

freely wies sparced with Gods grace, began to espy Christ from Antichrist, that is, true sincerity, from counterfeit religion. In the number of whom, was the sayd M. Simon Fish, a gentleman of Brayes June. It happened the first year that this Gentleman came to London to dwell, which was about the yeare of our Lord 1525, that there was a certayne play or interlude made by one M. B. of the same June gentlemen, in which play partly was matter agaynst the Cardinall wolsey. And where none durst take vpo the to play that part, which touched the sayd Cardinall, thys foresayd M. Fish took vpon him to do it, wherupon great displeasure ensued agaynst him, vpon the Cardinals part: In so much as he being perswaded by the sayd Cardinall, the same night that this Tragedy was playd, was compelled of force to voyd his owne house, & so fled ouer the Sea vnto Wendall: vpon occasion wherof the next yeare following this booke was made (being about the yeare. 1527.) and so not long after in the yeare (as I suppose) 1528. was sent ouer to the Lady Anne Bullepyne, who then lay at a place not farre from the Court. which booke her brother seing in her hand, took it and read it, & gaue it her agayne, willing her earnestly to geue it to the king, which thing she so dyd.

This was (as I gather) about the yeare of our Lord. 1528. The king after he had receiued the booke, demaunded of her who made it. wherunto she answered and said, a certayne subiect of his, one Fish, who was fled out of the Realme for feare of the Cardinall. After the king had kept the booke in his holome 3. or 4. dayes, as is credibly reported, such knowledge was geuen by the kinges seruants, to the wife of the sayd Simon Fish, that she might boldly send for her husband, without all perill or dawnger. wherupon she therby being incouraged, came first & made sure to the king for the safe returne of her husband. who vnderstanding whole wise she was, shewed a maruellous gentle & chearfull countenance towards her, asking where her husband was. She answered, if it like your grace, not farre of. When sayth he, fetch him, and he shall come and goe safe without perill, & no man shall do him harme, saying mozeouer that he had much wrong that he was from her so longe: who had bene absent now the space of two yeares and a halfe. In the which meane time, the Cardinall was deposed, as is aforesayd, and M. More set in his place of the Chawncellozship.

Thus Fishes wife being emboldened by the kinges words, went immediatly to her husband being lately come ouer, and sping priuily within a myle of the Courte, and brought him to the king: which apparcth to be about the yeare of our Lord 1530. when the king saw him, and vnderstand he was the author of the booke, he came and embraced him with louing countenance: who after long talke: for the space of 3. or 4. houres, as they were riding together on hunting, at length dinnitred him and had him take home his wife, for she had takē great paynes for him. who answered the king agayne and said, he durst not to do, for feare of Syr Thomas More then Chawncelloz, & Scotley then Bishop of London. This seemeth to be about the yeare of our Lord. 1530.

The king taking his signet of his finger, willed hym to haue him recommended to the Lord Chawncelloz, charging him not to be so hardy to worke him any harme, M. Fish receiuing the kinges signet, went and declared hys inuillage to the Lord Chawncelloz, who took it as sufficient for his owne discharge, but he asked him if he had any thing for the discharge of his wife: for she a litle before had by chaunce displeasid the Fryers, for not suffering them to say theyr Gospels in Latine in her house, as they did in others: vntlesse they would say it in English, wherupon the Lord Chawncelloz, though he had discharged the man, yet leauing not his grudge towards the wife, the next morning sent his man for her to appeare before him: who, had it not bene for her young daughter, which then lay sicke of the plague, had bene like to come to much trouble. Of the which plague her husband, the sayd M. Fish deceasid in half a yeare, the afterward married to one M. James Baynham, Syr Alexander Baynhames sonne, a worthypfull knight of gloucesteryre. The which foresayd M. James Baynham, not long after was burned, as incontinently after in the processe of this story, shall appeare.

And thus much concerning Symon Fish the author of the booke of beggars, who also translated a booke called the Summe of the Scripture, out of the Dutch.

Now cometh an other note of one Edmund Moddys the kinges footman, touching the same matter.

This M. Moddys being with the king in talke of religion, and of the new booke that were come from beyond the seas, sayd if it might please his grace to pardon hym, & such as he would bring to his grace, he shoulde see such a booke, as was matuell to heare of. The king demaunded

what they were. He sayd, two of your Eschauntres, George Elyot, & George Robinsō. The king poynted a time to speake with them. whē they came afoze his presence in a priuy closet, he demaunded what they had to say, or to shew him. One of the said y there was a booke come to their hads, which they had therē to shew his grace. when he saw it, he demaunded if any of them could read it. Yea sayd George Elyot, if it please your grace to heare it. I thought so, sayd the king, for if need were thou canst say it without booke.

The whole booke being read out, the king made a long pause, & then sayd, if a man should pull downe an old stone wall and begin at the lower part, the vpper part therof might chaunce to fall vpon his head: and then he took the booke and put it into his beske, and commaunded them vpon theyr allegiance, that they should not tell to any man, that he had seene the booke. &c. The Copy of the foresayd booke, intituled of the Beggars, here enucth.

A certaine Libell or booke intituled the Supplication of Beggars, throwne and scattered at the procesion in Wellminster on Candlemas day, before king Henry the 8. for him to read and peruse, made & compiled by M. Fish.

To the king our Soueraigne Lord.

Most lamentably cōplayneth theyr woofull misery, vnto your highnes, your poore daily bedemen the wretched hybidious nonsters, on who scarcely for horroz any eye dare looke, the soule unhappy sort of lepers, and other soze people, needy, impotent, blind, lame, and sick, that liue only by almes, how that their nūber is dayly so soze increased, that all the almes of all the well disposed people of this your realme is not halfe enough for to susteine them, but that for very constraint, they dye for hunger. And this most pestilent mischief is come vpon your sayd poore bedemen, by the reason y there is in the times of your noble pcedecessors passed, craftely crept into this your realme, an other soze, not of impotent, but of strong, puissant, and counterfeit ho-ly and idle beggars and vagabondes, which since the tyme of theyr first entry, by all the craft and wylmes of Satan, are now increased vnder your sight, not onely into a great number, but also into a kingdome.

These are not the herdes, but y rauenous wolues, going in herdes clothing, deuouring the flock, Bishops, Abbots, Priours, Deacons, Archdeacons, Suffraganes, Priestes, Monkes, Canons, Fryers, Wardons & Somners. And who is able to number this idle rauenous sort, which (setting all labour aside) haue begged so importunately, that they haue gotten into theyr hands, moze the thierd part of all your Realme. The goodlyest Lordships, manors, landes, and territories are theirs. Besides thys, they haue the part of all the corne, madow, pasture, grasse, wood, coltes, calves, lames, pigs, geese, and chickens. Deuer and besides, the r. part of euery seruantes wages, the r. part of wolle, milke, hony, waxe, cheeke, and butter: yea & they loke so narrowly vpon theyr profites, that the poore woues must be countable to them for euery r. egge, or els he getteth not her rightes at Easter, and shalbe taken as an hereticke. Hereto haue they theyr souce offering dayes, what money pull they in by probates of Testaments, priuy tithes, and by mens offerings to theyr pilgrimages, and at theyr first Wages. Euery man and childe that is buried, must pay somewhat for Wages and Dringes, to be long for him, or els they will accuse theyr frendes and executors of heresy, what money get they by mortuaries, by hearing of confessions (and yet they will keepe thereof no counsell) by halotwng of Churches, altars, superaltars, Chappels, and belles, by cursing of men, and absolving them agayne for mony? whar a multitude of money gather the Wardons in a yeare? How much money get the Somners by exortion in a yeare, by alsciting the people to the Commisaries Court, and afterward releasing the apparantes for money? finally, the infinite number of begging Fryers, what get they in a yeare?

Here if it please your grace to marke, you shall see a thing far out of roynit. There are within your realme of England, 52000. parische Churches. And this standing, that there be but r. householdes in euery parische, yet are there v. c. M. or xx. M. householdes. And of euery of these house holdes hath euery of the five orders of Fryers, a penny

The booke of Beggars brought to the king by George Elyot and George Robinsō.

The kinges answer vpon the booke of beggars.

A libell called the supplication of beggars.

Strong, valiant, sturdy & idle beggars.

More then the thierd part of the realme in the spiritual mens hands,

Ex certa relatione, vniuq. testimonio propriis ipsius coningis.

The booke of the supplication of beggars geuen to the king.

M. Fish brought, and gently entertayned of the king.

M. Fish rescued by the king.

Syr Thomas More perfectest M. Fishes wife.

M. Fish dyeth of the Plague.

The summe of the Scripture translated by M. Fish.

M. Moddys the kinges footman