

**THE EXAMINATION OF WILLIAM WESTON ALIAS WILLIAM EDMONDS,  
SUPERIOR OF THE JESUIT MISSION IN ENGLAND IN 1587.**

22 June 1587. Contemporary copy

Folger Shelf Mark: K.b. 1, p. 3.

**Contents**

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Transcription  
Annotation

**Editorial conventions**

<u>Underlined letters</u>	In abbreviated words the missing letters are underlined
< >	Broken brackets enclose deleted letters or words
[ ]	Square brackets enclose editorial interpolations
“j”	The “j” is used for the long “i”
“3”	This numeral is used for the yogh

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The Examination of William Weston alias William Edmonds, Superior of the Jesuit Mission in England in 1587.

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22 Junij. 1587

W<sup>m</sup> Edmūdcs:  
Jhezevit

Cumē dver  
cince y stat:  
But a most pillars  
Chappo for y pope:  
ex therfore sent  
dve ... a pills

He examination of William Edmonds a priest of the Society of Jesuits borne in Warrinall 21<sup>st</sup> in Cambridgeshire  
four or five miles from Cambridge of the age of about 35 years of English birth in Oxford habited of  
arts, whether he is a Jesuit, whether he is a Jesuit, whether he is a Jesuit, whether he is a Jesuit, whether he is a Jesuit,  
and whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit,  
or whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit,  
or whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit, and whether he is a Jesuit,

1. He is her Majesty's true and lawfull subject, and acknowledgeth her highnes to be lawfull Queen in right so farre  
as he knoweth.

2. He acknowledgeth he cannot tell whether a subject should answer to such Interrogatories as are mentioned in his  
writing, with respect to the subjects from his Majesty's obedience, for sometimes he saith he is bounde sometimes he is not  
bounde, because the positive lawes of his Majesty's realmes do not allow in many things the Catholicke religion: And for  
his parte he will answer, but not upon his oath, because he is a privileged person, and hath received the goddament  
of his Majesty, and direction of his Majesty, to the disposition of his Superior generall named Stanislaus Aquaviva, an  
Italian, and therefore cannot be drawn to suchall questions.

3. He went over the sea about thirtene years since.

4. He went over the sea as a passenger.

5. He is a priest of the Society of Jesuits.

6. He was made abbot of Granada in Spain, Prior of Valencia in Spain by the Bishop of the same.

7. He returned three years since he arrived about 9 months before he hath lived thirtene about London,  
Paris, Rome, Venice, Naples, Genoa, Padua, the which is his religion not to appear any Catholicke for  
receiving the Sacrament, which cannot live without the use of the Sacrament, and therefore must of necessity have  
contrabandment.

8. He was appointed by his Majesty's command to come for England, to the intent to exercise his function, with his Majesty's  
commanded satisfaction and peace, and as he might.

9. He saith the forme of reconciliation is made diverse in England, but he hath received the Sacrament of penance, not to  
and resolution to diverse, but he will not disclose the priest.

10. William Edmonds of the Society of Jesus.

11. He is not a Jesuit, for either Catholicke and goodly for him selfe it to be a doctrine, that the Pope is the only Supreme  
Head of the Church, and that there can be no true Church without the authority of the Pope acknowledged there.

12. He hath received no instructions for any of the books he hath printed of his printing, with his Majesty's  
name.

13. He had received, nor desired any such books.

14. He hath received some summe of money, with his Majesty's consent to have sent over to France or Spain to be distributed  
generally there, but will not confess the printer's name, or place.

15. He was not banished.

17. He had heard of none, or read any of the Books mentioned.

18. He doth not remember that he hath taught any, that the Pope hath authority to excommunicate  
the Queen, but his own opinion is, that he hath all spiritual Jurisdiction, wherof excommunication  
is one part, and therefore that he may excommunicate any, provided he may receive.

**The Examination of William Weston alias William Edmonds, Superior of the Jesuit Mission in England in 1587.**

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22° Iunij. 1587

**William Edmu[n]des:-** The examination of William Edmudes a  
**Thezewit:-** **!-!** preist of the society of Iesuits,  
borne in Crundall parish in Trimworth  
foure or fiue miles from Canterbury, of  
the age of aboute 35/ yeares, of  
Christs church in Oxforde, batcheler  
of  
artes, scholler to master Doctor Toby  
Mathew/ Towching conference, he  
aunswereth it cannot, it doth not, it  
may not  
stand with his faith and profession to  
doubt of his faith, and therfore he  
<v>vtterly refuseth to enter into  
question  
or dispute of the pointes of the  
Catholicke religion./  
*Cummed over  
cin̄ce ye statute:  
But a most perilloos  
Champyon for ye pope:  
& therfōre sent  
over: As a pillor:*

[Below "The Interrogatories whervpon the prisoners are to be examined", which are listed on p.1, are interpolated with the answers. The copy of the printed interrogatories and Edmond's answers are not included here.]

Interrogatory: 1 + Whether he doth accompt him selfe Queene Elizabeths true and lawfull subiect or no? and her Maiesty lawfull Queene in right?

Answer: 1 ++ He is her Maiestes true and lawfull subiect, and acknowledgeth her highnes to be lawfull Queene in right, so farre as he knoweth.

Interrogatory: 2 + whether he doth holde it the parte of a lawfull subiect to aunswer vnto a Magistrate appointed by her Maiestes warrant, either vpon his oth or vpon his alleagaunce, to such Interrogatories as shall concerne the drawing of her subiectes from their due obedience, and whether he for his parte will so aunswer?

Answer: 2 + He aunswereth he cannot tell whether a subiect should aunswer to such Interrogatories as are mentioned in  
[N.B.  
finger]

this  
 article, which withdraw the subjects from  
 her Ma<sup>i</sup>este<sup>s</sup> due obedience, for  
 sometimes h<sup>e</sup> saith he is bounde,  
 sometime he is not  
 bounde, because the positiv<sup>e</sup> lawes of this  
 realme do ouerthrow in many thinges  
 the Catholick<sup>e</sup> religion: And for  
 his parte he will aunswer, but not vpon  
 his oth, because he is a priviledged  
 person, and hath vowed the gouernment  
 of his body<sup>e</sup>, and direction of his soule,  
 to the disposition of his superior  
 generall named *Claudius Aqua viua*, an  
 Italian, And therefore cannot be drawne to  
 externall Courtes.

- Interrogatory: 3 + whan he went ouer the Sea? first
- Answer: 3 He went over the seas about sixteene  
 yeares sence.
- Interrogatory: 4 whether by licence or no, as a merchaunt  
 or passinger?/
- Answer: 4 He went over without licence as a  
 passenger.
- Interrogatory: 5 whether he be a Preist, Iesuite, or  
 Seminary?/
- Answer: 5 + He is a preist of the society of  
 Iesuits.
- Interrogatory: 6 whan he was so made and by whom?/ & whier
- Answer: 6 + He was made subdeacon at Gra<sup><?>nado</sup> in  
 Spaine, Preist at Corbuda in Spaine  
 by the Bishopp there.
- Interrogatory: 7 how longe it is since he retorned, wher he  
 arrived, And in what places he hath  
 lived since?/
- Answer: 7. + He retorned three yeares since, he  
 arrived aboute Yarmouth shoare, he  
 hath lived cheiflye aboute London,  
 Essex, Hampshire, Sussex, Kent, Suffolke,/   
 he saith it is religion not to  
 appeach any Catholicks for  
 receauing Preists, who cannot liue without  
 the vse of Sacraments, and therfore  
 must of necessity giue them  
 entertayment.
- Interrogatory: 8 whether he were appointed by the  
 gouernours of his howse beyond the  
 Seas to come into England, Ireland,  
 or any other parte of her Maiestes  
 dominions, or came of him selfe,? and

to what entent he so came? what he  
had  
*pro viatico?*/

Interrogatory: 9 what he was appointed by his said  
gouernours to do here in England, and  
what he hath done here since his  
comming into England?/

Answers: [N.B. 8.9. + He was appointed by his governours to  
finger] c<v>ome for England, to the entent to  
exercise his function, which he hath  
executed whansoeuer occasion did serve,  
and as he might.

Interrogatory: 10 whether one parte of their preistlie  
office be not sacramentally (as they  
terme it<,>) to reconcile men to the  
Catholicke  
Romish Church?/

Answer: 1<9>0 + He saith the terme of reconciliation is  
made odious in England, but he hath  
conferred the sacrament of penance,  
confession,  
and absolution to diuers, but he will not  
discouer the parties.

William Edmundes of the society of Iesus.

Interrogatory: 11 whether in their sacramentall confession  
and reconcilement (as they call  
it<,>) they do not persuade the  
parties reconciled  
to acknowledge the Pope to be supream  
heade of the true Church, and that  
without his authority, or wher he  
is bannished, & not obeyd ther is no true  
Church?/

Answer: [N.B. 1<0>1 + He presupposeth for other Catholicks and  
finger] holdeth for him selfe it to be a  
doctrine, that the Pope is the onely  
supream  
heade of the Church, and that ther can be  
no true Church without the authority  
of the Pope acknowledged there.

Interrogatory: 12 whether he haue receiued instructions  
before his comming from beyonde Seas  
or since from any other on that  
or this side the Seas, where to receaue  
any missalls, Breviaries, the aunswer  
to the english Iustice,  
or any other bookes which may draw the  
Queens subiects from their due  
obedience or dislike of the religion  
publikely professed in Englande?/

Answer: 12 He hath receaued no instructions for

any./. the bookes he hath sometimes  
of his freindes, which he will not  
name.

Interrogatory: 13. how many of those or such like bookes he  
hath receaued or deliuered forth, of,  
an<t>d to whome, and vpon what  
price?./

Answer: 1<2>3. He neuer received, nor deliuered any such  
bookes.

Interrogatory: 14 whether he haue since his comming from  
beyond Seas receiued any monye of any  
English man for the  
maintenaunce or releife of any preist or  
other person who is fledd or gone  
ouer Seas out of her Maiesties  
dominions?/

Answer: 1<5>4 He hath receaued some summes of monye,  
which he hath sent over to Parris or  
Rhoane to be distributed  
generally ther, but will not confesse the  
particuler places, or persons.

Interrogatory: 15 whether he were one of those that went out  
of the realme bannished hence, the  
yeare 27, and where he was  
beyond Seas, while he was bannished, and  
with what english men he had  
conference with in his last goinge  
+ + ouer, or duringe his being beyond Seas at  
any time before?/

Interrogatory: 16 whan he returned, in what sorte he  
returned, where he arrived?/

Answers: 15.16 He was not banished.

Interrogatory: 17 + whether he haue at any time either beyonde  
Seas, or since his comming ouer,  
seene, redd, or harde any of the  
excommunicacions against her Maiesty  
published first, and sett out by Pope  
*pius quintus*, and either altered,  
confirmed, or qualified by Gregory?./

Answer: 17. He neuer harde th<?>em redd, or redd any  
of the Bulls mentioned.

Interrogatory: 18 + whether he haue persuaded any of the  
Queens subiects, t<y>he Pope to haue  
any authority to excommunicate  
the Queene for forsaking his religion, or  
to absolue the subiect from h<is>er  
obedience, either by taking armes  
against her, or willfully withstanding her  
lawes, till such time as she do  
reconcile her selfe to that, which

they  
call the Catholicke Church, and do  
acknowledge the Popes supremacies in  
her dominions?/

[N.B.  
finger]

18. + He doth not remember that he hath taught  
any, that the Pope hath authority to  
excommunicate  
the Queene, but his owne opinion is, that  
he hath all spirituall Iurisdiction,  
wherof excommunication  
is one parte, and therefore that he may  
excommunicate any Prince vpon  
causes. . . .

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This manuscript is a fair copy of the examinations of ten priests imprisoned in London, including the Jesuit William Weston. His interrogation begins on the page depicted here. Weston, who was being held in the Clink Prison, was an Oxford friend of Edmund Campion, in whose honor he took one of his aliases. He was an influential figure in the Catholic mission, converting the Earl of Arundel and performing several dramatic exorcisms of devils, polemic accounts of which may later have influenced Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The last answer in his examination (not shown here) reads: "This Master Edmundes was taken knocking at Master Frauncis Brownes doore dwelling in Hogge Lane, who hath bene with him sence in conference in the Clinke, as Master Iustice younge knoweth and will prooue. Being demaunded towching Campion, he saith he is a Sainte, as he beleueeth."

Almost a year after being arrested, Weston was questioned on 22 June 1587, the date noted at the top of the page. His captors were little interested in his theological positions except those regarding the royal supremacy, but were much concerned with his movements, activities, and associates. The symbol of the gallows near the top of the page is misleading, as Weston was never executed. He was kept in prison and later transferred to Wisbech Castle, where he was a prominent figure in a dispute among the Catholic community as to who had proper spiritual jurisdiction over the Catholics in England. He chose banishment in preference to taking the oath of allegiance to the Crown at the beginning of James I's reign and died in Spain in 1615.

For more information on William Weston/Edmonds, consult the *Dictionary of National Biography*; *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, edited by Thomas McCoog (Rochester, New York: The Boydell Press, 1996); *The Elizabethan Jesuits of Henry More*, edited and translated by Francis Edwards (London: Phillimore, 1981); and Weston's autobiography, *William Weston: the Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, translated by Philip Caraman, S.J. (London: Longmans Green, 1955).