

## ST. POLYCARP.

Polycarp was born toward the latter part of the reign of Nero, the Roman Emperor, and probably at Smyrna, a city of Ionia in Asia Minor, which boasted to be the chief and most splendid city of the Roman province of Asia, both for beauty and size. In his early youth he is said to have been educated and supported by a pious woman named Callisto, and we have very good authority for saying that he was taught by the holy Apostle St. John, and that he had the privilege of conversing with many who had seen our Lord in the flesh.

The name of the Bishop of Smyrna, when Polycarp grew up, was Bucolus. By him Polycarp was admitted into holy orders, being ordained deacon and catechist, or teacher of the Church. Bucolus, we read, had always predicted that Polycarp would succeed him in his office, and so it turned out, for at his death Polycarp was appointed by St. John to be the Bishop to succeed him.

A dispute arose very early in the history of the Church whether the great festival of Easter should be kept always on the Lord's day, and thus on varying days of the month or whether it should follow the computation of the Jewish Feast of the Passover, and thus fall always on the fourteenth day of the month, but not always on the same day of the week. It was the sense of the great importance of the matter which led Polycarp to leave his beloved flock at Smyrna and to undertake a long journey to Rome to confer with the Bishop there about this subject. Polycarp favored the day of the month calculation, which he said he had learned from St. John, while the Roman Church, which was now beginning to be an important part of the Christian world, favored the arrangement for the first day of the week. Anicetus was Bishop of Rome at that time. He received Polycarp affectionately, and they had many conferences about the disputed point. Neither would yield their opinion, but they both agreed that the essence of Christianity did not consist in these things, but in the devotion of the heart to their common Lord and in true love of the brethren.

Among the most dangerous and mischievous of these false teachers was Marcion, who had propounded doctrines utterly subversive of Christian truth. This man one day meeting Polycarp in the street, and not receiving from him the greeting which he had expected, called out "Polycarp, own us!" Upon which Polycarp immediately answered, "I own thee indeed as the first-born of Satan."

This is recorded by Irenæus, who knew Polycarp in his latter days, and speaks with the greatest admiration of his fervent zeal for the truth. He also tells us of an anecdote which Polycarp was wont to relate of the Apostle St. John. St. John had one day gone to a bath in Ephesus, but when he entered he saw in the bath Cerinthus, another of the chief leaders of the Gnostic heresy. Upon seeing him he immediately hastened out of the bath, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest the bath should fall on us!" For what guilt could be greater than that of those who poisoned, by their admixture of "knowledge falsely so-called," the holy truth which our Lord and His Apostles had preached to the world.

But it was now the will of Him whom Polycarp served with his whole heart, that the Bishop of Smyrna, who had so long guided his flock by warning and oral teaching, should give, by example, a still more glorious witness to the truth.

In the reign of M. Antoninus and L. Verus, Emperors of Rome, a severe persecution against the Christians began, and informers were encouraged by large bribes to denounce them, that they might be seized upon. This persecution increased still more when Antoninus, intending to make an expedition against a warlike people, called together the heathen priests at Rome to celebrate solemn sacrifices to their gods to procure success for his expedition. The priests took occasion to assure the Emperor that the most acceptable offering he could make to the gods would be the complete destruction of the Christians, who everywhere despised their worship. The Emperor gave orders that it should be as they desired, and throughout his vast dominions the Christians were seized and brought to execution. At Smyrna, according as St. John had predicted, the persecution was severely felt.

Polycarp had at first resolved to remain quietly at his post in expectation of martyrdom, but many of his flock urging him for

their sakes to conceal himself, and reminding him of our Lord's words, that when His followers were persecuted in one city they should flee into another, he was prevailed upon to withdraw himself. Retiring to a neighboring village with a few companions, he continued day and night in prayer for the Church and for those who were called upon to suffer. In the meantime, he was carefully sought for everywhere and his friends persuaded him to retire to another village. Some suspicions as to the place of his concealment having reached the soldiers, they seized upon two youths, and having by stripes forced them to confess that they knew where he was, they compelled them to guide them to his place of concealment.

They came to the house when he was in bed at night, and he made no attempt to escape, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." When he heard that his persecutors were in the house, he came down to them with a cheerful countenance, and they were struck with the sight of this venerable man of so great age readily and even with smiles

great age; swear by the genius of the Emperor. Repent, say 'Away with the impious.'"

Upon this Polycarp, looking round him with a severe countenance, and remembering the savage shouts with which these people had applauded the shedding of Christian blood, called out in a loud voice these words, but in a different sense, "Away with the impious." Then the Proconsul again bade him to swear by the heathen gods and to blaspheme Christ. The Saint replied: "Fourscore and six years have I served him, and never did He any harm to me; how, then, shall I now blaspheme my King and Saviour?" "Swear," cried the Proconsul, "by the genius of the Emperor." Polycarp answered; "Since you are so vainly anxious that I should swear by the Emperor's genius, as you call it, as if you knew not who I am, hear my free confession. I am a Christian. If you would learn the Christian faith, appoint me a time and I will instruct you in it." The Proconsul advised him to try to persuade the people.

Then they shouted that he should be burned. The Governor not opposing this, the savage mob quickly brought together faggots from the work-shops and baths near at hand. A pile was soon raised, and the venerable Bishop, casting aside his garments with all eagerness, mounted upon it. But as the fire spread around him, it seemed not to touch his body but to envelop him like a sail inflated by the wind, while to the brethren, who with excited devotion mingled among the crowd, there seemed to come a sweet perfume from his body. He was then pierced with a sword, and again there seemed to come forth such a vast amount of blood from his body as to quench the flames, while some thought that they saw a dove fly forth and wing its way to heaven, which they held to be the soul of the martyr. The Jews eagerly pressed upon the Governor to cause the body to be burned to ashes, and not to allow the Christians to have it for burial, lest, as they said, they should leave Christ and worship Polycarp. Polycarp is said to have reached the age of one hundred years when he suffered, and his martyrdom is held to have taken place in the year 167 A.D.—*The Dawn of Day*.

## A TRUE DAUGHTER.

The *Advocate and Guardian* takes a long story from the *Youth's Companion*, and sums it up beautifully, thus:

An intelligent girl of our acquaintance half wished, not long since, when she came home from the boarding school in which she had been well trained in all the "ologies," that she did not know the English language any better than her parents.

"If he hain't got nothin' of his own," were the words she heard. How they jarred upon her ear! They made her hot and cold at once. Had her father's language always been as bad as this? Of course it must have been, only she did not notice it before those years at boarding-school, during which she had made friends with the Queen's English. "If he hain't got nothin' of his own," her father was saying, with reference to a young man who aspired to be his son-in-law.

"He has at least a good education," Margaret suggested, with some spirit.

"Yes, yes; but eddication ain't all. I've known college-learn't men that had hard pullin' to get their bread and butter. But ef you like him, Peggy, why, I hain't worked all my life without gettin' somethin' ahead to help you along ef a pinch comes."

Margaret's heart reproached her then. She looked at the two true-hearted old people who were her parents, and who sat there before her. Yes, that was what they had been doing all their lives. They might have read and have given time and have become more intelligent—only they had chosen this other thing, chosen to work for her, that she might have what they had lacked in their young days; that she might be well taught, and wear soft raiment, and keep her hands white and shapely!

And she—she who had never sacrificed one thing for anybody; who had grown like a fruitless flower in the warm sunshine—she, indeed, had been impatient with their verbs, and scornful of their double negatives, and secretly ashamed of them before her school-fellows!

Something seemed to choke her at the thought, and with moistened eyes she went up to them and tenderly kissed first one and then the other, and said, gently:

"It shall be as you say, father. If you think Harry and I ought not to marry without more money we will wait. It shall be just as you wish."

"No, I don't want that," he replied. "I guess you'll have your way now; you pretty much always have; but you're a good girl, Peggy, and I'm willin' to please you."

And so he was; and it is right that parents should make life larger and better for the children God has given them; but O, the pity of it when to grow in knowledge must be to grow away from home!

EMMA goes to school, but dislikes it very much. A lady friend of the family questioned her on the subject. "Emma, what do you do in school? Do you learn to read?"

Emma shakes her head.

"Do you learn to write?"

Another shake.

"Then what do you do?"

"I wait for it to be out."



giving himself into their hands. He was then set upon an ass and conducted into the city. Upon his way he was met by one of the chief magistrates of the country, who making him come up into his chariot with him did all he could, by crafty and smooth speeches, to make Polycarp consent to use a heathen prayer, and so to escape the danger which threatened him. But as Polycarp steadfastly refused to do this, the pretended kindness of the magistrate gave place to violence, and the aged Polycarp was rudely thrust out of the chariot so as to injure his thigh by the fall. Undisturbed by this, he hastened on as well as he was able to the place of execution, and appeared before the public tribunal, a great shout being raised by the mob in triumph that the head of the Christians was at length apprehended. The Proconsul, or Governor, seeing the aged man brought before him, asked if he were Polycarp. This being at once acknowledged, he then said: "Have some respect for your

He answered: "To you I rather choose to address my words, for we are commanded by the laws of our religion to give to princes and powers ordained of God all honor and reverence that is not against religion. For the people, I think them not fit judges to whom I should give an account of my faith."

The Proconsul now tried what threats would do. "I have wild beasts at hand," said he, "to whom I will cast thee unless thou repentest." "Call them," exclaimed the martyr, "for to us repentance from better to worse is impossible. It is good only to change from the bad to the good."

The boldness and eagerness of the martyr struck the Governor with amazement. He sent a herald into the midst of the throng to proclaim, "Polycarp hath confessed himself to be a Christian," upon which the mob, composed of heathens and Jews, shouted aloud, "This is he that is the teacher of impiety; this is the father of the Christians,"