

Discourse to the Lords of the Council of State in Spain (1605-1609?)

Sir Charles Cornwallis

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 11600, ff. 271r–269r

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A discourse used by S[ir] Charles Cornewallis knight in the tyme of his imployment in Spaine to the Lord[es] of the Councell of Estate there, sheweing the occasions (that if not p[re]vented) might endainger the peace betwixt the king[es] of Greate Brittain & Spayne. /

I say that such were my desires to continue the peace & unity betwene our king[es], so much affected by both their Ma[jes]ties soe p[ro]fittable to both their estates, & soe much conducing to gen[er]all rest & quiett of all Christendome, as being nowe & w[i]thin few weekes as I hoped to leave them & to returne into myne owne Country. I could not but sett before them these stones of offence, w[hi]ch being not remoued, would (in my Iudgem[en]t) in tyme putt the peace in p[er]ill of a stumble that would hardly be recou[er]ed w[i]thout a daingerous fall, if not an utter enmity betwene o[u]r king[es] and nations, I tould them I would not menc[i]on o[u]r gen[er]all difference in Religion, for soe wise a Councell haueing laid downe such a maxime admitting noe Controversye, that nothing earthly is more p[ro]p[er] & powerfull to assure both estates & quiet Christendome, then a faithfull freindshipp betwene these Monarches, and lykewise not Ignorant [tha]t lawfull contract[es], as well betwene Princes as p[ar]ticulers (though different in their faith,) are religiously to be obserued, That Josua (although manifestly beguiled) obserued w[i]th [th]e Eybonites (though vnbeleuers) & the same was punished in his posteritye for an after breach of what he had capitulated, That Daud both a king & a Prophit playnely p[ro]nounceth, that hee [tha]t desires to inhabitt heaven, is to accomplish his p[ro]misses & contract[es], although they tend to his owne p[re]iudice & disutility. That I hould vnworthy to be soe much as though vpon that p[er]fidious & infernall position never held by religious & understanding diuines, but by godlesse and timerarious and {partialist[es]}, That faith is not to be houlden w[i]th heretiques And doubted not but that the eares of both Princes ever continue stopped from the whisp[er]ing[es] of those fyrye spiritt[es] of both religions that hould it not lawfull to continue amitye w[i]th such as meete not in the iust & punctuall p[ro]porci[on] of their openions, thereby putting vs into soe many vehement disputes & doubt[es] what to thinke, as on all sydes wee are become irrespectiue & careles of what wee doe. / I said [tha]t I would passe vnto those that in my Iudgement were most lykely to giue offence & to hould this Tree of grace from bringing forth the desired fruite of a faithfull amity. /

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That these are in number .3. First the vunexpressed obscure & vnlymitted p[ar]t[es], w[hi]ch this Crew shutt[es] in from the commerce of straingers, Secondly the vnchristian & iniurious p[ro]ceeding of his Ma[jes]ties officers in his port[es], ioyned w[i]th the strainge & unnaturall advantage giuen them by being Iudges & informers in causes wherein themselues are to haue the greatest p[ar]te of the benefitt. Thirdly the dishonourable shift[es] & extremities

of delayes practised by the officers of his Treasury in deferring of paym[en]t[es] to such as his Ma[jes]tie oweth either for service w[i]th their shippes or for p[ro]visions taken for his owne vse & for his Gallies & Garrisons, Concerning the First [tha]t my purpose was not to dispute tytles, my desire being to quench fyre, no to kindle it. / That in those p[ar]t[es] wherein his Ma[jes]tie heere hath any p[ro]perty or possession, although some diuines, in regard that heavens & Seas are free by the law of nature, haue thought that the lyke in the Indies gaue soundest occasion to the Spanish nation in Conscience to vse force vnto, yet reason of State may giue some Cullor of restraunte of traffique. / But for his Ma[jes]tie to inhabbit it in p[ar]t[es] wherein there is neither fort nor foote w[i]thin his power or possession, vnder the shadowe of the authority of the Popes diuision, w[i]th greate reason may be controverted & held an Iniury. / That I would not question the Popes Iurisdicc[i]on, saying it sufficeith that diuines of his owne obedyence hould, That one sauour himselfe under whose authority they clayme, disclaymed temp[er]all Iurisdicc[i]on sayeing that his kingdome was not of this world and forbad the same to his appostles, when he taught them that the Princes of the Gentiles exercised their dominion over them, but he would not haue it soe in them, And that in affirmeing that all power was giuen vnto him in heaven and in earth hee onely intended power of Conversion & redemption of their sowles, not authority & dominion temp[er]all over thir possessions, himselfe in another place saying Quis me constituit Iudicem & deuisorem inter vos. / That I would hould my selfe w[i]thin my owne Element & end this poynt w[i]th example & that not forraine but domesticall, & of those of whose blood his Ma[jes]tie nowe reigneing is now p[ar]ticipant, & from whome are discended diuers of those kingdomes w[hi]ch he nowe possesseth. / I asked what Country, what Citty did Don Pedro king of Aarogon yeild vnto Charles, sonne to the French kinge, To whome Pope Martyn had giuen by authentique writeing & formall Investiture the kingdome of Arragon, Valentia & Cataluna, that w[i]th no reason

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it could be heere required. / That the king my M[aste]r being in forces ^{by Sea} inferior to noe Prince upon earth in number of Subiect[es] & able bodyes & apt disposic[i]ons for Sea services & discoveryes, superior to most, and the aboundance of his p[eo]ple such as necessitates him to seeke both occupac[i]on & evacuac[i]on for them, should, in regard of the Popes said p[ar]tic[i]on be restrayned from trade or setting on cuntryes neither subiect to his Ma[jes]ties dominions, nor confined w[i]th his other possessed kingdomes. / That the Outrages offered by his Ma[jes]ties ministers in the Port[es], I might well forbear to relate, being to most p[ar]te of ther Lo[r]dshi[ps] soe well knowne by the reveiwe of their cases in Councells of warr, where soe nobly & w[i]th soe greate regard to Iustice they had overthrowne their sentence. / That in noe p[ar]te of the world [tha]t ever I read of, It hath been seene [tha]t the Iudge of the cause should be a p[ar]ty in the prey, and that what succeeds of it well appeareth, vizt. all that come before them are adiudged for confiscate, & before the graunte of his Ma[jes]ties schedule (that the owners should haue the good[es] deliuered vpon suretyes) were sould & consumed, comonly vpon an estimate of the 10th p[ar]te of the value thereof, deceiueing his Ma[jes]tie of the most p[ar]te of his p[ar]te, if the sentence were found Iust, or the poore m[er]chant of soe much of his good[es] if vpon reveiw they were adiudged for free, / That sithence the publicac[i]on of the schedule, Iuideing it a bridle to their extorting humors, either they obey it not (as in diu[er]s Port[es] is manyfest) or if they obey

it soe p[ro]tract the dispatch & difficult the busines, as the m[er]chants, loth to loose tyme & consume their substance in suit[es], [tha]t are of soe long a life & soe excessiue Charge in this Courte & Kingdome, are enforced to come to an vnderhand composic[i]on w[i]th the officers, who, w[i]thout a brybe to themselues, will not be drawne to execute his Ma[jes]ties com[m]aund, and w[i]th a bribe are content to sett instantly free, that w[hi]ch before they pretended iustly to lay their hand[es] on as good[es] to be con [Left margin:3] fiscate to the use of their sou[er]eigne. / That the delays of his Ma[jes]ties officers of his treasury, if myselfe had not p[ro]fe of I never would haue beleeeved, that soe many were [th]e shift[es] & soe many & infinite the p[ro]tracc[i]ons, as were not the summe greate much better were the p[ar]ty to leaue it & loose it, then to loose his tyme & consume the rest of his dayes in sueing for it. / That those are the thing[es] soe much complayned of by the king

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my M[aste]r and by the enemyes of this Crowne & Kingdome soe much Inforced & agravated, vpon these they giue a ground & foundac[i]on to what they gen[er]ally reporte or desire of all to be. vizt That this nation covett[es] all [tha]t is to be had, layes hand on all they can gett, and will dep[ar]te from nothing that by any meanes they can hould. / That the .2. last, when they should be made knowne to his Ma[jes]tie I make noe doubt but he wilbe pleased to redresse them either by takeing away the abuses or removeing offices [tha]t shew soe litle regard to his honor or Conscience. / That concerneing the first, soe graue & Iudicious a Senate could not be ignorant, that [th]e tree that is suffered to nourish to many brainches neither thrives in the body, nor fourtifies in the tapp. / That participac[i]on in p[ro]fitt & pleasure is the most assured meanes to continue freindship & forbidd entry to envye, That the p[ar]t[es] of the world already possessed by this monarchy for extent & Riches were not to bee patterned by any [tha]t either is or hath ben, neither the vnrest & dayly increaseing difficultyes in houlding those it hath are hidden to any that cast their eyes upon affaires of State. / That to affect more or to restraine princes consideracon & apt vpon good tearmes to giue by their assistance a setleing to the already possessed, some to desire a garment vnproportionable for the bodye and such as of necessity must either induce deformityes or draw the whole world into dainger. / Condic[i]ons might be thought vpon fitt for neighbourhood contrary to contenc[i]on, and such securityes & Cautions mutually giuen, as the First opener of the gapp to a breach of the freindshipp & contract[es] should enter into a certeyne way to loose what in those newfound p[ar]t[es] hee should be possessed of. / That the king my M[aste]r haueing meanes to evacuate his sup[er]fluous people, should not be necessited to imploy them in warrs abroad, nor feare the inconveniences of their too much abounding att home, and by p[ar]takeing the Riches that now doth noe man good, should never enter into temptac[i]on of desireing p[ar]te of the excesse that is possessed by others. / That his Ma[jes]tie heere might p[er]fectly setle his owne conquest[es], make his voyages & returnes of his voyages safe as the botes in the waters att his howse of pleasure. / That to this soe greate a good could be giuen no other cullor of impedim[en]t then the wall of sep[er]ation in our opinions. / I confesse it were to be wished that in god[es] worshipp wee were all of one heart in the right, & that nothing in earth is more desireable, But sithence for o[u]r synnes soe greate a blessing is in these tymes denyed vs, that wee are w[i]th patience to expect god[es] good Leysure, That his diuine Ma[jes]tie as S[ain]t Augustine saith disponit omnia swauiter & contrary to the passionate & procipitous nature of man, vseth not his owne omnipotency

to enforce, but his clementest and softest hand to drawe & perswade. / That in the meane tyme sithence no new thing is to liue out of the obedyence of the Church of Rome w[hi]ch is [th]e greatest of our differences. / The Abissines, Muscouites & Rushians haueing donne it neuer, and the Church of the East for the most p[ar]te sithence the passion of our Sauour being agreed in the most fundamentall p[ar]te of our faith.

Charity

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Charity & care of o[u]r mutuall {conseruac[i]ons} may iustly move us, for the rest to expect the one the other & either p[ar]te to inuite w[i]th christian softnes w[i]th examples of piety & vertue & w[i]th teares & prayers offered to god, Not w[i]th fyre & sword the Children of Rumor & mallice, improp[er] & vnnaturall teachers of soe sweete & meeke a religion as that of Christ, who in his good tyme & when hee shall see it for his glory will p[er]forme what hee hath prophicied & p[ro]missed vizt, That before the end of the world wee shalbe one flock vnder one shepherd, In the intrim my desires & wishes should never cease that those monarches may vnite in a faithfull & endureing will to conserue & increase the one the other, And [th]e lyke I doubted not would be ever found in their Lor[dshi]ps finis. /

The Conclusion of a L[et]re written by [th]e said S[i]r Charles Cornewallis
k[nigh]t to the Lord[es] of his Ma[jes]ties most honor[a]ble priuie
Councell wherein was sent inclosed the discourse above written

To this purpose was what I said & in this forme I committed it to writeing, but w[i]thout meaneing it should passe out of my hand[es] vntill I had sent it to yo[u]r honors & should further vnderstand his Ma[jes]ties pleasure: What my reasons herein were I neede not Further p[ar]ticipate vnto yo[u]r Lor[dshi]ps who out of a word will understand them. / His Ma[jes]tie haueing rest and peace on eu[er]y side as had Solomon in amplitude of dominion, multitude of people, magnificence & splendor of his Courte & abundance of bread & flesh no whitt Inferior, I cannott but wish his Crowne cou[er]ed w[i]th pure gould & all the vessells of his howse of the same metle, sithence no Prince on earth is better furnished w[i]th a Nauie to fetch Gould from Opher & Ceader trees from Libanus, Besides of what consequence it is, that a nation of soe haughty a hearte & soe gathering a hand as this should possesse themselues wholly of the fountayne of that metle^{mettall}, that hath power to open the gates of Cittyes, disclose the secrett[es] of Princes & undermyne [th]e strength of kingdomes, I made noe doubt but his Ma[jes]tie hath well considered, I humbly leaue all to his Royall & most aduised Iudgem[en]t attributeing to my owne weakenes nothing but the merritt of a sinceere will and earnest desire to serue his w[i]th all my forces, his Ma[jes]tie & my Country

Other manuscript witnesses

- Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 966, ff. 268–270
- Bodleian Library, MS Carte 77, ff. 141r–142v
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C 929, ff. 48r–51v
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 265, ff. 7r–8v