

Speech 11 was to the Second Protectorate Parliament on 31st March 1657
Reception of their Petition and Advice with their offer of the Title of King.
Returns pious thanks; craves time to consider; will then answer.

MR. SPEAKER,

This Frame of Government which it hath pleased the Parliament through your hand to offer to me, -truly I should have a very brazen forehead if it did not beget in me a great deal of consternation of spirit; it being of so high and great importance as, by your opening of it, and by the mere reading of it, is manifest to all men; the welfare, the peace and settlement of Three Nations, and all that rich treasure of the best people in the world being involved therein! I say, this consideration alone ought to beget in me the greatest reverence and fear of God that ever possessed a man in the world.

Truly I rather study to say no more at this time than is necessary for giving some brief general answer, suitable to the nature of the thing. The thing is of weight; the greatest weight of anything that was ever laid upon a man. And therefore, it being of that weight, and consisting of so many parts as it doth, -in each of which much more than my life is concerned, -truly I think I have no more to desire of you at present, but that you would give me time to deliberate and consider what particular answer I may return to so great a business as this. -

I have lived the latter part of my age in, -if I may say so, -the fire; in the midst of troubles. But all the things that have befallen me since I was first engaged in the affairs of this Commonwealth, if they could be supposed to be all brought into such a compass that I could take a view of them at once, truly I do not think they would 'so move,' nor do I think they ought so to move, my heart and spirit with that fear and reverence of God that becomes a Christian, as this thing that hath now been offered by you to me! -And truly my comfort in all my life hath been that the burdens which have lain heavy on me, they were laid upon me by the hand of God. And I have not known, I have been many times at a loss, which way to stand under the weight of what hath lain upon me: -except by looking at the conduct and pleasure of God in it. Which hitherto I have found to be a good pleasure to me.

And should I give any resolution in this 'matter' suddenly, without seeking to have an answer put into my heart, and so into my mouth, by Him that hath been my God and my Guide hitherto, -it would give you very little cause of comfort in such a choice as you have made (Of me to be King) in such a business as this. It would savour more to be of the flesh, to proceed from lust, to arise from arguments of self. And if, -whatsoever the issue of this 'great matter' be -'my decision in' it have such motives in me, have such a rise in me, it may prove even a curse to you and to these Three Nations. Who, I verily believe, have intended well in this business; and have had those honest and sincere aims towards the glory of God, the good of His People, the rights of the Nation. I verily believe these have been your aims: and God forbid that so good aims should suffer by any dishonesty and indirectness on my part. For

although, in the affairs that are in the world, things may be intended well,-as they are always, or for the most, by such as love God, and fear God and make Him their aim (and such honest ends and purposes, I do believe, yours now are);-yet if these considerations fall upon a person or persons whom God takes no pleasure in; who perhaps may be at the end of his work; (Growing old and weak? Say not that, your Highness!-A kind of pathos, and much dignity and delicacy in these tones.) who, to please any of those humours or considerations which are of this world, shall run upon such a rock as this is,- without due consideration, without integrity, without approving the heart to God, and seeking an answer from Him; and putting things to Him as if for life and death, that such an answer may be received 'from Him' as may be a blessing to the person (Me) who is to be used for these noble and worthy and honest intentions of the persons (You) that have prepared and perfected this work:-'why then,' it would be like a match where a good and worthy and virtuous man mistakes in the person he makes love to; and, as often turns out, it proves a curse to the man and to the family, through mistake! And if this should be so to you, and to these Nations, whose good I cannot but be persuaded you have in your thoughts aimed at,-why then, it had been better, I am sure of it, that I had never been born!-

I have therefore but this one word to say to you: That seeing you have made progress in this Business, and completed the work on your part, I 'on my side' may have some short time to ask counsel of God and of my own heart. And I hope that neither the humour of any weak unwise people, nor yet the desires of any who may be lusting after things that are not good, shall steer me to give other than such an answer as may be ingenuous and thankful,-thankfully acknowledging your care and integrity;-and such an answer as shall be for the good of those whom I presume you and I serve, and are made for serving.

And truly I may say this also: That as the thing will deserve deliberation, the utmost deliberation and consideration on my part, so I shall think myself bound to give as speedy an answer to these things as I can.