

to meddle with Gods Arken matters, wherein he had little cunning and while he thinketh to helpe religion, destroyeth religion, and is an utter enemy to Christ, and to his spirituall doctrine, and his poore afflicted Church, to the intent therefore that he being taken for a speciallingleader, and a chiefe stay in the popes Church, might the better be knowne what he is, and that the ignorant and simple may see what little credite is to be geuen vnto him, as well in his other false facing out of matters, as namely in this present history of Bilneys recantation: I haue diligently searched out and procured the true certificate of M<sup>r</sup>. Bilneys burning, with all the circumstances, and poyntes thereto belonging, testified not by somelaptes & by heareseyes (as M<sup>r</sup>. Moore vnto) but truly witnessed, and faithfully recordeed by one, who as in a place and degree surmounteth the estate of M<sup>r</sup>. Moore (though he were Lord Chawncellour) so being also both a spirituall person, and there present the same time, comming for the same purpose the day before, to see his burning, was a present beholder of things there done, *αὐτοπύστη καὶ μαρτυρῶς* of Martyrdome, whole credite I am sure will counterpease with the credite of M<sup>r</sup>. Moore. The order of which martyrdome was this, as followeth.

Thomas Bilney, after his examination and condemnation before Doct. Beiles Doctour of law and Chawncel-

lour, first was degraded by Suffragan Underwoode, according to the custome of the popish manner, by the assistance of all the Fryers and Doctours of the same lute, whiche done, he was immediately committed to the laye power, and to the two Sheriffes of the Citie, of whome Thomas Acton was one. This Tho. Acton was Bilneys speciall good friend, and soyy to accept hym to such execution as followeth. But such was the tyrannye of Frymme and deard of the Chawncellour and Fryers, that he coulde no otherwise doe, but needes must receive him. who notwithstanding, as he coulde not beare in his conscience himselfe to be present at hys death: so, for the time that he was in hys custody, hee caused hym to be moze friendly looked vnto, and moze holefomely kept, concerning his dyet, then he was before.

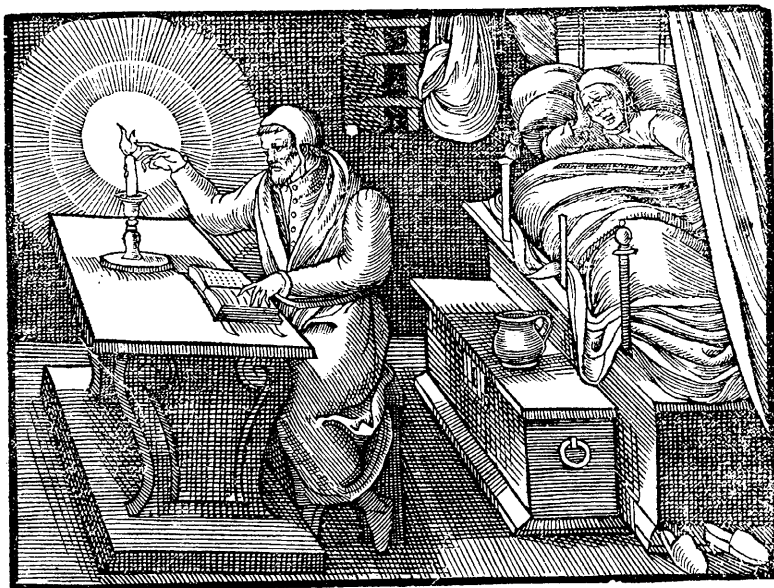
Tho. Neff  
Sheriffe of  
Norwich.

After this, the Friday following at night, whiche was before the day of his execution, being S. Magains day and Saturday, the said Bilney had diuers of his frendes rejoycing vnto hym in the Bullbhall, where he was kept. Amongst whome one of the sayd frendes finding hym eating of an Albrowe with suche a cheerefull hart and quyet minde as he did, sayd that he was glad to see hym at that time, to shortly before hys beaue and paynfull departure, so hartly to recomfort himselfe. wherunto he answered: Oh sayd he,

Anno. 1531.

The good  
courage of  
Bilney before  
hys  
death.

A description of the godly constancy of Thomas Bilney, who being in prison, oftentimes proued the fire with his finger.



Tho. Bilney  
being in  
prison, di-  
uers tymes  
proued the  
fire with  
his finger.

I followe the example of the husbandmen of the country who hauing a ruinous house to dwell in, yet bestowe cost as long as they may, to hold it vp, and so do I now with this ruinous house of my body, and with Gods creatures in thanks to hym, refresh the same as ye see. When sitting with his sayde friendes in godly talke, to theyr edification some put him in minde that though the fire, which he shuld suffer the next day should be of great heate vnto hys body, yet the comfort of Gods spirit should coole it to hys everlasting refreshing. At this word the said Tho. Bilney putting his hand toward the flame of the canble burning before them (as also he did diuers tymes besides) and feeling the heate thereof, (sayd he) I feele by experience, & haue known it long by philosophy, that fire by Gods ordinance is naturally hott, but yet I am perswaded by Gods holye worde, and by the experience of some spokē of in the same, that in the flame they felt no heate, and in the fire they felt no consumption: and I constantly beleue, that how soeuer y<sup>e</sup> stoude of this my body shalbe wasted by it, yet my soule and spirit shalbe purged thereby: a payne for the tyme, wherewith notwithstanding followeth toy vnspokeable. And here be much entreated of this place of scripture: Noli timere quia redemit te & vocauit te nomine tuo, meus es tu. Cum transferis per aquas, tecum ero, & flumina non operient te. Cum ambulaueris in igne, non combureris & flamma non ardebit te, quis ego Dominus Deus tuus sanctus Israel, saluator tuus. That is: Feare not, for I redeemed thee, and called thee by the name thou art myne owne. When thou goest through the water, I will

be with thee, and the strong floods shall not ouerflow thee. Whē thou walkest in the fire, it shall not burne thee, and the flame shall not kinde vpon thee, for I am the Lord the God, the holy one of Israel, which he did most comfortably entreate of, as well in respect of hymselfe, as applying it to the particular bie of his frendes there present, of whome, some tooke in che sweetefruite therein, that they caused the whole sayd sentence to be sayde written in Tables, & some in theyr booke. The comfort wherof (in diuers of them) was neuer taken from them to their dying day.

The Saturday next following, when the Officers of execution (as the manner is) with their gleaues and halberdes were ready to receaue hym, and to leade him to the place of execution without the Citie gate, called Byshops gate, in a tow valley commonly called the Lollards pit, vnder S. Leonards hyl enuironed about with great wyllies (whiche place was chosen for the peoples quiet sitting to see the execution) at the comming forth of the sayd Thomas Bilney out of the prison doore, one of hys frendes came to hym with few wordes, as he durst, spake to hym & prayed him & in Gods behalfe, to be constant and to take his death as patiently as he coulde. wherunto the sayd Bilney answered, with a quyet and milde countenance: Ye see when the Mariner is entred hys shipp to sayle on the treonblous Sea, how he for a while is tossed in the byllowes of y<sup>e</sup> same but yet in hope that he shall once come to the quyet harbor, he beareth in better comforte, the perils whiche he feeleth: So am I now toward this sayling, & what fouer stormis I shall

Constant  
Bilney ex-  
horted to  
constancy.

Doct. Parker  
Archb. of Can-  
terbury, present  
witness at the  
burning of Bil-  
ney.

Bilney tasted  
the fire with his  
finger.