Dr Taylor answered, "I make no commotion; but it is you Papists, that make commotions and tumults. I resist only with God's Word against your Popish idolatries, which are against God's Word, the Queen's honour, and tend to the utter subversion of this realm of England."

Then Foster, with his armed men, took Dr Taylor, and led him with strong hand out of the church; and the Popish prelate proceeded in his Romish idolatry. Dr Taylor's wife, who followed her husband into the church, when she saw him thus violently thrust out of his church, kneeled down and held up her hands, and with a loud voice said, "I beseech God, the righteous Judge, to avenge this injury, that this Popish idolater doth to the blood of Christ." Then they thrust her out of the church also, and shut the doors; for they feared that the people would have rent their sacrificer in pieces.

Thus you see how, without consent of the people, the Popish mass was again set up with battle array, with swords and bucklers, with violence and tyranny.

Within a day or two after, with all haste possible, this Foster and Clerk made a complaint of Dr Taylor, by a letter written to Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Lord Chancellor. When the bishop heard this, he sent a letter to Dr Taylor, commanding him within certain days to come and appear before him.

When Dr Taylor's friends heard of this, they were exceeding sorry and grieved in mind; which then foreseeing to what end the matter would come, came to him and earnestly counselled him to flee.

Then said Dr Taylor, "Dear friends, I most heartily thank you, for that you have so tender a care over me. And although I know that there is neither justice nor truth to be looked for at my adversaries' hand, but rather imprisonment and cruel death: yet know I my cause to be so good and righteous, and the truth so strong upon my side, that I will, by God's grace, go and appear before them, and to their beards resist their false doings."

Then said his friends, "Master doctor, we think it not best so to do. You have sufficiently done your duty, and testified the truth both by your godly sermons, and also in resisting the parson of Aldham, with others that came hither to bring again the Popish mass. And forasmuch as our Saviour Christ willeth and biddeth us, that when they persecute us in one city, we should flee into another: we think, in flying at this time ye should do best, keeping yourself against another time, when the Church shall have great need of such diligent teachers, and godly pastors."

"Oh," quoth Dr Taylor, "what will ye have me to do? I am now old, and have already lived too long, to see these terrible and most wicked days. Fly you, and do as your conscience leadeth you; I am fully determined (with God's grace) to go to the bishop, and to his beard to tell him that he doth naught. God shall hereafter raise up teachers of His people, which shall, with much more diligence and fruit, teach them, than I have done. For God will not forsake His Church, though now for a time He trieth [tests] and correcteth us. As for me, I believe before God, I shall never be able to do God so good service, as I may do now; nor shall I ever have so glorious a calling as I now have, nor so great mercy of God proffered me, as is now at this present. Wherefore I beseech you, and all other my friends, to pray for me; and I doubt not but God will give me strength and His Holy Spirit."

When his friends saw him so constant, and fully determined to go, they, with weeping eyes, commended him unto God.

Dr Taylor, being accompanied with a servant of his own, named John Hull, took his journey towards London. By the way, this John Hull laboured to counsel and persuade him very earnestly to fly, and not come to the bishop. But in no wise would Dr Taylor consent thereunto; but said, "O John! shall I give place to this thy counsel and worldly persuasion, and leave my flock in this danger. Remember the good shepherd Christ, which not alone fed His flock, but also died for His flock. Him must I follow, and with God's grace, will do."

Shortly after Dr Taylor presented himself to the Bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, then Lord Chancellor of England. Now, when Gardiner saw Dr Taylor, he, according to his custom, reviled him, calling him knave, traitor, heretic, with many other villainous reproaches; all which Dr Taylor heard patiently, and at the last said unto him: “My lord, I am neither traitor nor heretic, but a true subject, and a faithful Christian man; and am come, according to your commandment, to know what is the cause that your lordship hath sent for me.”

Then said the bishop, “Art thou come, thou villain? How darest thou look me in the face for shame? Knowest thou not who I am?”

“Yes,” quoth Dr Taylor, “I know who you are. You are Dr Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Lord Chancellor; and yet but a mortal man, I trow. But if I should be afraid of your lordly looks, why fear you not God, the Lord of us all? Should I forsake the Church of Christ, which is founded upon the true foundation of the apostles and prophets, to approve those lies, errors, superstitions, and idolatries, that the popes and their company at this day so blasphemously do approve? Nay, God forbid.”

“I see,” quoth the bishop, “thou art an arrogant knave, and a very fool.”

“My lord,” quoth Dr Taylor, “leave your railing at me, which is not seemly for such a one in authority as you are. For I am a Christian man, and you know, that ‘he that saith to his brother, Raca, is in danger of a council; and he that saith, Thou fool, is in danger of hell fire.’”

Then said the bishop, “Thou hast resisted the Queen’s proceedings, and wouldest not suffer the parson of Aldham (a very virtuous and devout priest) to say mass in Hadley.”

Dr Taylor answered, “My lord, I am parson of Hadley; and it is against all right, conscience, and laws, that any man should come into my charge, and presume to infect the flock committed unto me, with venom of the Popish idolatrous mass.”

With that the bishop waxed very angry, and said, “Thou art a blasphemous heretic indeed, that blasphemest the blessed sacrament: and speakest against the holy mass, which is made a sacrifice for the quick [living] and the dead.”

Dr Taylor answered, “Nay, I blaspheme not the blessed sacrament which Christ instituted [meaning the ordinance of the Lord’s supper], but I reverence it as a true Christian man ought to do; and confess, that Christ ordained the holy communion in the remembrance of His death and passion. Christ gave Himself to die for our redemption upon the cross, whose body there offered was the propitiatory sacrifice, full, perfect, and sufficient unto salvation, for all them that believe in Him. And this sacrifice did our Saviour Christ offer in His own person Himself once for all, neither can any priest any more offer Him, nor need we any more propitiatory sacrifice.”

Then called the bishop his men, and said, “Have this fellow hence, and carry him to the King’s Bench, and charge the keeper he be straitly kept.”

Then kneeled Dr Taylor down, and held up both his hands, and said, “Good Lord, I thank thee; and from the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome, and all his detestable errors, idolatries, and abominations, good Lord deliver us: and God be praised for good King Edward.”

Dr Taylor lay prisoner almost two years. He spent all his time in prayer, reading the holy Scriptures, writing, preaching, and exhorting the prisoners, and such as resorted to him, to repentance and amendment of life.

On the 22nd of January 1555, Dr Taylor, and Master Bradford and Master Saunders, were again called to appear before the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishops of Norwich, London, Salisbury, and Durham; and there were charged again with heresy and schism: and therefore a determinate answer was required; whether they would submit themselves to the Roman Bishop, and abjure their errors; or else they would, according to the laws, proceed to their condemnation.

When Dr Taylor and his fellows heard this, they answered stoutly and boldly, that they would not depart from the truth which they had preached in King Edward’s days, neither would they submit themselves to the Romish Antichrist; but they thanked God for so great mercy, that he would call them to be worthy to suffer for His Word and truth.

When the bishops saw them so boldly, constantly, and unmovably fixed in the truth, they read the sentence of death upon them.

Dr Taylor was committed to the Clink, and when the keeper brought him toward the prison, the people flocked about to gaze upon him: unto whom he said, "God be praised, good people, I am come away from them undefiled, and will confirm the truth with my blood." So was he bestowed in the Clink till it was toward night; and then he was removed to the Compter by the Poultry.

When Dr Taylor had lain in the said Compter a seven-night or thereabouts prisoner, the 4th of February, A.D. 1555, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, with others, came to degrade him, bringing with them such ornaments as do appertain to their massing-mummery. He called for Dr Taylor to be brought unto him; and at his coming, the bishop said, "Master doctor, I would you would remember yourself, and turn to your mother, holy Church [i.e. the Roman Catholic 'Church']; so may you do well enough, and I will sue for your pardon."

Whereunto Master Taylor answered, "I would you and your fellows would turn to Christ. As for me, I will not turn to Antichrist."

"Well," quoth the bishop, "I am come to degrade you; wherefore put on these vestures."

"No," quoth Dr Taylor, "I will not."

"Wilt thou not?" said the bishop. "I shall make thee ere I go."

Quoth Dr Taylor, "You shall not, by the grace of God."

Then he charged him upon his obedience to do it: but he would not do it for him; so he willed another to put them upon his back. And when he was thoroughly furnished therewith, he set his hands to his side, walking up and down, and said, "How say you, my lord? am not I a goodly fool? How say you, my masters? If I were in Cheap, should I not have boys enough to laugh at these apish toys, and toying trumpery?"

So the bishop scraped his fingers, thumbs, and the crown of his head.

"Then Dr Taylor said, "Though you do curse me, yet God doth bless me. I have the witness of my conscience, that ye have done me wrong and violence: and yet I pray God, if it be His will, to forgive you. But from the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome, and his detestable enormities, good Lord deliver us!"

The night after that he was degraded, his wife and his son Thomas and John Hull, his servant, resorted unto him, and were, by the gentleness of the keepers, permitted to sup with him. After supper walking up and down, he gave God thanks for His grace, that had given him strength to abide by His holy Word. With tears they prayed together, and kissed one the other. Unto his son Thomas he gave a Latin book, containing the notable sayings of the old martyrs, and in the end of that he wrote his testament:

"I say to my wife, and to my children, The Lord gave you unto me, and the Lord hath taken me from you, and you from me: blessed be the name of the Lord! I believe that they are blessed which die in the Lord. God careth for sparrows, and for the hairs of our heads. I have ever found Him more faithful and favourable, than is any father or husband. Trust ye therefore in Him by the means of our dear Saviour Christ's merits: believe, love, fear and obey Him: pray to Him, for He hath promised to help. Count me not dead, for I shall certainly live, and never die. I go before, and you shall follow after, to our long home.

"I say to my dear friends of Hadley, and to all others which have heard me preach; that I depart hence with a quiet conscience, as touching my doctrine, for the which I pray you thank God with me. For I have, after my little talent, declared to others those lessons that I gathered out of God's book, the blessed Bible. Therefore if I, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you any other Gospel than that ye have received, God's great curse upon that preacher!

"Departing hence in sure hope, without all doubting of eternal salvation, I thank God my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ my certain Saviour."

On the morrow the sheriff of London with his officers came to the Compter by two o'clock in the morning, and brought forth Dr Taylor; and without any light led him to the Woolsack, an inn without Aldgate. Dr Taylor's wife, suspecting that her husband should that night be carried away, watched all night in St Botolph's church-porch beside Aldgate, having her two children, the one named Elizabeth,

of thirteen years of age (whom, being left without father or mother, Dr Taylor had brought up of alms from three years old), the other named Mary, Dr Taylor's own daughter.

Now, when the sheriff and his company came against St Botolph's church, Elizabeth cried, saying, "O my dear father! mother, mother, here is my father led away." Then cried his wife, "Rowland, Rowland, where art thou?" – for it was a very dark morning, that the one could not well see the other. Dr Taylor answered, "Dear wife, I am here;" and staid. The sheriff's men would have led him forth; but the sheriff said, "Stay a little, masters, I pray you; and let him speak to his wife:" and so they staid.

Then came she to him, and he took his daughter Mary in his arms: and he, his wife, and Elizabeth kneeled down and said the Lord's prayer. At which sight the sheriff wept apace, and so did divers others of the company. After they had prayed, he rose up and kissed his wife, and shook her by the hand, and said, "Farewell, my dear wife; be of good comfort, for I am quiet in my conscience. God shall stir up a father for my children." And then he kissed his daughter Mary, and said, "God bless thee, and make thee His servant:" and kissing Elizabeth, he said, "God bless thee; I pray you all stand strong and steadfast unto Christ and His Word." Then said his wife, "God be with thee, dear Rowland; I will, with God's grace, meet thee at Hadley."

And so was he led forth to the Woolsack, and his wife followed him. As soon as they came to the Woolsack, he was put into a chamber, wherein he was kept with four yeomen of the guard, and the sheriff's men. Dr Taylor, as soon as he was come into the chamber, fell down on his knees and gave himself wholly to prayer.

Thus remained Dr Taylor in the Woolsack, kept by the sheriff and his company, till eleven o'clock; at which time the sheriff of Essex was ready to receive: and so they set him on horseback within the inn, the gates being shut.

At the coming out of the gates, John Hull, before spoken of, stood at the rails with Thomas, Dr Taylor's son. When Dr Taylor saw them, he called them, saying, "Come hither, my son Thomas." And John Hull lifted the child up, and set him on the horse before his father: and Dr Taylor put off his hat, and said to the people that stood there looking on him, "Good people, this is mine own son." Then lifted he up his eyes toward heaven, and prayed for his son; laid his hat upon the child's head and blessed him; and so delivered the child to John Hull, whom he took by the hand and said, "Farewell, John Hull, the faithfulest servant that ever man had." And so they rode forth, the sheriff of Essex, with four yeomen of the guard, and the sheriff's men leading him.

And so they came to Brentwood, where they caused to be made for Dr Taylor a close hood, with two holes for his eyes to look out at, and a slit for his mouth to breathe at. This they did, that no man should know him, nor he speak to any man: which practice they used also with others. They feared lest, if the people should have heard them speak, or have seen them, they might have been much more strengthened by their godly exhortations, to stand steadfast in God's Word, and to fly the superstitions and idolatries of the Papacy.

All the way Dr Taylor was joyful and merry, as one that accounted himself going to a most pleasant banquet or bridal. He spake many notable things to the sheriff and yeomen of the guard that conducted him, and often moved them to weep, through his much earnest calling upon them to repent, and to amend their evil and wicked living. Oftentimes also he caused them to wonder and rejoice, to see him so constant and steadfast, void of all fear, joyful in heart, and glad to die.

At Chelmsford met them the sheriff of Suffolk, there to receive him, and to carry him forth into Suffolk. And being at supper, the sheriff of Essex very earnestly laboured him to return to the Popish religion, thinking with fair words to persuade him. Dr Taylor staid a little, as one studying what answer he might give. At the last thus he said, "Master sheriff, and my masters all, I heartily thank you for your good-will: I have hearkened to your words, and marked well your counsels. And to be plain with you, I do perceive that I have been deceived myself, and am like to deceive a great many of Hadley of their expectation."

With that word they all rejoiced. "Yea, good master doctor," quoth the sheriff, "God's blessing on your heart! hold you there still. It is the comfortablest word that we heard you speak yet. What! should ye cast away yourself in vain? Play a wise man's part, and I dare warrant it, ye shall find favour." Thus they rejoiced very much at the word, and were very merry. At the last, "Good master

doctor," quoth the sheriff, "what meant ye by this, that ye say ye think ye have been deceived yourself, and think ye shall deceive many a one in Hadley?"

"Would ye know my meaning plainly?" quoth he.

"Yea," quoth the sheriff, "good master doctor, tell it us plainly."

Then said Dr Taylor, "I will tell you how I have been deceived, and, as I think, I shall deceive a great many. I am, as you see, a man that hath a very great carcass, which I thought should have been buried in Hadley churchyard, if I had died in my bed, as I well hoped I should have done; but herein I see I was deceived: and there are a great number of worms in Hadley churchyard, which should have had jolly feeding upon this carrion, which they have looked for many a day. But now I know we be deceived, both I and they; for this carcass must be burnt to ashes: and so shall they lose their bait and feeding, that they looked to have had of it."

When the sheriff and his company heard him say so, they were amazed, and looked one on another, marvelling at the man's constant mind, that thus, without all fear, made but a jest at the cruel torment and death now at hand prepared for him. Thus was their expectation clean disappointed.

At Lavenham, there came to him a great number of gentlemen and justices upon great horses, which all were appointed to aid the sheriff. These gentlemen laboured Dr Taylor very sore to reduce him to the Romish religion, promising him his pardon, "Which," said they, "we have here for you." They promised him great promotions, yea, a bishopric, if he would take it: but all their labour and flattering words were in vain.

When they were now come to Hadley, and came riding over the bridge, at the bridge-foot waited a poor man with five small children; who, when he saw Dr Taylor, he and his children fell down upon their knees, and held up their hands, and cried with a loud voice, and said, "O dear father and good shepherd, Dr Taylor? God help and succour thee, as thou hast many a time succoured me and my poor children."

The streets of Hadley were beset on both sides the way with men and women who waited to see him; whom when they beheld so led to death, with weeping eyes and lamentable voices they cried, saying one to another, "Ah, Lord! there goeth our good shepherd from us, that so faithfully hath taught us, so fatherly hath cared for us, and so godly hath governed us. O merciful God! what shall we poor scattered lambs do? What shall come of this most wicked world? Lord strengthen him, and comfort him."

And Dr Taylor evermore said to the people, "I have preached to you God's Word and truth, and am come this day to seal it with my blood."

Coming against the almshouses which he well knew, he cast to the poor people money which remained of that which had been given him in time of his imprisonment. As for his living, they took it from him at his first going to prison, so that he was sustained all the time of his imprisonment by the charitable alms of good people that visited him. Therefore, the money that now remained he put in a glove and gave it to the poor almsmen standing at their doors to see him. And, coming to the last of the almshouses, and not seeing the poor that there dwelt, ready at their doors, as the other were, he asked: "Is the blind man and blind woman, that dwelt here, alive?" It was answered, "Yea, they are there within." Then threw he glove and all in at the window.

Thus this good father and provider for the poor now took his leave of those, for whom all his life he had a singular care and study.

At the last, coming to Aldham-common, the place assigned where he should suffer, and seeing a great multitude of people gathered thither, he asked, "What place is this, and what meaneth it that so much people are gathered hither?" It was answered, "It is Aldham-common, the place where you must suffer: and the people are come to look upon you." Then said he, "Thanked be God, I am even at home;" and so alighted from his horse, and with both his hands rent the hood from his head.

When the people saw his reverend face, with a long white beard, they burst out with weeping tears, and cried, saying, "God save thee, good Dr Taylor! Jesus Christ strengthen thee and help thee; the Holy Ghost comfort thee." Then would he have spoken to the people, but the yeomen of the guard were so busy about him, that as soon as he opened his mouth, one or other thrust a tipstaff into his

mouth, and would in nowise permit him.

Dr Taylor thereupon sat down, and seeing one named Soyce, called him and said, "Soyce, I pray thee come and pull off my boots, and take them for thy labour. Thou hast long looked for them, now take them." Then rose he up, and put off his clothes unto his shirt, and gave them away: which done, he said with a loud voice, "Good people! I have taught you nothing but God's holy Word, and those lessons that I have taken out of God's blessed book, the holy Bible: and I am come hither this day to seal it with my blood." With that word, Homes, yeoman of the guard, who had used Dr Taylor very cruelly all the way, gave him a great stroke upon the head. Then he kneeled down and prayed, and a poor woman that was among the people, stepped in and prayed with him: but her they thrust away, and threatened to tread her down with horses: notwithstanding she would not remove, but abode and prayed with him. He went to the stake, and kissed it, and set himself into a pitch-barrel, which they had set for him and so stood with his back upright against the stake, with his hands folded together, and his eyes toward heaven, and so he continually prayed.

Then they bound him with chains, and the sheriff called one Richard Donningham, a butcher, and commanded him to set up faggots: but he refused to do it, and said, "I am lame, sir; and not able to lift a faggot." The sheriff threatened to send him to prison; notwithstanding he would not do it.

Then appointed he Mulleine, Soyce, Warwick, and Robert King, to set up the faggots, and to make the fire, which they most diligently did. Warwick cruelly cast a faggot at him, which lit upon his head, and brake his face, that the blood ran down his visage. Then said Dr Taylor, "O friend, I have harm enough; what needed that?"

Furthermore, Sir John Shelton there standing by, as Dr Taylor was saying the psalm "Miserere," in English, struck him on the lips: "Ye knave," said he, "speak Latin: I will make thee."

At the last they set to fire; and Dr Taylor, holding up both his hands, called upon God, and said, "Merciful Father of heaven, for Jesus Christ my Saviour's sake, receive my soul into Thy hands." So stood he still without either crying or moving, with his hands folded together, till Soyce with a halbert struck him on the head that the brains fell out, and the corpse fell into the fire.

(Excerpted from *Memorials of the English Martyrs*, as a fitting conclusion to the story of Rowland Taylor's martyrdom)

An old rude stone marks the very spot where this servant of Christ stood erect at the stake, and upon it these words are still to be read: "1555, D. Tayler in defending that was good, at this plas left his Blode." Dr. Hay Drummond, in conjunction with Dr. Drake and some others, placed a monument on this spot [in 1819], which bears the following inscription, written by himself:

"THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH." – John v.4.

Mark this rude stone, where Tayler dauntless stood,
Where zeal infuriate drank the Martyr's blood:
Hadleigh! that day how many a tearful eye,
Saw thy lov'd Pastor dragged a victim by;
Still scattering gifts and blessings as he past
"To the blind pair" his farewell alms were cast:
His clinging flock, e'en here, around him pray'd,
"As thou hast aided us, be God thine aid,"
Nor taunts, nor bribe of mitred rank, nor stake,
Nor blows, nor flames, his heart of firmness shake:
Serene – his folded hands, his upward eyes,
Like holy Stephen's, seek the opening skies:
There fixed in rapture, his prophetic sight
Views truth dawn clear on England's bigot night;
Triumphant saint! He bowed, and kissed the rod,
And soared on seraph wings to meet his God.

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