

[PARLIAMENT OF ENGLAND, 1545]

[Speech of King Henry 8 to Parliament accepting royal authority
over charities and exhorting against religious dissension]

[1]

[Halle's *Chronicle*]

The *xxiiij.* day of December, the kynges majesty came into the parliament houfe, to geve his royal assent, to suche actes as there had passed, where was made unto him by the Speaker, an eloquent oration, to the which it hath ever ben accustomed, that the lord Chauncellor made answer, but at this time it was the kynges pleasure, that it should be otherwyse, for the kyng himself made him answer, as foloweth worde for worde, as nere as I [2] was able to report it.

Kyng Henry the VIII. answered to the speaker of the Parliament.

Although my Chauncelor for the time beyng, hath before this time used, very eloquently and substantially, to make answer to suche oracions, as hath bene set furth in this high court of Parliament, yet is he not so able to open and set furth my mynd and meanyng, and the secretes of my hart, in so plain and ample maner, as I my selfe am and can do:

wherfore I taking upon me, to answer your eloquent oration maister Speaker, say, that wher you, in the name of our wellbeloved commons, hath both praysted 7 extolled me, for the notable qualities, that you have conceived to be in me, I most hartely thanke you all, that you have put me in remembraunce of my dutye, which is to endeavor my self to obtaine and get suche excellent qualities, and necessary vertues, as a Prince or governor, should or ought to have, of which giftes I recognize my self bothe bare and barren: but of suche small qualities, as God hath endued me withal, I rendre to his goodnes my moste humble thankes, entending with all my witte and diligence, to get and acquire to me suche notable vertues, and princely qualities, as you have alleged to be incorporate in my persone:

These thankes for your lovyng admonicion and good counsaill firste remembred, I eftsones thanke you again, because that you considering our greate charges (not for our pleasure, but for your defence, not for our gain, but to our great cost) whiche we have lately susteyned, aswell in defence of our and your enemies, as for the conquest of that fortresse, which was to this realm, moste displeasur and noysome, 7 shall be by Goddes grace

hereafter, to our nacion moste profitable and pleasaunt, have frely of youre awne mynde, graunted to us a certain subtedy, here in an act specified, [3] whiche verely we take in good part, regarding more your kindnes, then the proffite thereof, as he that setteth more by your loving hartes, then by your substauce.

Beside this hartie kindnes, I cannot a little rejoyse when I consider, the perfite trust and sure confidence, whiche you have put in me, as men having undoubted hope, and unfeined belefe in my good dooynges, and just procedinges for you, without my desire or request, have committed to myne order and disposicion, all Chauntries, Colleges, Hospitales, and other places specified in a certain act, [4] firmly trustyng, that I wil orde them to the glory of God, and the profite of the commonwealth. Surely if I contrary to your expectation, should suffre the ministres of the Church to decaye, or learning (which is so great a juell) to be minished, or pore and miserable people, to be unrelieved, you might say that I beyng put in so speciall a trust, as I am in this case, were no trustie frende to you, nor charitable man to mine even christian, neither a lover of the publyk wealth, nor yet one that feared God, to whom accompt must be rendered of all our dooynges. Doubt not I praye you, but your expectacion shall be served, more Godly and goodly then you wil wish or desire, as hereafter you shall plainly perceive.

Now, sithence I find suche kyndenes, on your part towarde me, I cannot chose, but love and favor you, affirmyng that no prince in the world, more favoereth his subjectes, then I do you, nor no subjectes or commons more, love and obaye, their soveraigne lord, then I perceive you do me, for whose defence my treasure shall not be hidden, nor yf necessity requyre my persone shall not be unadventured:

yet although I with you, and you with me, be in this perfect love and concord, this frendly amity can not continue, except bothe you my lordes temporal, and you my lordes spiritual, and you my lovyng subjectes, studie and take paine to amend one thing, which surely is amysse, and farre out of

[1] [The Union of the two noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke by Edward Halle, London: King's Printer (1550), fol 260r-262r. Copied from the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/b30326874/page/n1309/mode/2up>, & seq. Several similar versions of this remarkable speech are available elsewhere in print and on-line. The above is the earliest I can find, and apparently the source of the others.]

[2] [The author himself, Edward Hall or Halle (c 1496-1547) was an MP at this time.]

[3] [Subsidy act of 1545, 37 H 8 c 25 (SR vol 3 pp 1019-1032)]

[4] [The Dissolution of Colleges Act, 1545, 37 H 8 c 4 (SR vol 3 pp 988-993), also called the Abolition of Chantries Act or simply the Chantries Act of 1545]

ordre, to the which I moſte hartely require you, which is, that charity and concord is not e-amongeſt you, but diſcord and diſſencioⁿ, beareth rule in every place.

St Paule ſaieth to the Corinthians, in the *xiiij*. Chapter, Charitie is geⁿtle Charitie is not envious, Charitie is not proude and ſo furth in the ſaid Chapter:

Beholde then what love and Charitie is emongeſt you, wheⁿ the one calleth the other, Hereticke and Anabaptiſt, and he calleth hym again Papiſt, Ypocrite, and Phariſey, Be theſe tokens of charitie emongeſt you? Are theſe the ſignes of fraternal love between you?

No, no, I aſſure you, that this lacke of Charitie emongeſt your ſelves, will bee the hinderaunce and aſſwagyng, of the fervent love betwene us, as I ſaid before, except this wou^d be ſalved, and clerely made whole.

I muſt nedes judge the faut and occaſion of this diſcorde, to bee partly by negligence, of you the fathers 7 preachers of the ſpiritualtie. For if I know a man whyche liveth in adultery, I muſte judge hym a lecherous and a carnall perſone: If I ſe a man boaſt and bragg hymſelf, I cannot but deme hym a proude manne. I ſe and here daily that you of the Clergy preache one againſt another, teache one coⁿtrary to another, inveigh one againſt another without Charity or diſcrecioⁿ. Some be to ſtyff in their old *Mumpſimus*, other be to buſy and curious, in their newe *Sumpſimus*. Thus all men almoſte be in variety and diſcord, and fewe or none preache truly and ſincerely the worde of God, accordyng as thei ought to do. Shal I now judge you charitable perſones doing this? No, no, I cannot ſo do:

alas how can the pore ſoules live in concord when you preachers ſow emonges them in your ſermons, debate 7 diſcord? Of you thei loke for light, and you bryng the^m to darckenes.

Amende theſe crymes I exhorte you, 7 ſet furth Goddes worde, bothe by true preaching, and good example gevyng, or els I whom God hath appoynted his Vicare, and high mynſter here, wyll ſe theſe dyviſions extinct, and theſe enormities corrected, according to my very duety, or els I am an unproffitable ſervaunte, and untrue officer.

Although as I ſaie, the ſpiritual men be in ſome faute, that charytie is not kept emongeſt you, yet you of the temporaltie, bee not cleane and unſpotted of malice and envie, for you rayle on Biſhoppes ſpeake ſlauⁿderouſly of Prieſtes, and rebuke

and taunt Preachers, bothe contrary to good ordre, and Chriſtian fraternity. If you knowe ſurely that a biſhop or preacher, erreth or techeth perverſe doctrine, come and declare it to ſome of our Counſayl or to us, to whom is committed by God the high aucthority to reforme and ordre ſuch cauſes and behaviours: and bee not Judges your ſelves, of your awne phantaſticall opinions, and vain expoſitions; for in ſuche high cauſes ye maie lightly erre.

And al though you be permitted to reade holy ſcripture, and to have the word of God in your mother tongue, you muſt underſtande that it is licenſed you ſo to do, onely to informe your awne conſcience, and to inſtruct your childreⁿ and famely, 7 not to diſpute and make ſcripture, a railyng and a tauntyng ſtocke, againſt Prieſtes and Preachers (as many light perſones do.)

I am very ſory to knowe 7 here, how unreverently that moſte precious juel the worde of God is diſputed, rymed, ſong and jangeled in every Alehouſe and Taverne, coⁿtrary to the true meaninge 7 doctrine of the ſame. And yet I am even aſmuch ſory, that the readers of the ſame folowe it in doynge ſo fayntlye and coldly: for of thys I am ſure, that Charitie was never ſo faint emongeſt you, and verteous and Godly livyng was never leſſe uſed, nor God him ſelf emongeſt Chriſtians, was never leſſe revered, honored or ſerved.

Therefore as I ſaid before, bee in Charitie one with another, like brother and brother, love dread and ſerve God (to the which I as your ſupreme heade, and ſovereigne lord, exhort and require you) 7 theⁿ I doubt not, but that love 7 league, that I ſpake of in the beginning, ſhall never be diſſolved or broken betwene us.

And the makinge of lawes, which be now made and concluded, I exhort you the makers, to bee as dilligeⁿt in puttyng them in execuſiyn, as you wer in making and furthering the ſame, or els your labor ſhalbe in vain, and your common wealth nothing releved.

Now to your peticion, concerning our royal aſſent, to be geven to ſuch actes as hath paſſed both the houſes. They ſhalbe read openly, that ye maye hear them.

Then they were openly read, and to many hys grace aſſented, and diverſe he aſſented not unto. Thys the kynges oracion was to his ſubjectes there preſent ſuche comfort, that the lyke joye could no be unto them in this world. And thus the actes read, as the maner is, and his aſſent geven, his grace roſe and departed.