

Speech in the Star Chamber, Last Day of the Trinity Term (1617)

Francis Bacon

Transcript

British Library, Sloane MS 3522, ff. 31r–34v

31r

S[*i*]r Fraunces Bacon Lord Keeper of the great Seale of England his Speech in the Starre chamber the last Daie of Trinitie Terme 1617./.

The Kinge by his perfect declarac[i]on published in this place Concerninge Iudges, and Iustices hath made the speech of his Chauncellor accustomed before the Circuites rather of Ceremonie then of vse, For as in his Booke to his sonne he hath sett forth a true Character and Platforme of a Kinge, soe in this his speech he hath done of a Iudge and Iustice, w[*h*]ch sheweth that his Ma:*[j*es]tie is Exetentlie able to gouerne in Cheef soe he is likewise well seene, and Skilfull in the Inferior Offices, and Stages of Iustice, and gouernment which is a thinge verie rare in kings./.

Yet neuertheles somewhat must be sayed to fulfill an ould obseruation but yet upon the

Kinges groundes

31v

kinges groundes and verie shortelie, for as Soloman saieth in another Case in theis thinges, who is he that can come after the kinge./.

[*Left margin:*(1)] First you that are Iudges of Circutes yea are as it were the Plannetts of the Kingdome I doe you no dishonour in giuinge you that name / And noe doubt you haue a great stroke in the Frame of this gou[*ern*]m[*en*]te As the other haue in the great Frame, doe therefore, as they doe, moue allwayes, and be Carryed with the motion of yo[*u*]r First mouer w[*h*]ch is your soueraigne a Popular Iudge is a deformed thinge, and Plauditees are fitter for Players then for Magistrates doe goode to the people, loue them, and giue them Iustice, But lett it be like the Gospelender (*nihil inde expectantes*) lookinge for noethinge neither prayse, nor profit./.

Yet my meaninge is not when I wish you to take heede of popularitie that you should be Imperious, and strainge to

the gentlemen

32r

the Gentlemen of the Countrey, you are aboue them in Power, but yo[*u*]r Rancke is not much [*Left margin:*=] unequall, and learne this, that power is euer of greatest strength when it is Ciuilly Carryed./.

Secondly you must remember that besides your ordinary Administrac[i]on of Iustice, you doe Carry the two Glasses, or Mirrors of the State; For it is yo[*u*]r duetie in theis yo[*u*]r visitations to represent vnto the people the goodnes, and care of the Kinge and to represent vnto the Kinge the diseases, and greifes of his People./.

Marke what the kinge saieth in his Booke procure reuerence to the kinge, and the lawe Informe my People truelie of me (w[hi]ch we knowe is verie hard to doe accordinge to the Exelencie of his Merritt, but yet Endeauo[u]r it,) how zealous I am for Religion, how I desire lawe may be mainteyned and flourish; that euery Courte should haue his owne Iurisdicc[i]on, That euery subiect should submitt himself to lawe, And of this you haue had of late noe smale occasion of Remembrance in the great Charge that the kinge

hath giuen

32v

hath giuen me, beinge Keep[er] of his Seale, for the gouernance of the Chauncerie without Tumor, or Excesse./.

Again (e Re nata) yee ought to make the people knowe and Consider the Kinges blessed Care, and prouidence in gouerninge this Realme in his absence; soe that sittinge att the helme of another kingdome, not without great Affayres, and Businesses there, yet he gouerneth all thinges by his letters, and directions as punctually, and perfectlye as If he were present./.

I Assure you my lordes of the Councell I doe much admire the Execution and latitude of his Care in all thinges./.

In the high Comission he did Conceiue a sinewe of gouerment was a little shrunke, he recommended the Care of it./.

He hath Called for the Accompts of the last Circutes from the Iudges to be transmitted unto him in Scotland Touchinge the Infestac[i]on of Pyrates, he hath bin Carefull, and is, and hath put thinges in way./.

All thinges

33r

All thinges that Concerne theRe:formac[i]on, and Plantac[i]on of Ireland he hath giuen in them punctuall, and resolute direction./.

I giue but a few Instances of a publique nature the secretts of Councell I may not enter into, Though his dispatches into Fraunce, Spaine, and the lowe Countryes now in his absence, are alsoe publique as to the Outward sendinge soe that I must Conclude that his Ma[jes]tie wants but more Kingdomes, for I see he would suffice to all./.

As for the other glasse which I tould you of Representinge to the kinge the greifes of his people. without doubt it is properly yo[u]r parte, For the kinge ought to be Informed of aniethinge amisse in the State of his Countreys from the Obseruations, and relac[i]ons of his Iudges, that indeed knowe the pulse of the Countrey, rather then from discourses, But for this glasse (thankes be to God) I doe heare from you all that there was neuer greater peace, Obedience, and Contentment in the Countrey, though the best gouernments be allwayes like the fairest Christalls, wherein euery Eye sickle, or graine is seene, w[hi]ch in a fowle stone is neuer p[er]ceaved./.

Now to

33v

Now to some p[ar]ticulars, and not many of of all other things, I must begin as the Kinge begins, that is, w[i]th the Cause of religion, and especially the hollowe Church Papists; S[ain]t Augustine hath a good Comparision of such men Affirminge that they are the rootes of Nettles. which themselues stinge not, But they beare all the stringinge leaues lett me knowe of such Rootes, and I will Roote them out of the Commission./.

Next for Matter of Religion in principall places I recomend both to you, and the Iustices the Contenancinge of godlie, and zealous Preachers, I meane not Sectaryes or Nouellists, but those that are sound, and Conforme, but yet pious, and reuerend for there wilbe a perpetuall defection, except yee keepe men in by Preachinge, as well as laye men in by Punishment, and Com[m]only sperituall deseases are not cured but by Sperituall Remedyes./.

Next lett me Recom[m]end unto you. the Repressinge, as much as may be of Facc[i]ons in the Countrey, of w[hi]ch ensue Infinite Incon

ueniences

34r

Inconueniences and perturbac[i]on of all good order, and crossinge of all good seruices in Co[u]rte or Countrey, or wheresoeuer Cicero, when he was Consull had deuised a Fyne remedye a milde one, but an effectuall one, and an apt one, (eos qui otium perturbant reddam otiosos) those that trouble others quiett I will giue them quiett they shall haue noethinge to doe. nor noe authoritie putt into their hands. If I may knowe from you of anye who are in the Country that are heads or hands of Factions, or men of Turbulent speritts; I shall giue them Ciceroes reward, as much as in me is, and putt him out of the Com[m]ission./.

[*Right margin:*(3)] The Third perticular I will remember vnto you is, your repayre into the Countrey and to yo[u]r liuinge there this vacac[i]on accordinge to the Kings late Proclamac[i]on) though this were more needfull att a Christmas, then att this tyme For the stronge breath of london nowe will driue you to seeke the fresh ^{ayre} of the Countrey./.

To Conclude, studdye this the Kinges Booke, and studye with yo[u]rselues, how yow profitte by it, and all shalbe well; And you the Iustices of the Peace in perticular, Lett

me say

34v

me saye this unto you, that neuer kinge of this Realme did you soe much honno[u]r, as the Kinge hath done you in this his speech by being yo[u]r Imediate director, and by soartinge you, and yo[u]r seruices with the seruice of Ambassadors, and neere Attendants, nay more, it seemes his Ma[jes]tie is willinge to doe the State of the Iustices of peace Honno[u]r Actually alsoe by bringinge in with tyme the like forme of Com[m]issions into the gouernment of Scotland as the glorious kinge Edward the third did plante this Com[m]ission heere in England; And therefore yee are not fitt to be Copies except yee be faire Written without Blottes, or Blurres, or anythinge unworthy yo[u]r Authoritie, And soe I will trouble you noe longer for this tyme./.

Other manuscript witnesses

- Alnwick Castle, MS 10, ff. 289r–289v
- Alnwick Castle, MS 526, ff. 8r–12v

- British Library, Additional MS 18016, ff. 91r–94v
- British Library, Additional MS 22591, ff. 260r–261r
- British Library, Harley MS 1576, ff. 82r–v
- British Library, Harley MS 1576, ff. 208r–209r
- British Library, Harley MS 39, ff. 283v–285v
- British Library, Lansdowne MS 612, ff. 32r–35v
- Beinecke Library, Osborn Shelves Gordounstoun Box 5, ff. 64r–68r
- Beinecke Library, Osborn fb59
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D 692, ff. 97v–98r
- Cambridge University Library, MS Ll.3.11, ff. 1r–6r
- Northamptonshire Record Office, FH36
- Northamptonshire Record Office, FH83, ff. 9v–13r
- Senate House, University of London, MS 20, ff. 195v–199r
- Senate House, University of London, MS 290, ff. 47–52
- Senate House, University of London, MS 300, ff. 65x–79x
- Woburn Abbey, MS 192, pp127–132

© 2017–2025 University of Birmingham, University of Bristol. Provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence.

<https://mpese.ac.uk/t/BaconSpeechTrinityTerm1617.html>