

{ Anno 1555. }
Februa-
ry.
M. Saunders
brought to
examinati-
on.

as Christ required the to be denyed, and geue in his cause, And now to come to the examination of this good man; after that the Bishops had kept him one whole yeare and a quarter in prison, at the length they called him, as they did the rest of his fellowes, openly to be examined. Of the which his first examination the effect and purpose thus followeth.

¶ The Examination of Laurence Saunders.

Praised be our gracious God who preserveth his from evil, and doth geue them grace to avoyd all such offences as might hinder his honor, or hurt his Church. Amen.

Being commended before the Queenes most honorable Councell, sundry bishops being present, the Lord Chancelor began to speake in such forme as followeth.

L. Chan. It is not unknowne, that you have bene prisoner for such abominable heresies & false doctrine as hath bene fowne by you: and now it is thought good that mercy be shewed to such as seeke for it: wherefore if now you will shew your selfe conformable, & come home agayne, mercy is ready. we must say that we have fallen in maner all: but now we bee risen agayne, and returned to the Catholicke Church, you must rise with vs, and come home unto it. Bene vs forthwith a direct answer.

Saun. My Lord, and my Lordes all, my it please your honours to geue me leave to answer with deliberation.

Chan. Leave of your painting and pride of speech. For such is the fashion of you all: so please your selues in your glorious wordes. Answer ye a or nay.

Saun. My Lord, it is no time for me now to paynt. And as for pride, there is no great cause why it should be in me. My learning I confesse to be but final: and as for riches or worldly wealth I have none at all. Notwithstanding it standeth me in hand to answer to your demand circumspcctly, considering that one of these two extreme perilles are like to fall upon me: the losing of a good conscience, or losing of this my bodye and life. And I tell you truely, I loue both life and liberty, if I coude enjoy them without the hurt of my conscience.

Chan. Conscience? you have none at all, but pride and arrogancy, * deuiding your selues by singularitye from the Church.

Saun. The Lorde is the knower of all mens consciences. And where your Lordship layeth to my charge thys deuiding my selfe from the Church (as you do mean, & is now among you concluded upon, as I do vnderstand) I do assure you, that I lyng in the sayd wherem I haue bene brought vp sithens I was 14. yeare old: being taught that the power of the B. of Rome is but blurred, w many other abuses springing thereof. Yea, as I haue receiued euen at your hands that are here present, as a thing agreed upon by the Catholicke Church and publicke authority.

Chan. Yea mary, but I pray you: haue you receiued by conscience and authoritye all your heresies of the blessed Sacrament of the aulter?

Saun. My Lord, it is lesse offence to cutte off an arme, hand, or ioynt of a man, than to cut off the head. For if man may liue though he do lacke an arme, hand or ioynt, and so he can not without his head. But you, all the whole sort of you, haue agreed to cut off the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, to whome now you will haue to be the head of your Church agayne.

Bish. of Lond. And if it like your Lordship, I haue his hand agaynst the blessed sacrament. How say you to that?

Saunders. What I haue written, that I haue written, and farther I will not accuse my selfe. Nothing haue you to burden me withall, for breaking of your lawes since they were in force.

Chan. Well, you be obstinate and refuse liberty.

Saun. My Lord, I may not buy liberty at suche a price: but I beseech your honours to be meanes to the Queenes Majesty for suche a pardon for vs, that wee may liue and keep our consciences vnplugged, and we shal liue as most obedient subiectes. Otherwise, I must say for my selfe, that by Gods grace I will abide the moste extremity that man may do agaynst me, rather than to do agaynst my conscience.

Chan. Ah Syria, you will liue as you list. The Donatistes did desire to liue in singularitye: but in deed they were not meete to liue on earth: no more be you, and that shall you vnderstand within these fewen dayes: and therefore away with him.

Saun. Welcome be it, whatsoener the will of God shal be, either life or death. And I tell you truely, I haue learned to dye. But I exhort you to beware of shedding of innocent blood. Truly it will cry. The spirit of God rest upon all your honours, Amen. This is the summe and forme of my

first examination. Day, &c.

This examination being ended the officers led him out of the place, & so stayed vntill the rest of his fellowes were likewise handled, that they might haue them altogether to prison. Laurence Saunders standing among the Officers, being there a great multitude of people, opened his mouth and spake freely, warning them woe of that, which by their falling from Christ to Antichrist they did deserue; & therefore exhorting them by repentance to rise agayne, and to embrace Christ with stronger faith, to conticelle him to the end, in the defiance of Antichrist, sinne, death & the deuill: so should they retaine the Lordes fauor and blessing.

The coppes of his order examinations and excommunication came to the hands of such as do keepe them still in secret. But in them as he defended Christs cause stoutly: so warned he the Pharisaicall bishops and papists, of their hypocrisy and tyranny freely, and cleared himselfe of their vnjust quarrellings truly. After he was excommunicate and deliuered to the secular power, he was brought by the Shriffe of London, to the prison called the Countee in his owne parish in Breadstreet: wherent he reioyced greatly, both because he found there a fellow prisoner, M. Cardmaker, with whom he had Christian and comfortable conference, and also because out of prison, as before out of a pulpit, he might preach to his parishners: as by his letter here after shall be declared.

The fourth day of february, the Bishop of London did come to the prison where he was, to disgrace him: which when he had done, Laurence Saunders sayd to hym: I thanke God I am none of your Church.

The day following in the morning, the Shriffe of London deliuered him to certain of the Queenes Ward, which were appoynted to cary him to the City of Couentry, there to be burned. The first night they came to S. Alids, wher M. Brimoald (a man who had more store of god giftes, than of great constancy) did speake with him.

After M. Saunders had geuen him a lesson meete for his lightnes, he toke a cup into his hand, and asked him if he would pledge him of that cup, of which he would begin to him. Brimoald by his shugging and shrinking shewing what he was, sayd: of that cup which is in your hand, I will pledge you: but of that other which you meane, I will not promise you. Well sayde M. Saunders, my deare Lord Iesus Christ hath begun to me of a more bitter cup than mine shall be, and shall I not pledge my most sweet Saviour: yea I hope.

After they were come to Couentry, the same night a poore Shoemaker, which was wont to serue him of shoes, came to him after his maner & sayd: Oh my good M. Saunders, God strengthen and comfort you. Gramercies god Shomaker, quoth M. Saunders, and I pray thee to pray for me: for I am the vnmercifull man for this high office, that euer was appoynted to it: but my gracious God and deare father is able to make me strong enough. That same night he was put into the common Gayle among other prisoners, where he slept litle, but spent the night in prayer, and instructing of others.

The next day, which was the viij. of februarye hee was led to the place of execution in the March without the City, going in an old gowne, and a shorte, barbed, and astrimes fell flat on the ground and prayed. When he was come nigh to the place, the Officer appoynted to see y execution done, sayd to M. Saunders, that he was one of them which married the Queenes Realme with alse doctrine and heresy: wherefore thou hast deserued death (quoth he) but yet if thou wilt renoke thy heresies, y Queene hath pardoned thee: if not, yonder fire is prepared for thee. To whom M. Saunders answered: it is not I, nor my fellow preachers of Gods truth, that haue hurt the queenes Realme, but it is your selfe, & such as you are, which haue alwayes resisted Gods holy word: it is you which haue & do marre the Queenes Realme. I do hold no heresies, but the doctrine of God, the blessed Gospel of Christ: that hold I, that beleue I, that haue I taught, and that will I neuer renoke. with that this Tormentor cryed, away with him and away from him went M. Saunders with a merry courage to wardes the fire. He fell to the ground, and prayd: he rose vnye agayne, & toke the stake to which he shuld be chayned, in his armes and killed it saying: welcome the Crosse of Christ, welcome euerlasting life: and being fastened to the stake, and fire put to him, full sweetely he slept in the Lord.

And thus haue we the full history of Laurence Saunders whom I may well compare to S. Laurence, or any other of the old Martyrs of Christs church: both for the feruent zeale of the truth and Gospel of Christ, & the most constant patience in his suffering: as also for the cruell tormets that

SSS li.

M. Saunders freely preacheth Christ.

The 2. examination here lacketh.

M. Saunders deliuered to the secular power.

M. Saunders degraded by B. Boner.

M. Saunders caryed to Couentry.

A good Shoemaker of Couentry.

M. Saunders put in the common gayle in Couentry. February 28. M. Saunders brought to the place of execution.

Achab accuseth Elia. for troubling Israel.

The first examination of M. Saunders.

M. Saunders standeth vpon his conscience.

* Of this diuiding speaketh S. Paule. 2. Cor. 6. & Jerem. 50.

Come out and diuide your selues from them. Sc. Argument.

Conscience ought neuer to stand vpon things vnertaine.

Time and authoritye be thinges of them: selues alwayes vnertaine.

Ergo, conscience ought neuer to stand vpon time and authoritye.

Si non infans fatis sua sponte, insitiga.

A lawfull request, but it could not be heard.

To liue as the Scripture leadeth vs, is not to liue as we list.

The Papists desire the Pope, the Protestants Christ onely to be their head.

Now which of these two be most like the Donatistes.