

## THOMAS CROMWELL'S LETTER.

The 1540 INTERLUDE reconstructed for performance December 2014.  
Words by Sir David Lyndsay, Sir William Eure and Thomas Bellenden with  
additional dialogue by Gregory Thompson and Professor Greg Walker

1. THOMAS CROMWELL plays TEMPORALITY
2. SOLACE plays BURGESS
3. SIR DAVID LYND SAY plays EXPERIENCE
4. SIR WILLIAM EURE plays SPIRITUALITY
5. THOMAS BELLENDEN plays THE PLAYER KING
6. A POOR MAN

Both SOLACE and BELLENDEN impersonate JAMES V. SOLACE  
impersonates the BISHOP OF GLASGOW.

THOMAS CROMWELL. How are things in England? How are things in  
England? Oh I love this time of year, don't you? I think it's the smell. Or the  
freshness of the rain. The lack of leaves perhaps. Leaving vast skies. The big  
grey skies of January are a sign. A clear slate. Something dying to create  
space for the new born, for the reformation. You can see it in the plumes of  
smoke. I love bonfires, I think that's what it is. Winter is the time of bonfires.  
I've just come from a great roaring blaze, a crackling snapping fire. Waves of  
heat hitting your face when the wind changes. Reminding you that the Spirit  
of the Lord burns inside each man. Yes, that's good. Bonfire as metaphor.  
Bonfire as encouragement. Bonfire as instrument of government. It was a  
bonfire of relics. Relics, shrines and images. The Lord is not a thing, not a  
wooden knick-knack. The Lord is the Word. All that is false, consumed by the  
fire. So, how are things in England? The great project is afoot. The King is  
Supreme Head of the Church and assumes all the earthly powers. Who will  
administer those powers? You may well ask. It needs someone of proven  
abilities. How are things in England? The king has a new wife. A royal  
marriage, brokered by a certain someone. Ann of Cleves. Not quite the  
royal portrait but it's a good match if not a good likeness. Still, what's done is  
done. And I'm made Earl of Essex. How do you like that? How would you  
answer that? This is one of the great issues of historical reconstruction. I can  
wear the clothes and look the part but to talk to you directly? These are not

the patterns of Early Modern speech. And even if they were, if we could reconstruct a whole play in the proper clothes and in the original pronunciation and even play in the very building in which the play was performed the one thing we know we can no longer have is a 16th century audience. And yet we still have access to the great mechanism of early modern performance: the human imagination. Imagine I'm Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex. I've just received this letter at Greenwich Palace and imagine I've stepped into – the Great Hall at Greenwich no longer exists of course. It was destroyed in the 1690s to build a naval hospital. O capricious fortune. So there's no going there except in our imagination. Imagine this is the Great Hall at Greenwich. This is the Great Hall at Eltham Palace, of course, built in the 1470s and a similar space. It's a good bet though that this letter reached me at Greenwich. Or at Hampton Court. Or, come to think of it, here at Eltham. You see there are some things we don't know but we know the possibilities, the options. Historians, academics they offer the possibilities, hold them all in mind, but on the stage we have to choose. You can only play one reality. So, let's imagine this, here, this hall, imagine this is the Great Hall at Eltham. And it was in this space that I received this letter. A letter to answer my probings about the possibility of the Reformation spreading throughout these islands even into other countries. Other countries like Scotland. A letter to answer my question: How are things in Scotland?

SOLACE. [SINGS] You say you want a Reformation? Well, you know, we all want to change the world. You tell –

CROMWELL. Excuse me, who are you?

SOLACE. I'm Solace. I sing and I dance. [SINGS] But when you talk about destruction, don't you know that you can count me out.

CROMWELL. It's going to be alright.

SOLACE. What?

CROMWELL. It's going to be alright.

SOLACE. Oh, that's good, that's very good. [SINGS] It's gonna be alright. Alright, alright. [SPEAKS] Thank you. In January 1540 Scotland was just beginning to feel the winds of religious Reformation blowing up from the

south and across the sea from Germany. King James V was 28, and at the height of his political and cultural ambitions. Our reformation wasnae about destruction, oh no, it was about education, reason and argument. A reformation to liberate the people from corruption. It was for James' court that the playwright and royal herald Sir David Lyndsay wrote the first version of –

SIR DAVID LYND SAY. [LOOKS UP FROM WRITING] Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis. Nearly finished.

SOLACE. We don't know much about the Linlithgow performance, but we do know this: that the King himself, and his new French Queen, the pregnant Mary of Guise were in the hall to see it. The Archbishop of Glasgow, Gavin Dunbar was there too. We know too that the play caused quite a stir, both in Scotland and in England. And we know this because we have –

EURE. [SHOWS LETTER] This letter. A letter I wrote. Now I'm Sir William Eure. Henry VIII's man in Scotland. I'm Captain of Berwick Castle and Deputy Warden of the East March. I tell –

CROMWELL. Thomas Cromwell –

EURE. What's up, up North. Sir. [GIVES LETTER]

CROMWELL. [TAKES LETTER] Thank you. Eure's gets his information from his Scottish insiders, especially one –

BELLENDEN. Thomas Bellenden.

EURE. An educated Scot. One of our sort.

BELLENDEN. Indeed.

EURE. Protestant.

BELLENDEN. Not that I called myself that. I prefer New Catholic.

CROMWELL. And we don't know much more about him other than he –

BELLENDEN. [HOLDS UP PAPER] Gave Eure an account of the play: Sir. [GIVES ACCOUNT]

EURE. [TAKES ACCOUNT] Thank you. Sir. [GIVES ACCOUNT]

CROMWELL. [TAKES ACCOUNT] Thank you.

CROMWELL. The Satire of the Three Estates.

LYNDSAY. Nearly. Nearly there.

SOLACE. Imagine you're going to see the play. Imagine you're the court of King James V. It's coming to the end of Christmas 1540 and we're in the Great Hall of Linlithgow Palace. On the walls are great tapestries from the Netherlands. And of course there's a tension, a dynamic. Who produced this play? Who commissioned it? Is it speaking to the King? His Royal Majesty, King James V. [FANFARE. SOLACE PUTS ON THE CROWN OF KING JAMES V] All rise, come on, are you suspending your disbelief or not? [FANFARE] Aye, that's better. So as well as watching the play, you'll be watching the King [ADJUSTS THE CROWN] watch the play. Serious stuff, aye. Aye sit up straight, that's right, you're in the presence of one of the crowned heads of Europe. And you'll be thinking: Is this play just a flaggerty fuff? Or does it have a darker meaning? Is the King using the medium of the theatrical dialogue to speak to you his court? We've all seen plays where the writer has 'something to say'. Perhaps the King is speaking to someone in particular? Someone like, Gavin Dunbar, the Archbishop of Glasgow. Ladies and gentlemen, the Archbishop of Glasgow. [FANFARE. SOLACE PUTS ON THE MITRE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW] Come on, all rise, come on, the Archbishop's important, he's a direct link to His Holiness the Pope. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, the Archbishop of Glasgow. So you're the court watching a play in the Great Hall of Linlithgow in the presence of James V [PLACES THE CROWN] and over here's the Archbishop of Glasgow. [PLACES THE MITRE] The play was written, like I said, by Sir David Lyndsay. LYNDSAY. Finished.

SOLACE. Ladies and Gentleman: the Author. Watch out for him later, he's playing Experience. Oh, the very idea. You're way ahead of yourself. Experience in the sense of Wisdom. Interestingly there was a time, when James was a child, when these three men shared the royal apartments. The boy king, James V, [CRADLES THE CROWN] and his guardians, Lyndsay and Dunbar studying together. And now they're governing Scotland.

Unfortunately, the script of the 1540 performance hasn't survived.

LYNDSAY. What?

SOLACE. I'm sorry, that's history for you. So, as this is evidence based research, it's good night from me – [SOLACE BOWS]

SIR DAVID LYNDSAY. Hold your wisht, My 1554 version will survive. It's five times the size.

EURE. What about my letter?

BELLENDEN. And my account of the play?

CROMWELL. We still have them: in the British Library. BL MS Reg. 7 C. Roman numerals 16, folios 136 through 9.

SIR DAVID LYNDSAY. Look here's the Canongate. And there's this edition by Greg Walker. We can rife the play and stick it through the hairt.

BELLENDEN. Following my account.

EURE. And my letter.

LYNDSAY. And borrow from the surviving text.

BELLENDEN. Create a new version.

SOLACE. All cobbled together? Filling in from a later text to cover what hasn't survived?

BELLENDEN. I consider my account to be / evidence.

LYNDSAY. My text is / evidence.

EURE. My letter is / evidence.

CROMWELL. This letter is / evidence.

SOLACE. Okay we'll dramatise the letter. So this is what they mean by practise-based research.

EURE. To the Right Honourable and my very good lord, the Lord Privy Seal

—

CROMWELL. That's me.

SOLACE. Thomas Cromwell.

CROMWELL. Thomas Cromwell.

EURE. Please it your good Lordship to be advertised that the meeting which I had with two gentlemen of the King of Scots' council at Coldstream for such business as I have advertised your Lordship of in mine other letter, with account of our proceeding in the same. I had diverse communing with Master / Thomas

BELLENDEN. Thomas Bellenden

EURE. One of the said councillors for Scotland, a man by estimation apparent to be about th'age of fifty years or above, and of gentle and sage conversation, specially touching the stay of the spirituality in Scotland. And gathering him to be one inclined to the sort used in our sovereign realm of England –

SOLACE. That's a Protestant.

BELLENDEN. Alright. That's enough.

EURE. I did so largely break with him in those behalves as to move to know of him what mind the king and council of Scotland was inclined unto concerning the Bishop of Rome, and for the reforming of the misusing of the spirituality of Scotland, whereunto he gently and lovingly answered, showing himself well contented of that communing, and did say that –

BELLENDEN. The King of Scots himself, with all his temporal council, was greatly given to the reformation of the misdemeanours of bishops, religious persons and priests within the Realm. And so much so that they have had ane interlude –

SOLACE. That's a theatrical production would you believe?

EURE. Played in the feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord last passed.

SOLACE. The 6th January 1540.

EURE. Before the King and Queen at Linlithgow, and the whole council, spiritual and temporal. The whole matter whereof concluded upon the Declaration of the naughtiness in Religion, the presumption of bishops, the collusion of the spiritual courts, and misusing of priests. Now I wasn't there myself but I have obtained a note from a Scotsman of our sort –

BELLENDEN. – being present at the playing of the said interlude, of the effect thereof, –

EURE. Which I do send unto your Lordship by this bearer.

SOLACE. So in Scotland they're using theatre to push policy. Imagine that: the Scottish Government funding the production of a play that sets out a radical agenda calling for the end of corruption and the emancipation of the poor. Could that happen now?

BELLENDEN. In the first entry comes in Solace.

SOLACE. That's me.

BELLENDEN. [SOLACE KEEPS TRYING TO START AS BELLENDEN CONTINUES] whose part was but to make merry, sing ballads with his fellows, and drink at the interludes of the play, who showed first to all the audience the play to be played, which was a general thing, meaning nothing in special to displease no man, praying therefore no man to be angry with the same.

SOLACE. Prudent people, I pray you all, / Tak nae man grief in special, / For we shall speak in general, / For pastime and for play. / Therefore, till all our rhymes be rung / And our mistunit sangs be sung, / Let every man keep weel ane tongue, / And every woman tway.

BELLENDEN. Next came in a King, who passed to his throne. [FANFARE. BELLENDEN BECOMES THE PLAYER KING] The king [BELLENDEN OPENS HIS MOUTH] had no speech to the end of the play, and then only to ratify and approve as in plain parliament all things done by the rest of the players.

SOLACE. So the real King James V [SOLACE PUTS ON CROWN] is watching a player king. [SOLACE AND BELLENDEN SHARE A LOOK] Nice. With the player king came his courtiers – that is a reflection of you lot, remember you're the court of King James V of Scotland. And now you're watching courtiers like yourselves.

BELLENDEN. Placebo, Pickthank, and Flattery, and such a like guard, one swearing he's the lustiest, starkest, best proportioned and most valiant man

that ever was, another swearing he's the best in the world with long-bow, crossbow, and culverin.

SOLACE. What's a culverin, do you say? A culverin is a small firearm dating from the early 1500s. They're making them at Edinburgh Castle right now. Historical curiosity for you, a matter of life and death for us.

BELLENDEN. Another swearing he's the best jousting and man of arms and so forth.

SOLACE. Can you imagine that? Privileged young bucks talking themselves up and sucking up to power? A bunch of flattering, arrogant, entitled young c—

BELLENDEN. Courtiers.

SOLACE. Well, that part of the play is lost so we'll have to get on. Famous people, tak tent and ye shall se / The Three Estaitis of this natioun / Come to the court with their auld gravity. / Therefore, I mak you supplicatioun: / Till ye have heard our whole narratioun, / To keep silence and be patient, I pray yow. / Howbeit we speak by adulatioun, / We shall say nothing but the sooth, I say yow.

BELLENDEN. Thereafter came in a Lord, armed in harness, with a sword drawn in his hand.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. Sir, we with mighty courage at command / Of your super-excellent Majesty, / Shall mak service baith with our hairt and hand, / And shall not dreid in thy defence to die.

BELLENDEN. A Bishop.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Gloir, honour, laud, triumph, and victory / Be to your mighty prudent Excellence. / Here are we come, all the Estaitis three, / Ready to mak our due obedience / At your command with humble observance, / As may pertain to Spirituality, / With counsel of the Temporality.

BELLENDEN. A Burgess.

SOLACE AS BURGESS. Sir, we are here, your burgesses and merchands. / Thanks be to God that we may see your face, / Traistin' we may now into



diverse lands / Convey our gear with support of Your Grace. / For now, I  
traist, we shall get rest and peace, / When miss-doers are with your sword  
o'erthrowin / Then may leil merchands live upon their owin.

BELLENDEN. And Experience, clad like a doctor.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Sit down, my Lords, into your proper places: /  
Syne let the King consider all sic cases.

BELLENDEN. After them come a Poor Man, who did go up and down the  
scaffold, making a heavy complaint, that he was harried through the  
courtiers' taking his feu in one place, and also his tax in another place, where  
through he had skailed his house, his wife and children begging their bread,  
and so of many thousand in Scotland, which would make the King's Grace  
lose of men if His Grace stood need, saying there was no remedy to be  
gotten; for though he would sue to the King's Grace, he was neither  
acquainted with Controller nor Treasurer, and without them might no man  
get no goodness of the King.

POOR MAN. Good maister, I would speir at you ane thing: / Where traist ye  
I shall find yon new comed King?

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Come over, and I shall show thee to his Grace.

BELLENDEN. And when he was showed to the man that was King in the  
play, he answered and said:

POOR MAN. Nae, he is nae king, for there is but ane King, / Wha made all  
and governeth all, who is eternal.

BELLENDEN. To Whom he and all earthly kings are but officers, of the  
which they must make reckoning, aye and so forth much more to that effect.

POOR MAN. What is ane king? Nought but ane officer, / To cause his lieges  
live in equity, / And under God to be ane punisher / Of trespassers against  
His majesty. / But, when the king does live in tyranny, / Breakin' justice for fear  
or affectioun, / Then is his realm in weir and poverty, / With shameful  
slaughter but correctioun / Sir, if your Highness yearns lang to ring, / First  
dread your God above all other thing, / For ye are but ane mortal  
instrument / To that great God and King Omnipotent / Preordinat by His

divine Majesty, / To rule His people intil unity. / For David, king of Israel, /  
Whilk was the gret prophet royal, / Says God has hail at his command, / The  
hearts of princes in his hand; / Even as he list them for to turn, / That mun  
they do without sojourn; / Some to exalt to dignity, / And some to deprive,  
in poverty, / Sometime of lewd men to make lordis, / And sometime lordis  
to bind in cordis / And them all utterly destroy, / As pleases God, that royal  
roy.

BELLENDEN. And then he looked to the King and said he was not the King  
of Scotland.

POOR MAN. Ye are nat, my lord, King in Scotland, / For there is another king  
in this land / That hanged John Armstrong and Sim the Laird / And many  
another near at hand / Who brought us peace and stanchd theft / But  
one thing undone that king hath left / That stands well to his charge as other.

BELLENDEN. And, when he was asked what that was, he made a long  
narration of the oppression of the poor by the taking of the corpse-present  
beasts.

POOR MAN. My father was ane auld man and ane hoar, / And was of age  
fourscore of years and more, / And Mald, my mother, was fourscore and  
fifteen, / And with my labour I did them baith sustain. / We had ane mare  
that carryit salt and coal, / And every ilk year sho brought us hame ane foal. /  
We had three ky that was baith fat and fair, / Nane tidier into the toon of  
Ayr. / My father was sae weak of blood and bane / That he died, wherefore  
my mother made great main. / Then she died within ane day or two, / And  
there began my poverty and woe. / Our good grey mare was baitin' on the  
field, / And our land's laird took her for his hiald. / The vicar took the best  
cow by the head, / Incontinent, when my father was dead. / And, when the  
vicar heard tell how that my mother / Was dead, frahand he took to him  
another. / Then Meg, my wife, did mourn both e'en and morrow, / Till at the  
last sho died for very sorrow. / And when the vicar heard tell my wife was  
dead, / The third cow he cleekit by the head.

BELLENDEN. And then he spoke of the harrying of poor men by consistory  
law.

POOR MAN. Marry, I lent my gossip my mare to fetch hame coals, / And he  
her drownit into the querrell holes. / And I ran to the Consistory for to  
pleiny, / And there I happinit amang ane greedy many. / They gave me first  
ane thing they call citandum, / Within aucht days I gat but lybellandum, /  
Within ane month I gat ad opponendum, / In half ane year I gat  
interloquendum, / And syne I gat, how call ye it? ad replicandum, / Bot I could  
never ane word yet understand 'em. / And then they gart me cast out many  
placks, / And gart me pay for four and twenty acts. / But, or they came half  
gate to concludendum, / The Fiend ane plack was left for to defend him. /  
Thus they postponit me twa year with their train, / Sine hodie ad octo had  
me come again; / And then thir rooks they roupit wonder fast, / For  
sentence silver they cryit at the last. / Of pronunciandum they made me  
wonder fain, / But I gat never my good grey mare again.

BELLENDEN. And he spoke of many other abusions of the spirituality and  
church, with many long stories and authorities.

POOR MAN. To aid poor men who on lands do dwell. / For men who  
swinken to keep the kirk / See not the profits of their own work. / But  
others thrive, as all may ken: / Sir, I complain upon the idle men, / For why, sir,  
it is God's own bidding / All Christian men to work for their living. / Sanct  
Paul, that pillar of the Kirk, / Says to the wretches that will not work, / And  
been to virtuous labour laith, / 'Qui non laborat non manducet'. / This is, in  
English tongue or leit, / 'Wha labours not, he shall not eat'. / This been against  
the strang beggars, / Fiddlers, pipers, and pardoners, / Thir jugglers, jesters,  
and idle cutchors, / Thir carriers and thir quintacensors, / This been against  
thir great fat freirs, / Augustines, Carmelites, and Cordeleirs, / And all others  
that in cowls been cled, / Whilk labours not and been well fed. / I mean not  
labourin' Spiritually, / Nor for their living corporeally, / Lyin' in dens like idle  
dogs, / I them compare to well fed hogs! / I think they do themselves abuse, /  
Seeing that they the world refuse: / Having professed sic poverty, / Sin flees  
fast frae necessity. / What if they poverty would profess, / And do as did  
Diogenes? / That great famous philosopher, / Seeing in earth but vain  
labour, / All utterly the world refused / And in ane tumb himself enclosed, /  
And lived on herbs and water cold; / Of corporeal food nae mair he would. /

He trotted not from toon to toon / Beggin' to feed his carrion. / Fra time that life he did profess, / The world of him was cummerless. / Right sae of Mary Magdalene, / And of Mary th'Egyptian, / And of auld Paul, the first hermit: / All thir had poverty complete. / Ane hundreth mair I might declare, / But to my purpose I will fair, / Concluding slothful idleness, / Against the Commonweal express.

BELLENDEN. And then the Bishop rose and rebuked him, saying [it] affaired not to him to speak such matters, commanding him silence or else to suffer death for it by their law.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. To speak of priests, be sure, it is nae bourds: / They will burn men now for rakless words, / And all they words are heresy indeed.

POOR MAN. The meckle Fiend receive the soul that lied. / All that I say is true, though thou be greivit, / And that I offer on thy pallet to preef it.

HERE SPIRITUALITY FAMES AND RAGES.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. My Lords, why do ye thole that lurdun loon / Of Kirkmen to speak sic detractioun? / I let you wit, my Lords, it is nae bourds, / Of prelates for till speak sic wanton words. / Yon villain puts me out of charity!

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. Why, my Lord, says he ought but verity?

BELLENDEN. And then the Bishop rose and rebuked him, saying [it] affaired not to him to speak such matters, commanding him silence or else to suffer death for it by their law. Thereafter rose the man of arms, alleging the contrary, and commanded the poor man to speak, saying their abusion had been over long suffered, without any law.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. Ye cannot stop ane poor man for to pleiny, / If he has faulted, summon him to your Seinye.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Yea, that I shall. I shall mak great God a vow, / He shall repent that he spak of the cow. / I will not suffer sic words of yon villain.

POOR MAN. Than gar give me my three fat ky again.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. False carl, to speak to me stands thou not awe?

POOR MAN. The Fiend receive them that first devised that law! / Within an hour after my dad was dead / The vicar had my cow hard be the heed.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. False whoreson carl, I say that law is good, / Because it has been lang our consuetude.

POOR MAN. When I am Paip, that law I shall put down: / It is ane sair law for the poor commouns.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. I mak ane vow, they words thou shall repent.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. I you require, my Lords, be patient. / We came not here for disputatiouns; / We came to make good reformatiouns. / Therefore, of this your propositioun, / Conclude and put to executioun.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. Forsooth, my Lord, I think we should conclude. / Seeing this cow ye have in consuetude, / We will discern here that the King's Grace / Shall write unto the Paip's holiness: / With his consent by proclamatioun, / Baith corpse-present and cow we shall cry down. / Whom upon mair will ye complain?

POOR MAN. Marry, on mair and mair again. / For the poor people cries with / The infetching of Justice airs: / Exercit mair for covetise / Than for the punishing of vice. / Ane peggrel thief that steals ane cow / Is hanged; but he that steals ane bow, / With als muckle gear as he may turse, / That thief is hangit by the purse. / Sic pickin' peggrel thieves are hangit, / But he that all the world has wrangit, / Ane cruel tyrant, ane strang transgressor, / Ane common public plain oppressor, / By buds may he obtain favours / Of treasurers and compositors. / Though he serve great punitioun, / Gets easy compositioun: / And through laws consistorial, / Prolix, corrupt, and partial, / The common people are put sae under, / That they be poor, it is nae wonder.

BELLENDEN. Then the Poor Man showed the great abusion of bishops, Prelates, Abbots, reeving men's wives and daughters, and holding them, and of the maintaining of their children and of their over buying of lords' and barons' eldest sons to their daughters, where through the nobility of the blood of the Realm was degenerate, and of the great superfluous rents that pertained to the church, by reason of over much temporal lands given to

them, which they proved that the King might take both by the canon law, and civil law, and of the great abominable vices that reign in cloisters, and of the common bordellos that was kept in cloisters of nuns.

POOR MAN. Grand-mercies, then I shall not spare, / First to complain on the vicar. / Our Parson here, he takes nae other pine, / But to receive his teinds and spend them sine, / Howbeit he be obleist by good reason, / To preach the Evangel to his parichoun. / Howbeit they should want preaching seventeen year, / Our parson will not want ane sheaf of bier. / Our bishops with their lusty rockets white, / They flow in riches royally and delight: / Like Paradise been their palaces and places, / And wants nae pleasure of the fairest faces. / Als thir prelates has great prerogatives, / For why they may depairt ay with their wives, / Without any correctioun or damage, / Syne tak ane other wantoner, but marriage. / But doubt I would think it ane pleasant life, / Aye, and when I list to part with my wife, / Syne tak another of far greater beauty. / But ever alas, my lords, that may not be; / For I am bound, alas, in marriage; / But they like rams rudely in their rage / Unpissalt rins among the silly ewes, / Sa lang as kind of nature in them grows.

BELLENDEN. All this was proved by Experience. And also was showed th'office of a bishop, and produced the New Testament with the authorities to that effect.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Mark well, my Lords, there is nae benefice / Given to ane man but for ane good office. / Wha taks office and syne they cannot use it, / Giver and taker, I say, are baith abusit. / Ane bishop's office is for to be ane preacher, / And of the law of God ane public teacher. / Right sae the parson unto his parichoun, / Of the Evangel should leir them ane lessoun. / There should nae man desire sic dignities, / Without he be able for that office. / And for that cause I say, without leasing, / They have their teinds, and for nae other thing.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Friend, where find ye that we should preachers be?

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Look what Sanct Paul writes unto Timothy. / Tak there the Buik: let see if ye can spell.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. I never read that, therefor read it yoursel.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. [READS LATIN BIBLE & ENGLISH TRANSLATION] 'Fidelis sermo, si quis Episcopatum desiderat, bonum opus desiderat. Oportet [ergo], eum irreprehensibilem esse, unius uxoris virum, sobrium, prudentem, ornatum, pudicum, hospitem, doctorem: non vinolentum, non percussorem, sed modestum.' That is: 'This is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a worthy work: a Bishop, therefore, must be unreproueable, the husband of one wife..'

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Ye temporal men, by Him that harried Hell, / Ye are over pert with sik matters to mell.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. Sit still, my Lord, ye need not for till brawl, / Thir are the very words of th'Apostle Paul.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Some says, by Him that wore the crown of thorn, / It had been good that Paul had ne'er been born.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. But ye may know, my Lord, Sanct Paul's intent. / Sir, read ye never the New Testament?

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Na sir, by him that our Lord Jesus sold, / I read never the New Testament nor Auld. / Nor ever thinks to do sir, be the Rood! / I hear friars say that reading does nae good.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Till you to read them, I think it is nae lack, / For anis I saw them baith bound on your back; / That samen day that ye was consecrat. / Sir, what meanis that?

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. The Fiend stick them that wat!

SOLACE AS BURGESS. Then, before God, how can ye be excusit; / To have ane office and wats not how to use it? / Whererfore were given you all the temporal lands, / And all thir teinds ye have among your hands? / They were given you for other causes, I ween, / Nor mummle Matins and hold your clays clean. / Ye say to the Apostles that ye succeed, / But ye show not that into word nor deed. / The law is plain: our teinds should furnish teachers.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Yea, that it should, or sustain prudent preachers.

POOR MAN. / Sir, God nor I be stickit with ane knife, / If ever our Parson preachit in all his life.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. What Devil raks thee of our preaching, undocht?

POOR MAN. Think ye that ye should have the teinds for nought?

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Trows thou to get remeid, carl, of that thing?

POOR MAN. Yea, be God's bread, richt soon, war I ane king.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Would thou of prelates mak deprivatioun?

POOR MAN. Na, I should gar them keep their foundatioun.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. I pray thee, brother, gar me understand /  
Wherever Christ possessit ane foot of land.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. Yea, that he did, father, withoutin fail, / For Christ  
Jesus was King of Israel.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. I grant that Christ was King above all kings, /  
But he mellit never with temporal things: / As he has plainly done declare  
Him-sell, / As thou may read in his Haly Evangel; / 'Birds has their nests, and  
tods has their den, / But Christ Jesus, the Saviour of men, / In all this world  
has not ane penny braid / Whereon He may repose His heavenly head'.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. And is that true?

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Yes, brother, by All Hallows: / Christ Jesus had  
nae property but the gallows, / And left not when He yeildit up the spreit /  
To buy Himself ane simple windingsheet.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. Christ's successors, I understand, / Thinks  
nae shame to have temporal land. / Father, they have nae will, I you assure, /  
In this world to be indigent and poor. / Sir, we beseek your sovereign  
celsitude / Of our daughters to have compassioun. / Whom we may nae way  
marry, by the Rood, / Without we mak some alienatioun / Of our land for  
their supportatioun. / For-why the market raisit been sae high / That prelates'  
daughters of this natioun, / Are marryit with sic superfluity, / They will not  
spare to give twa thousand pound, / With their daughters to ane noble  
man, / In riches sae they do super-abound. / But we may not do sae, by Sant  
Allan, / Thir proud prelates our daughters sair may ban, / That they remain at  
hame sae lang unmarryit; / Sir, let your barons do the best they can, / Some  
of our daughters, I dreid, shall be miscarryit.



POOR MAN. What Devil is this? Whom of should Kings stand awe / To do the thing that they should by the law? / Were I ane king, be cock's dear Passioun, / I should right soon mak reformatioun. / What if King David were livin' in thir days / The whilk did found sae many gay abbeys? / Or out of Heaven what if he lookit down, / And saw the great abominatioun, / Among thir abbesses and thir nunn'ries, / Their public whoredoms and their harlotries? / He would repent he narrowit sa his bounds, / Of yearly rent three-score of thousand pounds. / His successors maks little ruisse, I guess, / Of his devotioun or of his holiness.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. How dare thou, carl, presume for to declare, / Or for to mell thee with sae high a matter? / For in Scotland there did yit never ring, / I let thee wit, ane mair excellent king. / Of holiness he was the very plant, / And now in Heaven he is ane mightful Sanct, / Because that fifteen abbasies he did found, / Wherethrough great riches has ay done abound / Into our Kirk and daily yet abounds. / But kings now, I trow, few abbasies founs / I dare well say thou art condempnit in Hell, / That does presume with sic matters to mell. / False whoreson carl, thou art over arrogant / To judge the deeds of sic ane haly sanct.

POOR MAN. King James the first, roy of this regioun, / Said that he was ane sair sanct to the croun. / I hear men say that he was something blind, / That gave away mair nor he left behind. / His successours that haliness did repent, / Whilk gart them do great inconvenient.

BELLENDEN. And then rose the Man of Arms and the Burgess, and did say that all that was produced by the Poor Man and Experience was reasonable, of verity and of great effect, and very expedient to be reformed with the consent of parliament.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. My Lords, let be your disputatioun. / Conclude with firm deliberatioun / How prelates frae thine shall be deponit.

SOLACE AS BURGESS. I think for me even as ye first proponit, / That the King's Grace shall give nae benefice, / But till ane preacher that can use that office. / The silly souls that been Christ's sheep / Should not be given to gormand wolves to keep. / What been the cause of all the heresies / But the

abusious of the prelacies? / They will correct and will not be correctit, /  
Thinkin' to nae prince they will be subjectit. / Wherefore I can find nae  
better remeid, / But that thir Kings mun take it in their head / That there be  
given to nae man bishopries, / Except they preach outthrough their dioceses,  
/ And ilk parson preach in his parichon: / And this I say for final conclusion.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. We think your counsel is very good, / As  
ye have said, we all conclude. / Of this conclusioun, Noter, we mak ane Act.  
SOLACE. He writes all day, but gets never ane plack!

SOLACE AS BURGESS. My Lords, conclude that all the temporal lands / Be  
set in feu to labourers with their hands, / With sic restrictiouns as shall be  
devisit, / That they may live and not to be surprisit, / With ane reasonable  
augmentatioun: / And when they hear ane proclamatioun / That the King's  
Grace does mak him for the weir, / That they be ready with harness, bow,  
and spear. / As for myself, my Lord, this I conclude.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Sae say we all, your reason be sae good. / To  
mak an Act on this we are content.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. We will conclude as they have done in  
France: / Let spritual matters pass to Sprituality, / And temporal matters to  
Temporality. / Who fails of this shall cost them of their good; / Scribe, mak  
ane Act for sae we will conclude.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. That act, my Lords, plainly I will declare: / It is against  
our profit singulair. / We will not want our profit, by Sanct Geill!

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. Your profit is against the commonweal. / It  
shall be done, my Lords as ye have wrought: / We cure not whidder ye  
consent or not. / Wherefore serves then all thir temporal judges, / If  
temporal matters should seek at you refuges? / My Lord, ye say that ye are  
spritual, / Wherefore mell ye then with things temporal? / As we have done  
conclude, sae shall it stand. / Scribe, put our Acts in order even frae hand.

BELLENDEN. And the Bishop said he would not consent thereunto.

EURE AS SPIRITUALITY. To that, my Lords, we plainly disassent: / Noter,  
thereof I tak ane instrument.

BELLENDEN. The Man of Arms and Burgess said they were two, and he but one, wherefore their voice should have most effect.

CROMWELL AS TEMPORALITY. My Lord, be Him that all the world has wrought, / We set not by whidder ye consent or not: / Ye are but ane Estait and we are twa, / Et ubi major pars ibi tota.

BELLENDEN. [SCRIBE HANDS KING PAPER WHICH HE SIGNS]  
Thereafter the King in the play ratified, approved, and confirmed all that was rehearsed.

LYNDSAY AS EXPERIENCE. Or ye depart, sir, / Give this the Poor Man here ane gay garmoun; / Because the Commonweal has been overlookit, / That is the cause that Commonweal is crookit. / With singular profit he has been sae surprisit, / That he is baith cold, nakit, and disguisit.

PLAYER KING. As ye have said, I am content. / Solace, give him ane new habilement / Of satin, damais, or of the velvet fine. / And give him place in our Parliament syne.

HEIR SHALL THEY CLEITH THE POOR MAN GORGEOUSLY, AND SET HIM DOWN AMANG THEM IN THE PARLIAMENT.

BELLENDEN AS PLAYER KING. All virtuous people now may be rejoiced, / Since Commonweal has gotten ane gay garmoun, / Blessed is that realm that has ane prudent king, / There may nae people have prosperity, / Where ignorance has the dominion, / And commonweal by tyrants trampit down.

SOLACE. And that was the end of the play, and there was stunned silence or rapturous applause, I can't remember which.

EURE. But, my Lord, the same Master Bellenden showed me that after the said interlude finished, the King of Scots did call upon the Archbishop of Glasgow, being Chancellor, and diverse other bishops, exhorting them to

BELLENDEN AS JAMES V. Reform your factions and manners of living, or I will send six of the proudest of you unto mine uncle of England,

CROMWELL. And we'll hang you all.

BELLENDEN AS JAMES V. And, as those were ordered, so I will order all the rest that will not amend.

EURE. And thereunto the Chancellor should answer, and say unto the King that –

SOLACE AS GLASGOW. One word of His Grace's mouth should suffice us to be at commandment,

BELLENDEN AS JAMES V. I would gladly bestow any words of my mouth that could amend you.

EURE. I am also advertised by the same Master Bellenden that

BELLENDEN. The King of Scots is fully minded to expel all spiritual men from having any authority by office under his Grace, either in household or elsewhere in the realm, and daily studieth and deviseth for that intent.

EURE. And that was that. The end of Bellenden's account and the end of my letter. At the King's Majesty's castle of Berwick, the 26th day of January 1540. Your Lordship's, at commandment, William Eure.

POOR MAN. You cannae end like that.

EURE. I'm afraid that's all we've got. History is incomplete, my boy.

LYNDSAY. Within two years James V was dead. So I had to write a different sort of play. A play for a Scotland without a king.

SOLACE. Isn't it amazing? A poor man speaking freely in the presence of the King. And being heard. Does that happen in England, Lord Cromwell?

CROMWELL. Oh no, in England our king is a Solomon, by the Grace of God, King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and of the Church of England and also of Ireland in Earth Supreme Head. A great majesty who administers bonfires in the name of justice.

SOLACE. Is this you at the height of your powers? [CROMWELL SMILES] And what happens to you, eh? How are things in England, Sir Thomas?