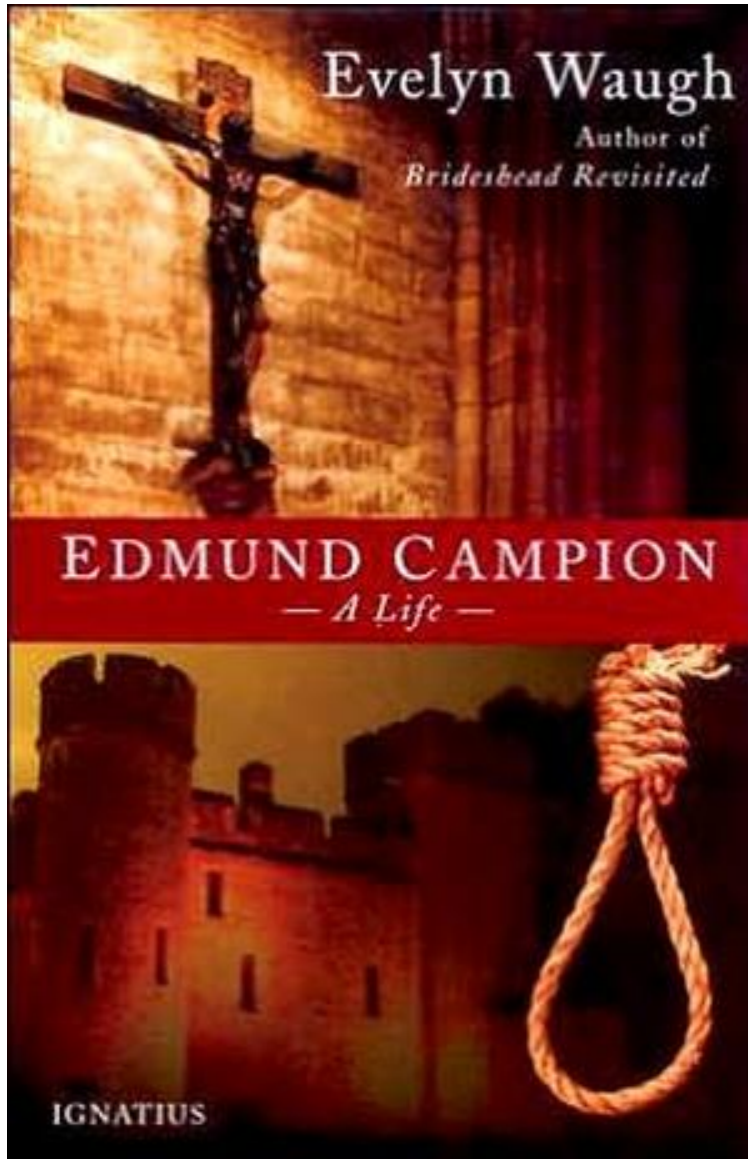


## A Summary of Edmund Champion by Evelyn Waugh



### Summary of *Edmund Champion* by Evelyn Waugh

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Summary by Trena Pilegaard

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## About the Author

Evelyn Arthur St. John Waugh was born in England, October 28, 1903. Waugh was not Catholic by birth, but rather Anglican. His own father was an Anglican clergyman and Waugh had a firm love of the Anglican faith rooted in his heart.

Waugh was sent to Heath Mount preparatory school, then Lancing College. Here he lost the faith of his boyhood. Then Waugh attended Hertford College at Oxford University in 1922. In 1924 he achieved a third-class degree, but left the university without accepting it.

After leaving Oxford, Waugh began to establish himself as an author. The first work that he published was *Decline and Fall* in 1928. Then in 1930, after a long search, and traveling through Catholic Europe, Evelyn Waugh discovered the truth of the Catholic Church and converted. Five years later he would publish the biography *Edmund Campion* in 1935. Evelyn Waugh would continue to write until his death in 1966 on April 10<sup>th</sup> at Combe Florey.

## General Overview

Edmund Campion is a young and promising Oxfordian who lives during the reign of Elizabeth I. His alma mater, St. John's College, Oxford, is one of the last colleges at Oxford with Catholic sympathies. Though he was studying at a college sympathetic to Catholics, and Catholic himself, Edmund betrays his faith by his actions, even accepting the ordination of a protestant deacon in order to avoid detection. After a time, it becomes evident that he must leave England, as many are suspicious that Edmund's papist tendencies despite his position in the English Church. Edmund first travels to Ireland, but soon it is clear that he must go elsewhere in order to avoid danger. Edmund escapes England to the English College at Douai in the Spanish Netherlands, a college for English seminarians unable to continue their studies in England.

At Douai Edmund continues his studies with the intention of becoming a priest. The seminarians at Douai were trained particularly for the administering to those Catholics still in England, a fatal task. After a time, Edmund leaves Douai to become a member of the Society of Jesus in Rome – a Jesuit. Edmund spends his novitiate, and early priesthood in Prague. After a time it is decided by the superiors of the order that Edmund will go to minister to those still oppressed in England.

In England, Edmund ministers and delivers the sacraments to those who have been suffering under the reign of Elizabeth I. While he is traveling in disguise from house to house, Edmund also manages to write several pamphlets against the English Church, infuriating those who are trying to find and punish him. Finally, Edmund, along with several other priest friends, is arrested and taken to the Tower of London.

Edmund is tortured and questioned for months upon months. His accusers are trying to discover a non-existent plot against the queen. Finally after an unfair trial, Edmund is sentenced to death for treason. Edmund Campion gains the martyr's crown by being hanged, drawn, beheaded, and disemboweled.

## Chapter One: The Scholar

In a flashback to 1603 the Queen, Elizabeth I, is on her deathbed, in a state of acute despair. She is dressed in her finery, seated on the ground, defying death itself. Around her neck is a good luck charm that is supposed to ward off death. Her courtiers are worried for the dying queen has yet to name a successor. She is coaxed by all to move to her bed, but she refuses, she refuses food and nourishment as well. It is only after two weeks of horrible suffering that she is carried from the floor to her bed where she dies. Amid all the horrors of her death, did she ever remember the visit she paid to Oxford?

The queen visited Oxford in 1564, during the summer months. Although school was out for the season, all the students and professors returned to pay homage to the queen. As the queen and her retinue process through Oxford, addresses were given in Latin to welcome the queen to Oxford. The queen's visit to Oxford lasted six days, each day filled with plays and orations written by the students and professors of Oxford.

The visit Elizabeth pays to Oxford is twofold. In the days of her father, all the monastic schools of learning were destroyed. With their destruction, learning was also affected, for they had been the strong hold of knowledge for years and years. Elizabeth and Cecil, her secretary, wanted to re-establish the learning in England, and had visited Oxford to show royal favor on the scholarly. Moreover, in the past Oxford had been the central training ground for the priests of England. With the Mass declared illegal and the main Catholic colleges in Oxford suppressed, Oxford was merely a place for scholars with had no other end in view. Elizabeth looked on Oxford with a favorable eye to produce leaders for her new Church.

Edmund Campion was among those who greeted the Queen of England with a speech. Edmund was a popular figure at the College of St. John, his dress and habits were frequently imitated by his peers. He had an interest in natural sciences, but his true gift was his logic and his rhetoric. The speech that Edmund delivered to the queen was quite a success. He also joined a debate on Fire at which the queen was present. Members of the queen's retinue, namely Cecil and Leicester, saw the potential in Edmund and promised him their patronage. Edmund accepted the patronage of Leicester, a powerful alliance indeed, and Leicester gave the promised patronage.

Edmund Campion and Tobie Matthew, another scholar, had both pleased the queen and she sought to establish them as leaders in her Church. Like Edmund, Matthew was an excellent scholar, his speeches were very popular with the queen and he quickly found himself Canon of Christ Church, then Dean, and then Vice Chancellor. Matthew continued his upward climb ending as Archbishop of York. Seeing the life of Tobie Matthew, one has a small idea of what the queen had planned for Edmund Campion.

After the royal visitors depart, life returns to normal at the college of St. John. The founder, Thomas White, was a staunch Catholic, who heard daily Mass a strict part of his routine, until the Mass was suppressed. He might have had secret Mass said afterwards, as it was not an uncommon event. When he died, Edmund gave his funeral oration. But, Thomas White is an example of the mindset of many of the Catholic leaders at Oxford, who were deposed for their faith. Or, if they did not practice it, they were allowed to continue in their position. However, some men, left the country altogether, such as William Allen, who would go on to found the English Seminary at Douai.

Those that remained in the country remained steadfast, only they were no longer allowed the joy of Mass. Waugh points out that it was the Mass, and not Papal supremacy, which sent many Catholics to the block. Mass was said in private, but at the risk of death.

Edmund who continued to move upward in his academic career, must at some point, have taken the oath of supremacy. He also must have attended protestant services, for in 1568 Edmund Campion was ordained a protestant deacon by Cheney, the Bishop of Gloucester. Edmund merely wanted to be left to his studies without getting involved in the battle between the two religions that surrounded him. But there was a problem. If Edmund remained at Oxford he would eventually have to accept holy orders for the English Church. More and more, through his studies and discussions with his professors, Edmund was beginning to see that he could not morally join the Anglican clergy.

Edmund had two choices before him: pretend that heresy does not really matter and live the posh life of Tobie Matthew, moving forward through the hierarchy of the English Church; or, stand up for what he believed was right, despite the consequences. Edmund's own friend Gregory Martin had left England in order to pursue the good. Moreover, anyone who knew Edmund knew that his alliance was leaning more and more with the Catholic faith despite his outward participation with the Church of England. Demands were made for Edmund

to publicly renounce his Catholic tendencies, demands which Edmund deeply resented. Gregory Martin urged Edmund to leave England before it was too late. Soon after, Edmund left Oxford, but he did not continue on to Douai, where Gregory was waiting for him.

Edmund found himself in a very delicate position, since technically because of his participation with the Church of England and his ordination to their diaconate, he was in a state of excommunication. Moreover, there was no one in England to remove the penalty of excommunication despite his Catholic convictions. During this interesting time in Edmund's life he moved to Ireland to write *The History of Ireland*, the only work of Edmund's in the English language that survives today. All of Edmund's other works were written in Latin. Edmund dedicated the work to Leicester, who Edmund still regarded as his patron despite their growing religious differences.

Ireland was quickly becoming just as dangerous for Catholics as England. The Pope had publicly declared the queen anathema and also declared that those Catholics under Elizabeth I were no longer required to obey her. The excommunication of the queen only made those hostile to the Catholic faith become even more so. Heavy penalties were imposed for a priest to administer the sacrament of Penance. In Ireland, Catholics were to be turned over to authorities.

With help, Edmund was smuggled out of Ireland, dressed as a lackey. Edmund sailed to England and remained there for a short while undetected and then sailed for Douai. His boat was boarded and taken back to Dover, but after surrendering his purse, Edmund was allowed to continue his journey across the channel to safety.

## Chapter Two: The Priest

Edmund made his way to the English College at Douai in the Spanish Netherlands. This college was formed shortly after Elizabeth I came to the throne for all those English seminarians that suddenly found themselves in exile. The founder was William Allen of Oriel who had escaped from Oxford some years before. The purpose of the college was to educate and prepare young priests and seminarians to serve those still in England and eventually die for the faith. William foresaw that the priesthood, and hence the faith, would die out in England without seminaries to educate English priests. The college at Douai was to supply England with the priests she needed in order to keep the faith from dying.

At Douai, Edmund met many of his friends that had been sent into exile before him, Gregory Martin was among them. Another friend, Richard Bristow, in collaboration with Gregory Martin, would produce the most accurate translation of the Bible into English, the Douai Bible.

Edmund remained at Douai for two years, studying and preparing for the priesthood. It was during this time that Edmund reconciled to the Church and began receiving the sacraments for the first time in years. While Edmund was here in Douai, he began to see the evil of his ways in England, his collaborating with the enemy so to speak. He realized his potential to serve God and the Church through his talents. But he felt he could not fulfill his duty to God by remaining at the college of Douai. He felt that he was being called to join the Society of Jesus and become a Jesuit. So, in 1573, Edmund left Douai to join the Society of Jesus in Rome.

When Edmund Campion arrived in Rome he found the Society in the process of electing a new successor, their general, Francis Borgia, had recently died. This formality prevented Edmund from joining as soon as he would have liked. After Mercurianus was elected as the new Superior General, the order began to look at candidates for the priesthood. Shortly thereafter, Edmund was accepted to the order as a novice and was sent to study for the priesthood in Prague. After five years of studying, Edmund Campion was ordained a sacred priest of God and said his first Mass on September 8, 1578.

During his time in Prague, Edmund became known as an excellent scholar. He taught rhetoric in the town and as a priest he gave many lectures, and he even entertained the Emperor with his work. He kept in touch with his English friends, some of whom had also joined the Jesuits. He also tried to get a copy of his *The History of Ireland*, which had been seized during his flight from Ireland, in order to revise the work. But things would not remain so peaceful for Edmund for long.

While Edmund was in Prague, Pope Gregory established an English seminary in Rome. Some disputes arose in the seminary between English and Italian seminarians, this dispute was settled by William Allen, now Cardinal Allen. Allen agreed that the seminary would be better in the hands of the Jesuits, but some objected. By giving the seminary to the Jesuits, men that were being trained to save England would instead be sent to country parishes throughout Europe. It was agreed that the English Jesuits would work with Cardinal Allen for the restoration of England. Two priests were immediately chosen from the English Jesuits for the next mission. One of them was Edmund Campion. Cardinal Allen wrote Edmund on December 5<sup>th</sup> to summon him to minister to England.

Edmund was not able to leave his assignment in Prague until March, and did he did not arrive in Rome for his commission until April. Once in Rome, Edmund met the fourteen other men that would accompany him to England. Robert Persons was elected superior of the group of men leaving for England.

It was understood by all that the danger of the mission would force the priests to travel in disguise. They were to leave behind their habits and their names. They would often be alone while they were in England and they were to live as laymen. The object of the mission was to preserve the faith that existed in England. They were to avoid trying to convert hardened heretics, as these men might endanger the mission. They were not to become involved with the state and they were on no account to speak ill of the queen. The queen remained the temporal ruler, they did not have to follow her in matter of faith or morals, but they would not challenge her authority to rule.

After assembling in Rome, the priests began their journey. As they neared the sea, one of their company began to lose his nerve, Bishop Goldwell. The joking of the younger priests about the horrible deaths they all would face was unbearable to the Bishop. The elderly Bishop would eventually ask permission to leave the company, and he was granted his request.

As they prepared to cross the channel, they found that there had been a spy in Rome who had provided the proper authorities in England with their descriptions. People would be waiting to take them into custody even before they left the boats they sailed on. This knowledge did not seem to dampen the spirits of the zealous missionaries, and they continued forward as planned. The group left the continent in shifts, the first being Persons who established himself in London. Nine days later Persons urged Edmund and his companion Emerson to join him. The two men boarded a ship on June 24<sup>th</sup> and left for England.

### **Chapter Three: The Hero**

In England, Elizabeth continued to gain popularity and power. There was also talk of the queen marrying the Duke of Anjou, a deformed little man twenty years younger than the queen. His mother was none other than Catherine of Medici, but if the alliance could be sealed in marriage there was a little spark of hope for the Catholics, for the Duke was staunch, though often misguided, Catholic himself.

Meanwhile, English Catholics were persecuted heavily for following their beliefs. It was high treason for a priest to absolve a person. The only service allowed to be held were those contained in the Pray Book issued by the English Church. Those who wished to hear Mass were heavily fined and there were heavy fines for those who did not attend the services of the English Church. People began to have secret rooms and hide outs

made to safe keep religious objects, and even at times, priests. In response to the actions of the Catholics, men were appointed to seek the Catholics out, one of the best being Richard Topcliffe.

Elizabeth I herself fell to personally persecuting Catholics. Once she told a man she was coming to visit his home and family. After showing the queen hospitality, he was arrested and sent to jail. In another home where she was staying as a guest, the queen had nine other guests sent to jail.

Edmund Campion and his men were being sent to those oppressed and downtrodden by the queen and her laws. They came to give hope and deliver the sacraments to give strength to souls who were quickly falling into despair.

Upon arriving in England, Edmund and his companion were immediately searched and brought into custody. For some miraculous reason, they were set free and the two men met Persons in London. In London they were introduced to a man by the name of George Gilbert, he was a very wealthy man who had dedicated his life to helping the Catholic movement in England. While in London, Edmund met all the chief Catholic leaders and even preached for them in a large hall that had been hired for that purpose. But it was dangerous to have the priest stay for too long in London, as there were spies who knew the priests by sight.

Before they dispersed, the men met to discuss any last questions anyone might have regarding their mission. A main concern was the following of the rules of attending English Church services. It was made clear that no priest should attend such services. Another question that was raised was the rite they were to use to celebrate Mass. The priests were all trained in the Roman rite, but an older rite was more popular in England at the time. It was decided that they should use the older rite, since that is was the rite that was recognized throughout all of England.

After resolving any remaining questions, the priests left London, but first they were outfitted by George Gilbert. Each man had a horse, traveling money, and clothes fit for a gentleman of modest means. Their first stop was at the house of a protestant with a Catholic wife. Here they met a man by the name of Thomas Pounce, who was in the prison of Marshalsea for being a Catholic. How the man escaped prison for a short time to meet Edmund and his companions is still a mystery, but he asked the priests to write a statement of their mission. Edmund proceeded to write what is now known as Campion's Brag, a mission statement, not only for himself, but for every Catholic priest. Pounce brought the Brag back to prison with him and read it to all those who were held within the walls of Marshalsea. From there, copies were made and Edmund Campion's Brag quickly spread across England, giving hope to all who read it. But the Brag spread to the enemies of the Church as well, who took it to be some kind of conspiracy against the crown.

As the priests continued to minister to those across England they tried to keep not only their identity secret, but the identity of those that they ministered to. They left few clues and details behind them, and as a result not much is known of the time they spent in England. However, even with lack of knowledge it is undoubtable that they spent every moment laboring for the Church.

As they traveled from house to house, so did the priest chasers. Often in the middle of a meal Edmund would find himself smuggled into some secret hiding place, only to be let out once danger had passed. For any event, Mass or a sermon, guards were posted to keep watch for any hostile persons. London was especially dangerous, but there the priests would go to meet, give each other confession and then once again go their different ways.

Soon a pamphlet was issued by the Church of England against Campion's Brag, calling the Catholic Church and her priests, among other things, the Anti-Christ. It was also proclaimed that it was treason to harbor priests, or provide them with anything that they might need. To put emphasis on the evilness of priests, Sherwin, Johnson, Hart, Orton, Thomson and Roscarock, priests that had been caught, were tortured by the rack.

In addition to his daily duties of ministering to Catholics, Edmund began working on *The Ten Reasons* or in Latin *Decem Rationes*, an argument defending the Catholic Church against the accusations of the Church of England. The book was secretly printed and then distributed throughout England.

Not long after the publication of *Decem Rationes*, Edmund Campion was discovered and arrested for administering confession and saying the Mass. He had been staying at home where, unbeknown to all, a spy was present. When authorities arrived to escort Edmund to prison, the owners had hidden Edmund and two other visiting priests into a secret room. The three priests stayed there as the authorities ransacked the house, tearing open walls and cupboards, looking for the priests. The priests remained in their cramped hide-away for almost two days, until they were discovered early in the morning of the second day.

## Chapter Four: The Martyr

After Edmund and his fellow priests were discovered, the High Sheriff was sent for and an armed escort. They were treated with respect until they reached London, where they were tied to their horses and a sign was hung about Edmund's neck saying "CAMPION THE SEDITIOUS JESUIT." Upon arriving in the London the priests were imprisoned in the Tower of London, the most formidable prison in England.

After being in the Tower for a while, Campion was taken to an audience with the Queen, where he was questioned about his loyalty to her majesty, about Persons, and the purpose of his coming to England. Edmund affirmed his loyalty to the Queen, but refused to publicly renounce his faith and become a protestant. Shortly after his audience with the queen, permission was granted for his torture.

Edmund was captured in July, and he would remain in the Tower of London, under almost constant torture, until December. The purpose of the torture was to try and extract from him a papist plot to murder the queen. Of course such a plot did not exist, but authorities could not think of any other reason for priests to infiltrate England. Moreover, through various trick questions and brutal torture, the questioners were able identify more Catholics and confirm suspicions about others who had been suspected of being Catholic.

Edmund was also forced to undergo four "Conferences" where he was questioned about his faith. A more correct understanding of these conferences is that they were debates of some sort. Edmund was never allowed to prepare for these conferences, despite the vast amount of preparation they required. However, despite his lack of resources and extreme pain, Edmund was able to refute any question they put to him, though his correct answers were never acknowledged.

The two other priests who had been captured with Edmund were put under trial and were both falsely accused of treason. Edmund was also tried unfairly and deemed a traitor; the penalty for all three was death by hanging, quartering, beheading and disembowelment.

The execution was carried out eleven days after the trial. But like the death of any saint, the gruesome death of Edmund Campion was not without its rewards. One example is a man who was present converted to Catholicism, and later would return to England to die the same death as Edmund Campion.