

Speech 12 was to a Committee of the Second Protectorate Parliament on 3rd April 1657

Answers with praise as to the Petition and Advice generally, but as to the Title of King with a distinct but not emphatic 'No'.

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MY LORDS,

I am heartily sorry that I did not make this desire of mine known to the Parliament sooner; 'the desire' which I acquainted them with, by Letter, this day. The reason was, Because some infirmity of body hath seized upon me these last two days, Yesterday and Wednesday. (It is yet but three days, your Highness.)

I have, as well as I could, taken consideration of the things contained in the Paper, which was presented to me by the Parliament, in the Banqueting-House, on Tuesday last; and sought of God that I might return such an answer as might become me, and be worthy of the Parliament. I must needs bear this testimony to them, That they have been zealous of the two greatest Concernments that God hath in the world. The one is that of Religion, and of the just preservation of the professors of it; to give them all due and just Liberty; and to assert the Truth of God;-which you have done, in part, in this Paper; and do refer it more fully to be done by yourselves and me. And as to the Liberty of men professing Godliness, you have done that which was never done before! And I pray it may not fall upon the People of God as a fault in them, in any sort of them, if they do not put such a value upon this that is now done as never was put on anything since Christ's time, for such a Catholic interest of the People of God. (Liberty in non-essentials; Freedom to all peaceable Believers in Christ to worship in such outward form as they will; a very "Catholic interest" indeed.) The other thing cared for is the Civil Liberty and Interest of the Nation. Which though it is, and indeed I think ought to be, subordinate to the more peculiar Interest of God,-yet it is the next best God hath given men in this world; and if well cared for, it is better than any rock to fence men in their other interests. Besides, if any whosoever think the Interest of Christians and the Interest of the Nation inconsistent, 'or two different things,' I wish my soul may never enter into their secrets! (We will take another course than theirs, your Highness!)

These are things I must acknowledge Christian and honourable; and they are provided for by you like Christian men and also men of honour,-like yourselves, English men. And to this I must and shall bear my testimony, while I live against all gainsayers whatsoever. And upon these Two Interests, if God shall account me worthy, I shall live and die. And I must say, If I were to give an account before a greater Tribunal than any earthly one; If I were asked, Why I have engaged all along in the late War, I could give no answer that were not a wicked one if it did not comprehend these Two ends!- Meanwhile only give me leave to say, and to say it seriously (the issue will approve it serious), that you have one or two considerations which do stick with me. The one is, You have named me by another Title than I now bear. (What SHALL I answer to that!)

You do necessitate my answer to be categorical; and you have left me without a liberty of choice to save as to all. (Must accept the whole Petition and Advice, or reject the whole of it.) I question not your wisdom in doing so; I think myself obliged to acquiesce in your determination; knowing you are men of wisdom, and considering the trust you are under. It is a duty not to question the reason of anything you have done. (Not even of the Kingship: say Yes, then!)

I should be very brutish did I not acknowledge the exceeding high honour and respect you have had for me in this Paper. Truly, according to what the world calls good, it hath nothing but good in it,-according to worldly approbation of sovereign power. You have testified your value and affection as to my person, as high as you could; for more you could not do! I hope I shall always keep a grateful memory of this in my heart;-and by you I return the Parliament this my grateful acknowledgement. Whatever other men's thoughts may be, I shall not own ingratitude.-But I must needs say, That that may be fit for you to offer, which may not be fit for me to undertake. (Profound Silence.) And as I should reckon it a very great presumption, were I to ask the reason of your doing any one thing in this Paper,-(except 'in' some very few things, the 'new' Instrument, 'this Paper,' bears testimony to itself),-so you will not take it unkindly if I beg of you this addition to the Parliament's favour, love and indulgence unto me, That it be taken in tender part if I give such an answer as I find in my heart to give in this business, without urging many reasons for it, save such as are most obvious, and most to my advantage in answering: Namely, that I am not able for such a trust and charge. (Won't have it then!)

And if the "answer of the tongue" as well as the preparation of the heart be "from God," I must say my heart and thoughts ever since I heard the Parliament were upon this business-(Sentence breaks down)-'For' though I could not take notice of your proceedings therein without breach of your privileges, yet as a common person I confess I heard of it in common with others.-I must say I have been able to attain no farther than this, That, seeing the way is hedged up so as it is to me, and I cannot accept the things offered unless I accept all, I have not been able to find it my duty to God and you to undertake this charge under that Title. (Refuses, yet not so very peremptorily!)

The most I said in commendation of the 'new' Instrument may be retorted on me;-as thus: "Are there such good things provided for 'in this Instrument:' will you refuse to accept them because of such an ingredient?" Nothing must make a man's conscience a servant. And really and sincerely it is my conscience that guides me to this answer. And if the Parliament be so resolved 'for the whole Paper or none of it,' it will not be fit for me to use any inducement to you to alter their resolution.

This is all I have to say. I desire it may, and do not doubt but it will, be with candour and ingenuity represented unto them by you.