

certaine tumultes began to rise about religion, wherupō it seemed good vnto king Henry, to appoynt an assemble of leaerne men and Bishops, which should soberly & modestly enterat and determine those things which perteyned vnto Religion. Briefely, at the kinges pleasure all the learned men, but specially the Bishops assembled, to whō this matter seemed chiefly to belong. Cromwell thought also to be present himselfe with the Bishoppes, who by chaunce meeting with Alexander Alecius by the way, a Scottish man, brought him with him to the conuocation house, where all the Bishoppes were assembled together. which was in the yeare. 1537. The Bishops and Prelates attending vpon the coming of Cromwell, as he was come in, rose vp, and did obeysaunce to him as to their vicar-generall, and he agayn saluted euery one in theyr degree, and sate downe in the highest place at the table, according to his degree and office, and after him euery bishop in his order, and Doctours. First our agaynst him sate the Archb. of Canterburie, then the Archbishop of Yorke, the bishops of London, Lincolne, Salisburie, Bath, Ely, Bedford, Lichester, Norwich, Rochester and Worcester, &c. There Cromwell in the name of the king (whose most deare and secret Counsellour at that present he was, and Lorde priuy Seale, and vicar generall of the realme) spake these wordes in maner folowing.

**R**ight reuerend fathers in Christe: The kinges maiesty geueth you high thanks that ye haue so diligently without any excuse, assembled hither according to his commaundement. And ye be not ignoraunt that ye be called hither to determine certayne controuersies, which at this time be moued concerning the christian Religion and sayth, not onely in this Realme, but also in all nations through the world. For the king studyeth day and nyght to set a quietnesse in the Church; and he can not rest, vntill all such controuersies be fully debated and ended, through the determination of you & of his whole Parliament. For although his speciall desire is to set a stay for the vnlearned people, whose consciences are in doubt what they may beleue: and he himselfe by his excellent learning, knoweth these controuersies wel enough, yet he will suffer no common alteration, but by the consent of you and of his whole Parliamēt. By the which thing ye may perceiue both his high wisedom, and also his great loue toward you. And he desireth you for Christes sake, that all malice, obstinacy, and carnall respecte set apart, ye will frendly and louingly dispute among your selues, of the controuersies moued in the Church, and that ye will conclude all things by the woord of God, without all brawling or scolding: neither will his maiesty suffer the Scripture to be wraited and defaced by any Gloses, any papistical Lawes, or by any authority of Doctours or Counsellors; and muche lesse will he admitte any articles or doctrine, nor conteyned in the Scripture, but approued onely by continuance of time and olde custome, and by vnwritten verities, as ye were wont to do. Ye know wel enough that ye be bound to shew this seruice to Christ and to his Church, and yet notwithstanding his maiesty will geue you high thanks, if ye will sette and conclude a godly and a perfect vnyty: whereunto this is the onely way and meane, if ye wil determine all things by the Scripture, as God commaundeth you in Deuteronomie, whiche thing hys maiesty exhortheth and desireth you to do.

When Cromwell had ended this his Oration, the Bishops rose vp altogether, geuing thanks vnto the kings maiesty, for his great zeale toward the church of christ and also for his most godly exhortation, worthy to Christian a prince.

Immediately they rose vp to disputation, where as Stokely Bishop of London, first of all, being the moste earnest champion & maynteyner of the Romish Decrees, (whō Cromwell a litle before had checked by name, for defensing vnwritten verities) endeouored himselfe with all his labour and industry, out of the olde Schole Gloses, to maynteyne the seuen Sacramentes of the Church. The Archb. of Yorke, Lincolne, Bath, Lichester, & Norwicke also fauoured his part and sect. On the contrary part, was the Archb. of Canterburie, the Bishops of Salisburie, Ely, Bedford, and Worcester, with many other.

After much communication had on either part, & that they had long contended about the testimonies of the Doctours, which as it seemed vnto them, dissented & disagreed among themselves, the Archbishop of Canterburie at the last spake and sayd thus vnto them.

**I**t becometh not men of learning and grauity to make much bawling and brawling, about bare wordes, so that we agree in the very substance & effect of the matter. For to brawle about wordes is the property of Sophisters & such as meane deceit & subtlety, which delight in the debate and dissension of the world, & in the miserable state of the Church: and not of them whiche should

seeke the glory of Christ, and should study for the vnitie & quietnes of the Church. There be waighty controuersies nowe moued and put forth not of ceremonies and light things, but of the true vnderstanding, and of the right difference of the lawe, and of the Gospell: of the maner and waye how finnes bee forgiven, of comforting doubtfull and wauering consciences, by what meanes they may be certified, that they please God, seeing they feele the strength of the lawe, accusing them of sinne: of the true vse of the Sacramentes, whether the outward worke of the doth iustifie man, or whether we receaue our iustification by fayth: Item, which be the good workes, and the true seruice and honour which pleaseeth God: and whether the choise of meates, the difference of garments, the vowes of Monkes and priestes, and other traditions which haue no worde of God to confirme them: whether these (I say) be right good workes, and suche as make a perfect Christian man or no: Item, whether vayne seruice, and false honouring of God, and mans traditions, doe binde mens consciences, or no? Finally, whether the ceremony of confirmation, of orders, and of annealing, and such other (whiche cannot be proued to be institute of Christ, nor haue anye worde in them to certifie vs of remisison of finnes) ought to be called Sacraments, and to be compared with Baptisme and the supper of the Lord or no?

These be no light matters, but euen the principall poyntes of our Christian religion. Wherefore we contēd not about words and titles, but about high and earnest matters. Christ saith. Blessed be the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sonnes of God. And Paule writing vnto Timothie, commaunded Bishops to auoyde brawling and contention about wordes, which be profitable to nothing but vnto the subuersion and destruction of the hearers: and monetheth him specially, that he should resist with the scriptures whē any man disputeth with him of the fayth: and he addeth a cause whereas he sayth: Doing this thou shalt persecute both thy selfe, & also them which heare thee: Now if ye will folow these Counsellors, Christ and Paul, all contentio and brawling about words must be set apart, and ye must stablish a godly and a perfecte vnyty and conorde out of the Scripture. Wherefore in this disputatio, we must first agree of the number of the Sacramentes, and what a Sacrament doth signify in the holyc scripture; & when we call Baptisme & the Supper of the Lord, Sacramentes of the Gospell, what we meane thereby. I know right well, that S. Ambrose and other Authours call the washing of the Disciples feete and other things, Sacramentes: which I am sure you your selues woulde not suffer to be numbred among the other Sacramentes.

When he had ended his Oration, Cromwell commaunded Alecius which stood by (whome he perceiued to geue attentie care to that which was spoke) to shew his mind and opinion, declaring to the Bishops before, that he was the kinges scholer, and therefore desired them to be contented to heare him indifferently.

Alecius after he had first done his duety vnto the Lord Cromwell, and to the other Prelates of the Church, sayde in this wise.

Right honorable & noble Lord, and you most reuerend fathers and Prelates of the Church, although I come vnprepared vnto this disputatio yet trusting in the ayde of Christ which promisseth to geue both mouth and wisdom vnto vs when we be required of our sayth, I wil utter my sentence and iudgement of this disputation. And I thinke that my Lord Archbishop hath geuen you a profitable exhortation, that ye should first agree of the signification of a Sacrament, whether ye will call a sacrament, a ceremony institute of Christ in the gospell, to signify a special or a singular vertue of the gospell, and of godlines (as Paule nameth remisison of finnes to be) or whether ye meane, euery ceremony generally, which may be a toke or a signification of a holy thing, to be a sacrament. For after this latter signification, I will not sicke to graunt you that there be seuen Sacramentes and moze too, if ye will. But yet Paule seemeth to describe a sacrament after the iust signification, where as he sayth: That Circumcision is a token & a seale of the righteousness of sayth. This definitio of one particular sacrament, must be vnderstand to perteyne vnto all sacramentes generally; for the Jewes had but one Sacrament onely, as all the sophisticall writers do graunt. And he described Baptisme after the same maner, in the fift to the Ephesiens, whereas he sayth. That Christ doth sanctify the Church (that is to say, all that be baptised through the bath of water in the word of life.) For here also he addeth the word & promise of God vnto the ceremony. And Christ also requireth sayth, where he sayth: Who so euer beleueth, and is baptised, shall be saued.

And S. Augustine describeth a Sacrament thus: The word of God comming vnto the element, maketh the sacrament. And in an other place he sayth: A sacrament is a thing wherein the

Cromwel with Alex. Alecius resort to the assembly.

Cromwells Oration to the Bishops.

The kinges request to the Bishops.

Stokely defendeth the 7. Sacramentes.

The Archb. of Canterburie Oration to the Bishops.

Sophistication of wordes to be avoyded in matters of weight.

Questions and controuersies of religion necessary to be discussed.

Falsh worshipping. Ceremonies

Math. 5. 2. Tim. 1.

All be not Sacramentes of the new Testament, which may haue the name of Sacramentes.

Alexander Alecius reasoneth with the Bishop.

The name of a Sacrament how farre it extendeth.

Rom. 6.

Ephes. 5. What is a Sacrament properly.