

them." The governor having once more threatened him in vain with the wild beasts and the stake, caused it to be proclaimed by the herald, in the circus, "Polycarp has declared himself to be a Christian!" With these words, was pronounced the sentence of death. The heathen populace, with an infuriate shout, replied, "This is the teacher of atheism, the father of the Christians, the enemy of our gods, by whom so many have been turned from the worship of the gods and from sacrifice." The proconsul having yielded to the demands of the people, that Polycarp should die at the stake, Jews and pagans hastened together, to bring wood from the shops and the baths. As they were about to fasten him with nails to the stake of the pile, he said, "Leave me thus; he who has strengthened me to encounter the flames, will also enable me to stand firm at the stake." Before the fire was lighted, he prayed, "Lord, Almighty God, Father of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received from thee the knowledge of thyself; God of angels, and of the whole creation; of the human race, and of the just that live in thy presence; I praise thee that thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour, to take part in the number of thy Witnesses, in the cup of thy Christ."

What appeared the greatest thing, to this church, was not the martyr's death of Polycarp in itself, but the Christian manner in which it was suffered. They expressed it as their conviction, that all had been so ordered, that he might exhibit what was the essential character of evangelical martyrdom; "for," so they write, "he waited to be delivered up, (did not press forward uncalled to the martyr's death,) imitating, in this respect, our Lord, and