# Encomium on the Martyrs

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. AD 260–339)

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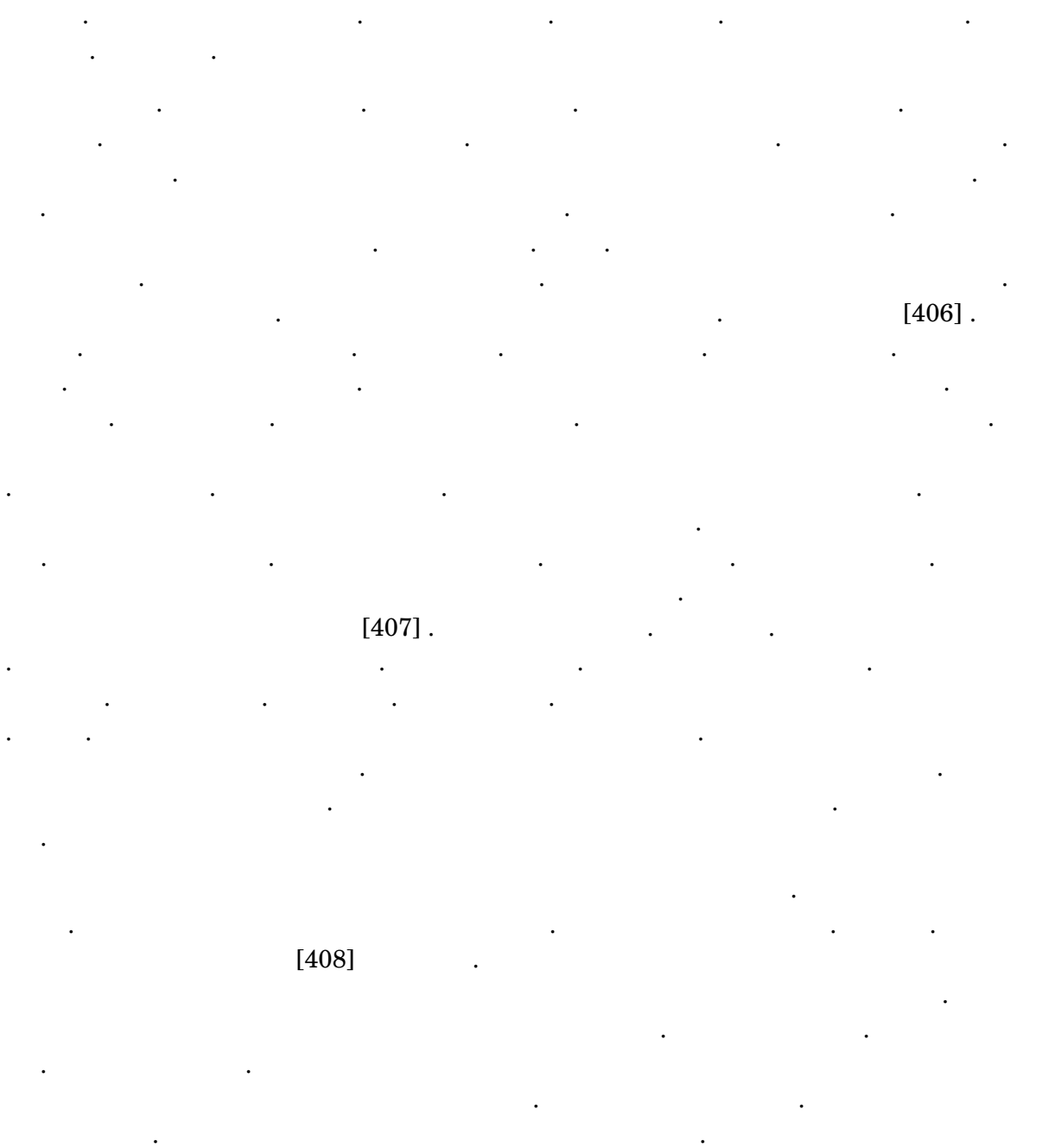
# Encomium on the Martyrs

W. WRIGHT, The Encomium of the Martyrs: Journal of Sacred Literature, 4th series vol. 5 (1864), pp.403-408 (Syriac text with introduction by B.H.COWPER); 4th series vol. 6 (1864-5), pp.129-133 (English translation and introduction by B.H.COWPER). Journal of Sacred Literature 4th series 5 (1864) pp. 403-408

**THE ENCOMIUM OF THE MARTYRS. AN INEDITED ORATION or EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA.--Syriac text.**

[THE following short oration is found near the end (fol. 250 rect.) of the venerable volume from which, at different times, there have been printed: 1. The Recognitions of Clement. 2. Titus of Bostra against the Manicheans. 3. The Theophany of Eusebius. 4. The Martyrs of Palestine, also by Eusebius. This last was published by Dr. Cureton in 1861 ; but it is singular that the learned editor, whose premature decease all Orientalists deplore,a made no allusion to the Encomium, which has been detected by Dr. W. Wright during his labours as curator of the Syriac MSS. in the British Museum. The same gentleman has also called our attention to an unfortunately imperfect list of early martyrs following this oration, and forming the actual conclusion of the volume (Add. MS. 12,150). We cannot say whether Eusebius is the writer of this venerable martyrology, but it must be older than the MS. in which we find it,--the oldest dated Syriac MS. in our Museum (written A.D. 411). Those who possess Dr. Cureton's Martyrs of Palestine, will welcome the Encomium as its natural complement. As for the authorship, it is undoubted. Among the works of Eusebius, mentioned by Ebed-Jesu in his catalogue, the Martyrs of Palestine is followed by an oration with exactly the same title as ours. This may be seen in Assemani's Bibliotheca Orientalis, i., 184 ; iii., 19. Through the courtesy of Mr. Watts, the oriental printer, we are enabled to present our readers with the Syriac text of this curious little document. We intend to give an English version of the Encomium in our October number.]

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a Dr. Cureton died at his country residence, Westbury, in Shropshire, on the 18th of June, after an illness of several months, arising from a shock to the nervous system received last year on the occasion of a railway accident. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated in 1830 ; and after having been ordained deacon in 1831 by the Bishop of Rochester, was admitted to priest's orders in the following year by the Bishop of Oxford. He was for some time sub-librarian in the Bodleian Library, and afterwards for several years assistant-keeper in the department of MSS. in the British Museum, of which institution he was latterly a royal trustee. In 1847 he was appointed chaplain in ordinary to the Queen,

and two years after was nominated to a canonry in Westminster Abbey, to which is annexed the rectory of St. Margaret's ; the two appointments being worth about £1,800 a year. Dr. Cureton was a scholar whose personal character and great literary attainments won for him the respect and admiration of the learned at home and abroad. He was an honorary D.D. of Halle, member of the French Institute and of the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, corresponding member of the German Oriental Society, etc., etc. His publications in the departments of Arabic and Syriac literature are numerous. Among the former we may mention editions of Rabbi Janchum's Commentary on the Book of Lamentations, of An-Nasafi's Pillar of the Creed of the Sunnites, and of Ash-Shahrastani's Book of Religious Sects and Philosophical Schools.

The list of the latter is still longer, comprising the Epistles of St. Ignatius, 1845; the Vindiciae Ignatianae, 1846; the Corpus Ignatianum, 1849; the Festal Letters of St. Athanasius, 1848 ; fragments of the Iliad from a Syriac palimpsest, 1851; the third part of the Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus, 1853 ; the Spicilegium Syriacum, 1855 ; the celebrated Curetonian Gospels, 1858; and the History of the Martyrs in Palestine by Eusebius, 1861. He has, we understand, left behind him an almost finished work on the establishment and early history of Christianity in Edessa -- texts, translation, and notes, to the publication of which we look forward with the deepest interest.

Journal of Sacred Literature 4th series 6 (1865) 129-133 Above all, consider the design and tendency of the New Testament. See to what it will lead you, and all those who cordially obey it; and then say, whether it be not good. And consider how naturally its truth is connected with its goodness. Trace the character and sentiments of its authors, whose living image (if I may be allowed the expression) is still preserved in their writings. And then ask your own heart, Can you think this was a forgery, an impious cruel forgery? For such it must have been, if it were a forgery at all; a scheme to mock God and to ruin men, even the best of men, such as reverenced conscience, and would abide all extremities for what they apprehended to be truth. Put the question to your own heart, Can I in my conscience believe it to be such an imposture? Can I look up to an omniscient God, and say, "O Lord, thou knowest that it is in reverence to thee, and in love to truth and virtue, that I reject this book, and the method to happiness here laid down."

But there are difficulties in the way. And what then? Have those difficulties never been cleared? Go to the living advocates for Christianity, to those of whose abilities, candour, and piety, you have the best opinion ; if your prejudices will give you leave to have a good opinion of any such, tell them your difficulties; hear their solutions; weigh them seriously, as those who know they must answer it to God: and while doubts continue, follow the truth as far as it will lead you, and take heed that you do not " imprison it in unrighteousness " (Rom. i. 18). Nothing appears more inconsistent and absurd, than for a man solemnly to pretend dissatisfaction with the evidences of the gospel, as a reason why he cannot in conscience be a thorough Christian ; when yet at the same time he violates the most apparent dictates of reason and conscience, and lives in vices condemned even by the heathens.--Dr. Doddridge.

**SELECTIONS FROM THE SYRIAC.--No. II. : THE ENCOMIUM OF THE MARTYRS. BY EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. ENGLISH TRANSLATION.**

Encomium of their Excellences. 1. O YE retainers of Godly freedom and truth in tribulation and in labour; dead in body and free in soul; through the death of the body ye overcame death, armed with faith, and clothed for ever in the robe of faith. For, verily, invincible armour was given to you in faith and in victory ; for in your hands abode the shield which is by the law; and the helmets which were on your heads were not weakened nor cast down, and the precepts which are sustaining were not relaxed in you; and sharp, and not blunt, was the spiritual sword; and by earnest prayers through Christ unto the Lord of all, your will ye directed. For unto you was adjudged a heavenly war, and by victory ye became worthy of the heavenly assemblies; for the world which passeth away did not flatter you, nor did it entice you, neither did the wrath of kings make you afraid; and the promise of a gift of the wealth of the world wrested not from your souls the treasure of truth which is for ever; and the pomp of the fashion of the world perverted not your sobriety. For ye hated dishonour and loved distinction, and through the desire of the love of the cross of Christ ye put away from yourselves the curse of crucifixion, which is in malice and in evil. For by affliction for a little time ye acquired immeasurable glory; for in the truth of faith ye served with the prophets, and stood in agreement with the apostles; and with the glorified blessed, Christ the divine chief, the crown of glory ye received.

2. O ye who are dead in appearance, and alive in reality, for your inferiority to the angels is filled up by the suffering which has happened on behalf of Christ, and through grace victory is vouchsafed to you without much solicitude, and your memory every hour is very full of glory; for ye received in your body the signs of the reproach of Christ, the setting free of your souls; for your death on behalf of Christ assured the hope of your faith; and by the constancy which ye received from above, ye changed the constitution of your former nature, and became the sons and children of desirable wisdom; and by the understanding of knowledge, ye caused your souls to fly to the righteous, and ye ran the race without weariness to the King of truth, and the Lord of the assemblies, which are for ever. Therefore, let labour be ashamed, and the stripped eagerness of the conflicts of men whose labour is not vouchsafed on behalf of Christ; and let them restrain their unprofitable sweat, which is not distilled for the conflict of heaven ; and let the race of the eager horses be accounted vain, and their victory be derided, because they cannot be compared to souls upon the horses of Elijah, on which he has in truth arisen. In these the Lord is; for the righteousness of the soul is the chariot of the Lofty One, and a confession wherein is the keeping of his restraints.

And let the assemblies of worldly festivals slumber, --those to which a place in heaven is not vouchsafed; for all of them are earnest in body, and an increase of the trade of worldly contests. Let them be ashamed in their labour, which maketh void of the grace of Christ. For those who on behalf of our Lord and our God received in exchange the judgment of their body, are in heaven, in glory, and in victory, and in joy. Hananiah is exalted, and Azariah is lauded, and Mishael the strong one is called glorious. The fire of Babel was kindled, and did not ascend on high, and by the abundance of much wood that was in it, it was deprived

of its power, and its destroying nature was shorn of its might, because of the love wherewith it would honour the sons of the law. But it was fierce and it was strong, and it burned and destroyed the slanderers who were spectators of the zealous and the blessed. These were confessors, and when the veil of their suffering was before their eyes for reproach and for praise, they drew near to the confessors' fire. The den of hungry mountain-lions also was nullified through fear of the servant of God, of Christ; and the lions were appeased in their hunger, so that they were not defiled by the suffering of the righteous. For Noah fed the beasts with flesh according to the former commandment;

but Daniel made them abstinent, that they should fast, as he was able to command in the conflict of righteousness. But let another pit shew the reproach and ignominy of Jewish oppressors,--the one which is a testimony to the earnestness and manliness of Jeremiah. The altar and temple bore witness, and the holy place which was between them, where Zechariah received the crown of victory. And let Abel speak after his death, by denouncing the cruel and hateful in the manners of Cain. But the crown of victory in the great contest both for men and for women, who are in confession (or become confessors), the mother of seven sons put on : she who reared her sons by prayer and by the milk of the law and by heavenly food, stood with every one of them in confession of the utterances of the law, in order that not one of her pains might be deprived of grace, and very much rejoiced because of the fruit which there was upon each one of her branches. For she was not crowned on account of one of her sons, while honour was taken away because of another; nor was it over one that she rejoiced in victory, and was in anguish over another because of his fall; but over all of them, and through all of them, she had great rejoicing, because she saw them all that they stood in the commandment of the law; and she was glad and gave praise, because of the righteousness of her branches in the law;

and she offered pure praise and righteous prayer to the Most High the Strengthener of his servants. How fair was she in duty, and righteous in the law, and blessed in her offspring! A wise mother, thou didst remove indifference far away from thy lovely children, and without blows they took their stand in the arena: and this is an evidence of true mothers. For it behoves that more than worldly wealth, and than love to our fellow-men, we should love the love of God, and that we should cleave to Christ and love the prophets according to the divine rule, and in everything be like Abraham. O blessed woman, who didst bring forth with hard pains, and without griefs didst restore, by prayer, the fruit thou didst rear ; thou, without laments, didst send a messenger for thyself before God. For what time is there, or what day, or what godly congregation of the passion of Christ, and glorious day of the memorial of his resurrection, when the members of the resurrection of the confessor Christ may not be remembered and honoured by every mouth and by every tongue?

So, then, let the new soldiers of his faith, equipped with the glory of his truth, pass in remembrance and in word before our eyes, and before the Lord of victory, and the giver of crowns, the Lord Christ, Peter being second in command after our Lord Jesus, in the heavenly host of the glorious ranks, powerful in heaven and also upon earth, closing and

opening without envy, in righteousness, the way of the gate of heaven, and not like the Pharisees, the partakers of his blood and of his race. Let us cleave to them, and to every one of the apostles, since it is proclaimed in heaven and by observation that their minister shall receive a crown of righteousness.

3. Let Stephen be crowned ; and also Paul, no longer persecuting the churches, declaring his conversion in the Gospel of truth which is from the Deity, which he received and confessed by his suffering for Christ, and he filled up in his body what was behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body, that is, the Church.

4. But also let others be remembered, who, after them, accepted the conflict, and were counted worthy to stand in the true conflict for Christ. Now as worthy of our commemoration, let the men be remembered who, after these, were the elect, and who, without reproach and violence, with their souls affirmed the faith,--those who were counted worthy to receive the hope of the apostles. Let there be honoured in our commemoration then, both Asclepiades and Serapion, and Philetus, and Zebinas, and Demetrius, and Flavianus, and Cyrillus (?), and Sosipater, and Andrew, and Babylas, and Caerealis (?), and Izabenus(?), and Zenobius, and Paulus, a kinsman, who was counted worthy to stand in the divine portion, and to be of it. Let Marinus also hasten, and to heaven let Fronto come, and the abstinent old man Hippolytus. Now I know and confess that many others were victorious in this conflict. But although their names escape me, their record, which is in heaven, I remember in my soul, and I lay to heart the sufferings of the Church which is in Christ. For, truly, I hope with all of you, through the divine message, by the truth of the confession which, is in Christ, that I shall receive fruit at the resurrection of the dead. I further say to you, O blessed confessors, I desire to depart from the world unto you, and from the body from which you are freed. Now faults fail (those) that (are) with Christ, as ye are this day, and are accounted. May there, at some time, be given the power to say after you, Pains flee, anguish is worn away, and groaning is departed : O ye who exist in the likeness of the suffering of Christ, and die not for ever.

End of the Discourse upon the Confessors. [I have moved the footnotes to the end from the bottom of the pages, and used numbers instead of the letters of the original]

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**Source.** English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.