

I shall feele, yet shortly after shall my ship be in the haues: as I doubt not thereof by the grace of God, desiring you to help me to your prayers to the same effect. And so he going forth in the streets, geuing much almes by the way, by the handes of one of his frendes, & accompanied with one D. Warner, Doct. of Diuinity and parson of Yountert, whom he did chuse as his olde acquaintance, to be with him for his ghostly comfort: came at the last, to the place of execution, and ascended downe from the hill to the same, apparrelled in a lay mans gowne with his sleues hanging downe, & his armes out, his heare being pitiously mangled at his degradation (a litle single body in person, but alwaies of a good vpright countenance) and drew neare to the stake prepared, & somewhat taryng the preparation of the fyre, he desired that he might speak some wordes to the people, and there standing, thus he sayd:

God people, I am come hyther to dye, and borne I was to liue vnder that condition, naturally to dye againe, and that ye might testify that I depart out of this present life as a true Christian man in a right beliefe towardes almighty God, I will rehearse vnto you in a fast sayth, the Articles of my Creede, and then began to rehearse them in order as they be in the common Creede, with oft eleuating his eyes and handes to almighty God, and at the Article of Christiies incarnatio having a litle meditation in himselfe, & comming to the word Crucified, he humbly bowed himselfe and made great reuerence, and then proceeding in the Articles and comming to their wordes, I beleue the Catholicke Church, there he paused and spake these wordes: God people I must here confesse to haue offended the Church in preaching once agaynst the prohibition of the same, at a pome Cure belonging to Trinity hall in Cambridge where I was fellow, earnestly intreated thereunto by the Cure and other good people of the parish, theuving that they had no Sermon there of long time before: & so in my conscience moued, I did make a pome collation vnto them, and thereby ranne into the disobedience of certaine authority in the Church, by whom I was prohibited: howbeit I trust at the generall day, charity that moued me to this acte, shall beare me out at y iudgement seat of God: & so he proceeded on, without any manner of wordes of recantation, or charging any man for procuring him to his deeth.

This once done, he put of his gowne, and went to the stake, and knelyng vpon a litle ledge comming out of the stake, wheron he should afterward stand to be better sene, he made his pyniate prayer w such earnest eleuation of his eyes and handes to heauen, and in so good quiet behauior, that he seemed not much to consider the terror of his deeth, and ended at the last, his pyniate prayers with the 143. Psalm beginning Domine exaudi orationem meam, auribus percipe obsecrationem meam. &c. That is, Heare my prayer O Lord, consider my desire: & the next verse he repeated in deepe meditation thys: Et ne intres in iudicium cum seruo tuo Domine. I. And enter not into iudgement with thy seruauant, for in thy sight shall no man liuing be iustified, and so finishing that psalme he ended his pyniate prayers.

After that, he turned himselfe to the officers, asking the if they were ready, and they answered, yea, whereupon he put of his iacket and doublet and stode in his hose & shirt, and went vnto the stake, standing vpon that ledge, and the chayne was cast about him, and standing thereon, the sayd D. Warner came to him to bid him farewell, which spake but few wordes for weeping. Vpon whom the sayd Tho. Bilney did most gently smile, & inclined his body to speak to him a few wordes of thanks, and the last were these: D. Maister Doctor, Pace gregem tuum, Pace gregem tuum, vt cum venerit Dominus, inueniat te sic facientem. That is, Feede your flocke, feede your flocke, that when the Lord commeth, he may finde you so doing, and farewell god D. Doctor, and pray for me, and so he departed without any answer, sobbing and weeping.

And while he thus stode vpon the ledge at the stake, certayne Friers, Doctours and Priors of theyr houses being there present (as they were vcharitably and maliciously present at his examination and degradation, &c.) came to him and sayd: D. Bilney the people be perswaded that we be the causes of your deeth, and that we haue procured the same, and thereupon it is like that they will withdraw theyr charitable almes from vs al, except you declare your charity towards vs and discharge vs of the matter, wherupon the sayd Tho. Bilney spake with a loud voyce to the people, and sayd: I pray you god people be neuer y worle to these men for my sake, as though they should be the authors of my deeth. It was not they, and so he ended.

Then the officers put reed and fagots about hys body and set fire on the reed, which made a very great flame, which sparkled and deformed the visage of his face, he holding vp his handes and knocking vpon his brest, crying

sometimes Ihesus, sometimes Credo. which flame was blowne away fro him by the violence of the winde, which was that day & 2. or 3. dayes before notable great, in which it was sayd that the fieldes were maruellously plagued by the losse of cozne: and so for a litle pauce, he stode without flame, the flame departing & recouling thys ere the wood took strength to be the sharper to consume him: and the he gaue vp the ghost, and his body being turbered bowed downeward vpon the chayne. The one of the officers with his halbard smite out the stagle in the stake behinde him, & suffered his body to fall into the bottom of the fyre, laying wood on it, and so he was consumed.

Thus haue ye (good readers) the true history, & Martyrdome of this good man, that is, of blessed Saunt Bilney (as M. Latimer doth call him), without any recantation, testified and ratified by the authority abovesayd. By the which authority and party being there present & yet alme, it is furthermoze constantly affirmed that Bilney not only did neuer recant, but also that he neuer had any such bill, or script or scrolle in his hand to read, either softly, or avertly, as M. Moore per licentia Poeticam, would heare vs downe, wherfore euen as ye see M. Moore deale in this, so ye may trust him in the residue of his other tales, if ye will.

¶ Mayster Stafford of Cambridge.

As the death of this Bodly Bilney did much good in Northfolke where he was burnt: so his diligent trauel, in teaching and exhorting other, and example of life correspondent to his doctrine, left no small fruite behinde him in Cambridge, being a great meanes of framing that vniuersity, & drawing diuers vnto Christ. By reason of wh, and partly also of an other called M. Stafford, the word of God bega there most luckily to spread, and many toward wittes to flourish. In the company of whom was M. Latimer, D. Barnes, D. Thibell of Denbroke hall, M. Foke of Beuet Colledge, and M. Soude of the same Colledge, D. Warner aboue mentioned, with diuers other moe.

This M. Stafford was then the publicke reader of the Diuinity lecture in that vniuersity, who, as he was an earnest professour of Christiies Gospell: so was he as diligent a follower of that which he professed, as by this craspic here following may appeare.

For as the plague was then soze in Cambridge, and amongst other a certaine Ioyist called Sy. Henry Coniurer lay soze sicke of the sayd plague, M. Stafford hearyng therof, and seeing the horrible danger that his soule was in, was so moued in conscience to helpe the dangerous case of the Ioyist, that he neglecting his owne bodely deeth, to recouer the other from eternal damnatio, came vnto him, exhorted and so labored him, that he would not leaue him, before he had conuerted him, and saw his coniuering books burned before his face, which being done, maister Stafford went home, and immediately sickened, & shortly after most christianly deceased, Ex fideli testimonio D. Ridlei, & Edmund. Episcoporum Lond.

Concerning which M. Stafford, this mozeouer is to be noted how that M. Latimer being yet a feruent and a zealous Iapost, standing in the Schooles when M. Stafford read, had the Schooles not to heare him: and also preaching agaynst him, exhorted the people, not to beleue hym, and yet the sayd Latimer confessed himselfe, that he gaue thanks to God, that he asked him forgiveness before hee departed.

And thus much by the way of god M. Stafford, who for his constant and godly aduenture in such a cause, may seeme not vnworthy to goe with blessed Bilney, in the fellowship of holy and blessed Martyrs.

¶ The story of M. Symon Fish.

Before the time of M. Bilney, and the fall of the Cardinal, I thought haue placed the story of Saunt Fish with the booke called the Supplication of Beggars, declaring how and by what meanes it came to the kynge's hand, and what effect therof followed after, in the reformation of many thinges, especially of the Clergy. But the missing of a few yeares in this matter, breaketh no great square in our story, though it be now entered here which should haue come in five yeares before. The manner and circumstance of the matter is this:

After that the light of the gospell working mightely in Germany, began to spread his beames here also in England, great fyre & alteration folowed in the hearts of many: so that colozed hypocrisy, and false doctrine, & paynted holynes began to be clyped moze and moze by the reading of Gods word. The authority of the Bishop of Rome, and y glory of his Cardinals was not so high, but such as had

The patient death & Martyrdome of M. Bilney.

Saunt Bilney.

M. Moore's false report refuted.

M. Bilney the chiefe conuictor or Apostle of Cambridge.

The notable zeale of M. Stafford, in saving a damnable Priest.

M. Latimer asked M. Stafford forgiveness.

M. Symon Fish, the author of the booke, called the supplication of Beggars.

Tho. Bilney going to hys death.

The wordes of Tho. Bilney at the stake.

Tho. Bilney put to death preaching, being thereunto desired.

M. Moore proued a lyer by witness present at Bilneys death.

Tho. Bilney praying at the stake. Psal. 143.

D. Warner taking his farewell of Tho. Bilney.

The wordes of Tho. Bilney to Doct. Warner.

The Fryers desire Bilny to speake for them.