

Certain Sermons or Homilies

Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII, had finished compiling and editing the first edition of *Certain Sermons or Homilies* in 1543. The politically sensitive nature of the project, however, delayed its publication until the accession of Henry's heir, Edward VI. Originally conceived as a method of instructing the laity in new reformist doctrine until an effective preaching clergy could be trained, *Certain Sermons and Homilies* was controversial. When Cranmer finally got the volume into print, not to mention authorized by royal proclamation, in July 1547, its content had already raised the ire of Stephen Gardiner, who had refused to contribute to the project. He argued, without much effect, that *Certain Sermons*, with its advocacy of justification by faith and its rejection of good works as necessary to salvation, violated the law which proscribed teachings that contradicted those in the *King's Book* of 1543, an endorsement of conservative and more "Catholic-leaning" doctrine. Used throughout the reign of Edward VI, *Certain Sermons* was suppressed under Mary I, only to be reinstated under Elizabeth in 1559. Going through a number of substantially altered editions, *Certain Sermons* functions as a register of political as well as religious concerns in the reigns of Edward and Elizabeth. Twenty-one new sermons in a second volume appeared in 1563. The sermon "Against Rebellion," written in response to the Northern Rebellion of 1569, appeared in the 1571 edition of the second volume. While the authorship of the sermons is not always known, Cranmer wrote at least three of the sermons in the original 1547 edition, with others by John Harpesfield (1516-78), Edmund Bonner (d. 1569), and Thomas Becon (1512/13-67).

The identity of the author of "An Exhortation concerning Good Order and Obedience" remains unknown.

EDITION: *Certayne sermons, or Homelies appoynted by the Kynges Maiestie, to bee declared and redde, by all persons, vicars, or curates, every Sondag in their churches, where they have cure* [London: R. Grafton], Anno, 1547. STC 13639.5.



Certain Sermons or Homilies

An Exhortation Concerning Good Order and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates

Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in Heaven, earth, and waters in a most excellent and perfect order. In Heaven, he hath appointed distinct orders and states of archangels and angels. In earth, he hath assigned kings, princes, with other governors under them, all in good and necessary order. The water above is kept and raineth down in due time and season. The sun, moon, stars, rainbow, thunder, lightning, clouds and all birds of the air do keep their order. The earth, trees, seeds, plants, herbs, corn, grass and all manner of beasts keep them in their order. All the parts of the whole year, as winter, summer, months, nights and days, continue in their order. All kinds of fishes in the sea, rivers and waters,

with all fountains, springs, yea, the seas themselves, keep their comely course and order. And man himself also hath all his parts, both within and without, as soul, heart, mind, memory, understanding, reason, speech, with all and singular¹ corporal members of his body, in a profitable, necessary and pleasant order. Every degree of people, in their vocation, calling and office, hath appointed to them their duty and order. Some are in high degree, some in low, some kings and princes, some inferiors and subjects, priests and laymen, masters and servants, fathers and children, husbands and wives, rich and poor, and every one have need of other: so that in all things is to be lauded² and praised the goodly order of God, without the which, no house, no city, no commonwealth can continue and endure. For where

¹ *with all and singular* every one [of the] (all of the).

² *lauded* synonym for "praised."

there is no right order, there reigneth all abuse,
 carnal liberty,¹ enormity, sin and babylonical² con-
 35 fusion. Take away kings, princes, rulers, magis-
 trates, judges and such states of God's order, no
 man shall ride or go by the highway unrobbed; no
 man shall sleep in his own house or bed un-
 killed; no man shall keep his wife, children, and posses-
 40 sions in quietness: all things shall be common,³
 and there must needs follow all mischief and utter
 destruction, both of souls, bodies, goods, and
 commonwealths.

But blessed be God, that we in this realm of
 45 England feel not the horrible calamities, miseries,
 and wretchedness which all they undoubtedly feel
 and suffer that lack this godly order. And praised
 be God, that we know the great, excellent benefit
 of God showed towards us in this behalf.⁴ God
 50 hath sent us his high gift, our most dear sovereign
 lord, King Edward VI,⁵ with godly, wise, and hon-
 ourable Council, with other superiors and inferi-
 ors in a beautiful order. Wherefore, let us subjects
 do our bounden⁶ duties, giving hearty thanks to
 55 God and praying for the preservation of this
 godly order. Let us all obey even from the bottom
 of our hearts all their godly proceedings, laws,
 statutes, proclamations, and injunctions, with all
 other godly orders. Let us consider the Scriptures
 60 of the Holy Ghost,⁷ which persuade and com-
 mand us all obediently to be subject first and

¹ *carnal liberty* fleshly or sensual license, conduct beyond what is recognized as proper.

² *babylonical* of or belonging to Babylon; thus, Romish or popish; here, perhaps also Babel-like (disorderly, tumultuous).

³ *common* i.e., held in common (i.e., private property will cease to exist).

⁴ *in this behalf* i.e., in this matter.

⁵ King Edward VI (1537-53) reigned 1547-53. His dedication to the Protestant Reformation undertaken by his father Henry VIII made him the hope of Protestants like Cranmer, who wanted to further the doctrinal and liturgical reform of the English Church. Cranmer called Edward VI on the occasion of his coronation "a second Josias" (see p. 8, note 7).

⁶ *bounden* bound, strictly and absolutely required.

⁷ *Holy Ghost* the Holy Spirit, third person of the Christian triune God, along with God the Father, and God the Son, Jesus Christ; traditionally, Christian commentators have believed that the various authors of Scripture were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit.

chiefly to the King's Majesty, supreme head over
 all; and next, to his honourable Council, and to all
 other noblemen, magistrates, and officers, which
 65 by God's goodness be placed and ordered. For
 almighty God is the only author and provider of
 this forenamed state and order, as it is written of
 God in the Book of the Proverbs: "Through me
 kings do reign; through me counsellors make just
 70 laws; through me do princes bear rule and all
 judges of the earth execute judgment: I am loving
 to them that love me."⁸

Here let us mark well and remember that the
 high power and authority of kings, with their
 75 making of laws, judgements, and officers, are the
 ordinances not of man, but of God, and therefore
 is this word "through me" so many times repeated.
 Here is also well to be considered and remembered
 that this good order is appointed of God's
 wisdom, favour, and love, specially for them that
 80 love God, and therefore he sayeth, "I love them
 that love me." Also, in the Book of Wisdom we
 may evidently learn that a king's power, authority,
 and strength is a great benefit of God, given of his
 great mercy to the comfort of our great misery.
 85 For thus we read there spoken to kings: "Hear, O
 ye kings, and understand; learn, ye that be judges
 of the ends of the earth; give ear, ye that rule the
 multitudes: for the power is given you of the Lord,⁹
 and the strength from the Highest." Let us learn
 also here by the infallible word of God that kings
 and other supreme and higher officers are ordained
 of God, who is most highest, and therefore they
 are here diligently taught to apply themselves to
 95 knowledge and wisdom necessary for the ordering
 of God's people to their governance committed.
 And they be here also taught by almighty God that
 they should reknowlege¹⁰ themselves to have all
 their power and strength not from Rome, but
 100 immediately of God most highest.¹¹

⁸ Proverbs 8:15-17 [Original marginal note: Prover. viii.].

⁹ Wisdom 6:1-3 [Original marginal note: Sapien. vi.].

¹⁰ *reknowlege* acknowledge.

¹¹ A refutation of the Catholic doctrine of the Pope's supremacy over all believers and all worldly rulers, like kings.

We read in the Book of Deuteronomy that all punishment pertaineth to God by this sentence: “Vengeance is mine, and I will reward.”¹ But this sentence we must understand to pertain also unto the magistrates, which do exercise God’s room² in judgement and punishing by good and godly laws here in earth. And the places of³ Scripture which seem to remove from among all Christian men judgement, punishment, or killing ought to be understand⁴ that no man, of his own private authority, may be judge over other, may punish, or may kill. But we must refer all judgement to God, to kings and rulers, and judges under them, which be God’s officers, to execute justice and by plain words of Scripture have their authority and use of the sword granted from God, as we are taught by St. Paul, the dear and elect apostle of our saviour Christ, whom we ought diligently to obey even as we would obey our saviour Christ, if he were present. Thus St. Paul writeth to the Romans: “Let every soul submit himself unto the authority of the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be, be ordained of God; whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, but they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation, for rulers are not fearful to them that do good, but to them that do evil. Wilt thou be without fear of the power? Do well then, and so shalt thou be praised of the same, for he is the minister of God, for thy wealth.⁵ But and if⁶ thou do that which is evil, then fear, for he beareth not the sword for naught,⁷ for he is the minister of God, to take vengeance on him that doth evil. Wherefore ye must needs obey, not only for fear of vengeance, but also because of conscience, and even for this cause pay ye tribute, for they are God’s ministers, serving for the same purpose.”⁸

¹ Deuteronomy 32:35 [Original marginal note: Deu. xxxii.]. *sentence* pithy, wise saying; here, more probably, “passage.”

² *room* office, position, authority.

³ *places of* passages in.

⁴ *understand* i.e., understood.

⁵ *wealth* prosperity, happiness, well-being.

⁶ *But and if* i.e., “but if.”

⁷ *naught* nothing.

⁸ Romans 13:1-7 [Original marginal note: Roma. xiii.].

Here let us all learn of St. Paul, the elect vessel of God,⁹ that all persons having souls—he excepteth none, nor exempteth none, neither priest, apostle, nor prophet, sayeth St. Chrysostom¹⁰—do owe of bounden duty, and even in conscience, obedience, submission, and subjection to the high powers, which be constituted in authority by God, forasmuch as they be God’s lieutenants, God’s presidents, God’s officers, God’s commissioners, God’s judges, ordained of God himself, of whom only they have all their power and all their authority. And the same St. Paul threateneth no less pain than everlasting damnation to all disobedient persons,¹¹ to all resisters against this general and common authority, forasmuch as they resist not man, but God, not man’s device and invention, but God’s wisdom, God’s order, power, and authority.

And here, good people, let us all mark diligently that it is not lawful for inferiors and subjects in any case to resist the superior powers, for St. Paul’s words be plain, that whosoever resisteth shall get to themselves damnation: for whosoever resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God. Our saviour Christ himself and his apostles received many and diverse injuries of the unfaithful and wicked men in authority, yet we never read that they, or any of them, caused any sedition or rebellion against authority. We read oft that they patiently suffered all troubles, vexations, slanders, pangs and pains, and death itself obediently, without tumult or resistance. They committed their cause to him that judgeth righteously¹² and prayed for their enemies heartily and earnestly. They knew that the authority of the powers was God’s ordinance, and therefore, both in their words and deeds, they taught ever obedience to it and never taught, nor did the contrary. The wicked judge, Pilate, said to Christ,

⁹ So-called by Jesus in Acts 9:15.

¹⁰ John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), bishop of Constantinople and Doctor of the Church. R. Bond identifies the source as “On the Epistle to the Romans” (*Certain Sermons or Homilies* [1547] and *A Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion* [1570]: *A Critical Edition*, Toronto, 1987, p. 171).

¹¹ Romans 13:2.

¹² 1 Peter 2:23.

“Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee and have power also to loose thee?” Jesus answered, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above”;¹ whereby Christ taught us plainly that even the wicked rulers have their power and authority from God. And therefore it is not lawful for their subjects by force to resist them, although they abuse their power, much less than it is lawful for subjects to resist their godly and Christian princes which do not abuse their authority, but use the same to God’s glory and to the profit and commodity of God’s people.

The holy apostle St. Peter commandeth servants to be obedient to their masters, not only if they be good and gentle, but also if they be evil and froward,² affirming that the vocation and calling of God’s people is to be patient and of the suffering side. And there he bringeth in the patience of our saviour Christ to persuade obedience to governors, yea, although they be wicked and wrong doers. But let us now hear St. Peter himself speak, for his own words certify best our conscience. Thus he uttereth them in his first Epistle: “Servants, obey your masters with fear, not only if they be good and gentle, but also if they be froward. For it is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God suffereth grief and suffereth wrong undeserved, for what praise is it, when ye be beaten for your faults, if ye take it patiently? But when ye do well, if you then suffer wrong and take it patiently, then is there cause to have thank of God, for hereunto verily were ye called. For so did Christ suffer for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.”³ All these be the very words of St. Peter.

St. David also teacheth us a good lesson in this behalf, who was many times most cruelly and wrongfully persecuted of King Saul and many times also put in jeopardy and danger of his life by King Saul and his people, yet he never resisted,

¹ John 19:10-11 [Original marginal note: Jhon. xix.].

² *froward* perverse, ungovernable.

³ 1 Peter 2:18-21 [Original marginal note: i. Peter. ii]. For Peter’s expansion on Christ’s patience under injustice, see also 22-24.

neither used any force or violence against King Saul, his mortal enemy, but did ever to his liege lord and master, King Saul, most true, most diligent, and most faithful service.⁴ Insomuch that when the Lord God had given King Saul into David’s hands in his own cave, he would not hurt him, when he might without all bodily peril easily have slain him; no, he would not suffer any of his servants once to lay their hands upon King Saul, but prayed to God in this wise:⁵ “Lord, keep me from doing that thing unto my master, the Lord’s anointed; keep me that I lay not my hand upon him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord. For as truly as the Lord liveth, except the Lord smite⁶ him, or except his day come, or that he go down to war and in battle perish, the Lord be merciful unto me, that I lay not my hand upon the Lord’s anointed.”⁷ And that David might have killed his enemy, King Saul, it is evidently proved in the first Book of the Kings,⁸ both by the cutting of the lap⁹ of Saul’s garment and also by the plain confession of King Saul. Also another time, as it is mentioned in the same book, when the most unmerciful and most unkind King Saul did persecute poor David, God did again give King Saul into David’s hands by casting of King Saul and his whole army into a dead sleep, so that David and one Abishai with him came in the night into Saul’s host where Saul lay sleeping and his spear stuck in the ground at his head. Then said Abishai unto David, “God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hands at this time; now, therefore, let me smite

⁴ 1 Samuel 18-20 [Original marginal note: i. Reg. xiii, xiv. and xx.].

⁵ *wise* way.

⁶ *smite* visit with death, destruction, or overthrow.

⁷ 1 Samuel 24:6-7 and 26:10-11. Saul pursues David into the wilderness of Engedi, where David and his men are encamped. Saul falls asleep in a cave which is being used by David and his men, and although his men urge him to kill Saul, David will not hurt “the Lord’s anointed.” Instead of stabbing Saul, David cuts off a piece of his robe; on being shown the cloth, Saul weeps, repents his hunting of David and acknowledges that David will be the next king of Israel. Taking the young man back into his service, Saul requires only an oath from David that when David becomes king he will not take vengeance on Saul’s descendants.

⁸ Original marginal note: i. Reg. xxiii.

⁹ *lap* part of a garment that hangs down and can be folded.

250 him once with my spear to the earth, and I will not
smite him again the second time” meaning thereby
to have killed him with one stroke and to have
made him sure forever. And David answered, and
255 said to Abishai, “Destroy him not, for who can lay
his hands on the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?”
And David said furthermore, “As sure as the Lord
liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall
come to die, or he shall descend into battle, and
260 there perish. The Lord keep me from laying my
hands upon the Lord’s anointed. But take thou
now the spear that is at his head and the cruse¹ of
water, and let us go.” And so he did.²

Here is evidently proved that we may not resist,
nor in any ways hurt an anointed king, which is
God’s lieutenant, vicegerent,³ and highest minister
265 in that country where he is king. But peradventure,⁴
some here would say that David in his own
defence might have killed King Saul lawfully and
with a safe conscience.⁵ But holy David did know
that he might in no wise resist, hurt, or kill his sov-
270 ereign lord and king; he did know that he was but
King Saul’s subject, though he were in great favour
with God, and his enemy, King Saul, out of God’s
favour. Therefore, though he were never so much
provoked, yet he refused utterly to hurt the Lord’s
275 anointed. He durst not, for offending God and his
own conscience, although he had occasion and
opportunity, once lay his hands upon God’s high
officer, the king, whom he did know to be a
person reserved, for his office sake, only to God’s
280 punishment and judgement. Therefore, he prayeth
so oft and so earnestly that he lay not his hands
upon the Lord’s anointed. And by these two exam-
ples St. David, being named in Scripture a man
after God’s own heart,⁶ giveth a general rule and
285 lesson to all subjects in the world not to resist
their liege lord and king, not to take a sword by

¹ *cruse* pot or drinking vessel.

² See 1 Sam 26:7-12.

³ *vicegerent* a person appointed by a king or ruler to act in his place.

⁴ Original marginal note: Objection. *peradventure* perhaps, maybe.

⁵ Original marginal note: Answer.

⁶ 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22 [Original marginal note: Psalm. lxxx. and viii.].

290 their private authority against their king, God’s
anointed, who only beareth the sword by God’s
authority for the maintenance of the good and for
the punishment of the evil, who only by God’s law
hath the use of the sword at his commandment,
and also hath all power, jurisdiction, regiment⁷ and
coercion⁸ as supreme governor of all his realms
and dominions, and that, even by the authority of
295 God and by God’s ordinances.

Yet another notable story and doctrine is in the
second Book of the Kings that maketh also for
this purpose. When an Amalechite, by King Saul’s
own consent and commandment, had killed King
Saul, he went to David supposing to have had
great thank for his message that he had killed
David’s mortal enemy, and therefore he made
great haste to tell to David the chance, bringing
with him King Saul’s crown that was upon his
head and his bracelet that was upon his arm to
persuade his tidings to be true. But godly David
was so far from rejoicing at these news that im-
300 mediately he rent his clothes of his back; he mourned
and wept, and said to the messenger, “How is it
that thou wert not afraid to lay thy hands on the
Lord’s anointed to destroy him?” And by and by,⁹
David made one of his servants to kill the mes-
senger, saying, “Thy blood be on thine own head,
for thy own mouth hath testified against thee,
305 granting that thou hast slain the Lord’s
anointed.”¹⁰ These examples being so manifest
and evident, it is an intolerable ignorance,
madness, and wickedness for subjects to make any
murmuring, rebellion, resistance, commotion, or
310 insurrection against their most dear and most
dread sovereign lord and king, ordained and
appointed of God’s goodness for their commod-
ity, peace, and quietness.

Yet let us believe undoubtedly, good Christian
325 people, that we may not obey kings, magistrates, or

⁷ *regiment* rule or government.

⁸ *coercion* the power to punish.

⁹ *by and by* immediately, at once.

¹⁰ 2 Samuel 1:1-16 [Original marginal note: ii. Reg. I.]. David’s beautiful lament for Saul and Jonathan (Saul’s son and David’s close friend) follows at 19-27.

any other, though they be our own fathers, if they would command us to do anything contrary to God's commandments. In such a case, we ought to say with the apostles, "We must rather obey God than man."¹ But nevertheless in that case, we may not in any wise resist violently or rebel against rulers, or make any insurrection, sedition, or tumults, either by force of arms or other ways, against the anointed of the Lord or any of his appointed officers. But we must in such case patiently suffer all wrongs and injuries, referring the judgement of our cause only to God. Let us fear the terrible punishment of almighty God against traitors or rebellious persons by the example of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, which repined² and grudged against God's magistrates and officers, and therefore the earth opened, and swallowed them up alive. Other, for their wicked murmuring and rebellion, were by a sudden fire sent of God utterly consumed. Other, for their froward behaviour to their rulers and governors, God's ministers, were suddenly stricken with a foul leprosy. Other were stung to death with wonderful strange fiery serpents. Other were sore³ plagued, so that there was killed in one day the number of fourteen thousand and seven hundred for rebellion against them whom God had appointed to be in authority.⁴ Absalom also, rebelling

¹ Acts 5:29 [Original marginal note: Acts v.].

² *repined* murmured or complained.

³ *sore* greatly, grievously.

⁴ *Other ... authority* Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were the chief ring-leaders in a rebellion against the leadership and religious authority of Moses and Aaron. The Lord sanctions their authority by sending Korah, Dathan, Abiram as well as their servants and goods "down alive into the pit"; their two hundred and fifty followers who had offered incense to the Lord in competition with Moses and Aaron were consumed by fire (Numbers 16:1-35). The next day, when the people begin to accuse Moses and Aaron of these deaths, the Lord punishes them with a plague in which 14,700 people die, before Aaron's sacrifice can appease the Lord (Numbers 16:41-50). For similar defiance of God's ordained authorities—Moses and Aaron—the Lord consumes the people of Israel with fire (Numbers 11.1); he afflicts Moses's sister, Miriam, with leprosy (Numbers 12:1-10); he sends fiery serpents which mortally poison many of the complaining Israelites (Numbers 21:5-6) [Original marginal notes: Nume. xi, xii, xxi, xvi].

355 against his father King David, was punished with a strange and notable death.⁵

360 And let no man think that he can escape unpunished that committeth treason, conspiracy, or rebellion against his sovereign lord, the king, though he commit the same never so secretly, either in thought, word, or deed, never so privily, in his privy chamber by himself, or openly communicating and consulting with other. For treason will not be hid; treason will out at the length. God will have that most detestable vice both opened⁶ and punished, for that it is so directly against his ordinance and against his high principal judge and anointed in earth. The violence and injury that is committed against authority is committed against God, the common weal,⁷ and the whole realm, which God will have known and condignly⁸ punished, one way or other. For it is notably written of the wise man in Scripture, in the book called Ecclesiastes, "Wish the king no evil in thy thought, or speak no hurt of him in thy privy chamber, for a bird of the air shall betray thy voice, and with her feathers shall she bewray⁹ thy words."¹⁰ These lessons and examples are written for our learning. Let us all, therefore, fear the most detestable vice of rebellion, ever knowing and remembering that he that resisteth common authority resisteth God and his ordinance, as it may be proved by many other more places of¹¹ Holy Scripture. And here let us take heed that we understand not these or such other like places which so straightly¹² command obedience to superiors, and so straightly punisheth rebellion and disobedience to the same, to be meant in any condition of the pretended¹³

⁵ Riding beneath a tree, David's rebellious son Absalom is caught up in its branches. Dangling there, he is killed by Joab, one of David's men (2 Samuel 18:9-17) [Original marginal note: ii. Re. xvii.].

⁶ *opened* revealed.

⁷ *common weal* common good.

⁸ *condignly* suitably, appropriately.

⁹ *bewray* disclose, reveal.

¹⁰ Ecclesiastes 10:20 [Original marginal note: Eccle. x.].

¹¹ *places of* passages in.

¹² *straightly* directly.

¹³ *pretended* falsely claimed; spurious.

power of the Bishop of Rome.¹ For truly the
 390 Scripture of God alloweth no such usurped power,
 full of enormities, abusions,² and blasphemies. But
 the true meaning of these and such places be to
 extol and set forth God's true ordinance and the
 authority of God's anointed kings, and of their
 officers appointed under them.

395 And concerning the usurped power of the
 Bishop of Rome, which he most wrongfully chal-
 lengeth³ as the successor of Christ and Peter, we
 may easily perceive how false, feigned, and forged
 400 it is, not only in that it hath no sufficient ground
 in Holy Scripture, but also by the fruits and doc-
 trine thereof. For our saviour Christ and St. Peter
 teacheth most earnestly and agreeably obedience
 to kings, as to the chief and supreme rulers in this
 405 world, next under God. But the Bishop of Rome
 teacheth immunities, privileges, exemptions, and
 disobedience, most clearly against Christ's doc-
 trine and St. Peter's. He ought, therefore, rather to
 be called Antichrist and the successor of the
 Scribes and Pharisees than Christ's vicar, or St.
 410 Peter's successor,⁴ seeing that not only in this
 point, but also in other weighty matters of Chris-
 tian religion, in matters of remission of sins and
 of salvation, he teacheth so directly against both
 St. Peter and against our saviour Christ, who not
 415 only taught obedience to kings, but also practiced
 obedience in their conversation and living. For we
 read that they both payed tribute to the King.⁵
 And also we read that the holy Virgin Mary,
 mother to our saviour Christ, and Joseph, who

420 was taken for his father, at the Emperor's com-
 mandment went to the city of David, named
 Bethlehem, to be taxed among other and to
 declare their obedience to the magistrates for
 God's ordinance's sake.⁶ And here let us not forget
 425 the blessed Virgin Mary's obedience, for although
 she was highly in God's favour and Christ's natural
 mother, and was also great with child that same
 time, and so nigh her travail⁷ that she was deliv-
 ered in her journey, yet she gladly, without any
 430 excuse or grudging, for conscience sake did take
 that cold and foul winter journey, being in the
 mean season⁸ so poor that she lay in the stable,
 and there she was delivered of Christ.⁹

And according to the same, lo¹⁰ how St. Peter
 435 agreeth, writing by express¹¹ words in his first
 Epistle: "Submit yourselves," sayeth he, "unto
 kings, as unto the chief heads or unto rulers, as
 unto them that are sent of him for the punish-
 ment of evil doers and for laud¹² of them that do
 440 well, for so is the will of God."¹³ I need not to
 expound these words: they be so plain of them-
 selves. St. Peter doth not say, "submit yourselves
 unto me, as supreme head of the Church"; neither
 he sayeth, "submit yourselves from time to time¹⁴
 445 to my successors in Rome." But he sayeth,
 "Submit yourselves unto your king, your supreme
 head, and unto those that he appointeth in author-
 ity under him." For that ye shall so show your obe-
 dience, it is the will of God. God will that you be
 450 in subjection to your head and king. That is God's
 ordinance, God's commandment, and God's holy

¹ *Bishop of Rome* i.e., the Pope.

² *abusions* perversions.

³ *challengeth* asserts [his] title or right to; lays claim to.

⁴ "Christ's vicar" and "Peter's successor" are both terms tradition-
 ally used to describe the Pope; *Antichrist* Satan; *Scribes and Pharisees* In
 the New Testament, these Jewish scholars are often presented by
 early modern Christian commentators as Christ's opponents. Propo-
 nents of a blind obedience to the Law, the Scribes and Pharisees
 became an emblem for illegitimate and tyrannical authority.

⁵ *both payed tribute to the King* The "King" is the Roman Emperor (the
 Caesar). Christ famously counsels his listeners: "Render therefore
 unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things
 that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Jesus also counsels Peter to pay re-
 quisite tribute money (Matthew 17:24-27) [Original marginal note:
 Matth. xvii.].

⁶ Luke 2:1-7 [Original marginal note: Luke. ii.].

⁷ *travail* labour.

⁸ *mean season* meantime, meanwhile.

⁹ Ron Bond's critical edition of *Certain Sermons or Homilies* notes an
 important and unique passage in the Bodleian copy of the 1547
 edition [Bod. 4° I 6 (2) Th. Seld.], which counsels Christian kings to
 reject the exercise of an absolute authority that would entail exercis-
 ing power without a due consideration and "dread of God and of his
 laws, without consideration of their honour and office, whereunto
 God hath called them" (pp. 171-72).

¹⁰ *lo* behold, see.

¹¹ *express* plain and explicit.

¹² *laud* praise.

¹³ 1 Peter 2:13-14 [Original marginal note: i. Pet. ii.].

¹⁴ *time to time* throughout all time.

will, that the whole body of every realm and all the members and parts of the same shall be subject to their head, their king, and that, as St. Peter writeth, “for the Lord’s sake” and, as St. Paul writeth, “for conscience sake, and not for fear only.”¹ Thus we learn by the word of God to yield to our king that² is due to our king: that is, honour, obedience, payments of due taxes, customs, tributes, subsidies, love, and fear.³

Thus we know partly our bounden duties to common authority. Now let us learn to accomplish the same. And let us most instantly and heartily pray to God, the only author of all authority, for all them that be in authority, according as St. Paul willeth, writing thus to Timothy in his first Epistle: “I exhort, therefore, that above all things, prayers, supplications, intercessions and giving of thanks be done for all men: for kings and for all that be in authority, that we may live a quiet and a peaceable life with all godliness and honesty, for that is good and accepted in the sight of God our saviour.”⁴ Here St. Paul maketh an earnest and an especial exhortation, concerning giving of thanks and prayer for kings and rulers, saying above all things, as he might say in any wise⁵ principally and chiefly, let prayer be made for kings. Let us heartily thank God for his great and excellent benefit and providence concerning the state of kings. Let us pray for them, that they may have God’s favour and God’s

protection. Let us pray that they may ever in all things have God before their eyes. Let us pray that they may have wisdom, strength, justice, clemency, and zeal to God’s glory, to God’s verity, to Christian souls, and to the commonwealth. Let us pray that they may rightly use their sword and authority for the maintenance and defence of the catholic⁶ faith, contained in Holy Scripture, and of their good and honest subjects, and for the fear and punishment of the evil and vicious people. Let us pray that they may faithfully follow the most faithful kings and captains in the Bible: David, Hezekiah, Josiah and Moses,⁷ with such other.⁸ And let us pray for ourselves, that we may live godly, in holy and Christian conversation,⁹ so we shall have God of our side.¹⁰ And then let us not fear what man can do against us, so we shall live in true obedience, both to our most merciful king in Heaven and to our most Christian king in earth. So shall we please God, and have the exceeding benefit, peace of conscience, rest and quietness here in this world, and after this life we shall enjoy a better life, rest, peace, and the eternal bliss of Heaven, which he grant us all, that was obedient for us all, even to the death of the cross,¹¹ Jesus Christ: to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, both now and ever. Amen.

—1547

¹ 1 Peter 2:13; Romans 13:5 [Original marginal notes: i. Pet. ii; Roma. xiii.].

² *that* i.e., that which.

³ Another reference to Matthew 22:21 (see p. 7, note 5); Romans 13:7 [Original marginal notes: Matth. xxii. Roma. xiii.].

⁴ 1 Timothy 2:1-3 [Original marginal note: i. Tim. ii].

⁵ *wise* way.

⁶ *catholic* universal.

⁷ For David, see p. 4, note 7. *Moses* the patriarch who led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and towards the Promised Land; *Hezekiah* king of Judah, famous for his piety, a determined civil and religious reformer (2 Chronicles 28-30; 2 Kings 18); *Josiah* king of Judah, who expanded the territory of the state and instituted important religious reforms, aimed at purifying the Jewish faith of foreign influences (2 Kings 23).

⁸ Judith, chapter 5 [Original marginal note: Judith v].

⁹ *conversation* way of life; communal and social interaction.

¹⁰ *God of our side* Psalm 118:6; Psalm 124:1-2.

¹¹ *obedient ... cross* Philippians 2:8.