

Speech 8 was to the two Houses of Parliament on the opening of the Second Session of the Second Protectorate Parliament on 20th January 1657 (Note - English Calendar. New Year started on 25th March).

Reasons for thankfulness in such a meeting: Religious Liberty, the great object of our struggles, gained, and in a way being made secure, Peace hitherto; a Godly Ministry. Understand the works of God, what God has done for you and persevere and prosper.

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MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN 'OF' THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

I meet you here in this capacity by the Advice and Petition of this present Parliament. After so much expense of blood and treasure, 'we are now' to search and try what blessings God hath in store for these Nations. I cannot but with gladness of heart remember and acknowledge the labour and industry that is past, 'your past labour,' which hath been spent upon a business worthy of the best men and the best Christians. (May it prove fruitful!)

It is very well known unto you all what difficulties we have passed through, and what 'issue' we are now arrived at. We hope we may say we have arrived if not 'altogether' at what we aimed at, yet at that which is much beyond our expectations. The nature of this Cause, and the Quarrel, what that was at the first, you all very well know; I am persuaded most of you have been actors in it: It was the maintaining of the Liberty of these Nations; our Civil Liberties as Men, our Spiritual Liberties as Christians. (Have we arrived at that?) I shall not much look back; but rather say one word concerning the state and condition we are all now in.

You know very well, the first Declaration, after the beginning of this War, that spake to the life, was a sense held forth by the Parliament, That for some succession of time designs had been laid to innovate upon the Civil Rights of the Nations, 'and' to innovate in matters of Religion. And those very persons who, a man would have thought, should have had the least hand in meddling with Civil things, did justify them all. (Zealous sycophant Priests, Sibthorp, Manwaring, Montagu, of the Laud fraternity: forced-loans, monopolies, ship-monies, all Civil Tyranny was right according to them!) All the 'Civil' transactions that were, -'they justified them' in their pulpits, presses, and otherwise! Which was verily thought, 'had they succeeded in it,' would have been a very good shelter to them, to innovate upon us in matters of Religion also. And so to innovate as to eat out the core and power and heart and life of all Religion! By bringing on us a company of poisonous Popish Ceremonies (Somewhat animated, your Highness!), and imposing them upon those that were accounted "the Puritans" of the Nation, and professors of religion among us, -driving them to seek their bread in an howling wilderness! As was instanced to our friends who were forced to fly for Holland, New England, almost anywhither, to find Liberty for their Consciences.

Now if this thing hath been the state and sum of our Quarrel, and of those Ten Years of War wherein we were exercised; and if the good hand of God, for we

are to attribute it to no other, hath brought this business thus home unto us as it is now settled in the Petition and Advice,-I think we have all cause to bless God, and the Nations have all cause to bless Him. (If we were of thankful just heart,-yea!)

I well remember I did a little touch upon the Eighty-fifth Psalm when I spake unto you in the beginning of this Parliament. Which expreseth well what we may say, as truly as it was said of old by the Penman of that Psalm! The first verse is an acknowledgment to God that He "had been favourable unto His land," and "brought back the captivity of His people;" and 'then' how that He had "pardoned all their iniquities and covered all their sin, and taken away all His wrath;"-and indeed of these unspeakable mercies, blessings, and deliverances out of captivity, pardoning of national sins and national iniquities. Pardoning, as God pardoneth the man whom He justifieth! He breaks through, and overlooks iniquity; and pardoneth because He will pardon. And sometimes God pardoneth Nations also!-And if the enjoyment of our present Peace and other mercies may be witnesses for God 'to us,'-we feel and we see them every day.

The greatest demonstration of His favour and love appears to us in this: That He hath given us Peace;-and the blessings of Peace, to wit, the enjoyment of our Liberties civil and spiritual! (Were not our prayers, and struggles, and deadly wrestlings, all even for this;-and we in some measure have it!) And I remember well, the Church 'in that same Eighty-fifth Psalm' falls into prayer and into praises, great expectations of future mercies, and much thankfulness for the enjoyment of present mercies; and breaks into this expression: "Surely salvation is nigh unto them that fear Him: that glory may dwell in our land." In the beginning it is called His land; "Thou hast been favourable to Thy land." Truly I hope this is His land! In some sense it may be given out that it is God's Land. And he that hath the weakest knowledge, and the worst memory, can easily tell that we are "a Redeemed People,"-'from the time' when God was first pleased to look favourably upon us, 'to redeem us' out of the hands of Popery, in that never to be forgotten Reformation, that most significant and greatest 'mercy' the Nation hath felt or tasted! I would but touch upon that,-but a touch: How God hath redeemed us, as we stand this day! Not from trouble and sorrow and anger only, but into a blessed and happy estate and condition, comprehensive of all Interests, of every member of every individual;-an imparting to us' of those mercies 'there spoken of,' as you very well see!

And then in what sense it is "our Land;"-through this grace and favour of God, That He hath vouchsafed unto us and bestowed upon us, with the Gospel, Peace and rest out of Ten Years War: and given us what we would desire! Nay, who could have forethought, when we were plunged into the midst of our troubles, That ever the people of God should have had liberty to worship God without fear of enemies? (Strange: this "liberty" is to Oliver Cromwell a blessing almost too great for belief; to us it has become as common as the liberty to breathe atmospheric air,-a liberty not once worth thinking of. It is the way with all attainments and conquests in this world. Do I think of Cadmus, or the old unknown Orientals, while I write with LETTERS? The world is built

upon the mere dust of Heroes; once earnest-wrestling, death-defying, prodigal of their blood; who now sleep well, forgotten by all their heirs.- -"Without fear of enemies," he says.) Which is the very acknowledgment of the Promise of Christ that "He would deliver His from the fear of enemies, that they might worship Him in holiness and in righteousness all the days of their life."

This is the portion that God hath given us; and I trust we shall forever heartily acknowledge it!-The Church goes on there, 'in what Psalm,' and makes her boast yet farther: "His salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land." His glory; not carnal, nor anything related thereto: this glory of a Free Possession of the Gospel; this is that which we may glory in! (Beautiful, thou noble soul!-And very strange to see such things in the Journals of the English House of Commons. O Heavens, into what oblivion of the Highest have stupid, canting, cotton-spinning, partridge-shooting mortals fallen, since that January 1658!) And it is said farther, "Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other." And 'note,' it shall be such righteousness as comes down from Heaven: "Truth shall grow out of the Earth, and Righteousness shall come down from Heaven." Here is the Truth of all 'truths;' here is the righteousness of God, under the notion of righteousness confirming our abilities,-answerable to the truth which He hath in the Gospel revealed to us! (According to Calvin and Paul.) And the Psalm closeth with this: "Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps;"-that righteousness, that mercy, that love and that kindness which we have seen, and been made partakers of from the Lord, it shall be our Guide, to teach us to know the right and the good way; which is, To tread in the steps of mercy, righteousness and goodness that our God hath walked before us in.-

We 'too' have a Peace this day! I believe in my very heart, you all think the things that I speak to you this day. I am sure you have cause.

And yet we are not without the murmurings of many people who turn all this grace and goodness into wormwood; who indeed are disappointed by the works of God. And those men are of several ranks and conditions; great ones, lesser ones,-of all sorts. Men that are of the Episcopal spirit, with all the branches, the root and the branches;-who gave themselves a fatal blow in this Place, when they would needs make a "Protestation that no Laws were good which were made by this House and the House of Commons in their absence;" and so without injury to others cut themselves off! Men of an Episcopal spirit:' indeed men that know not God; that know not how to account upon the works of God, how to measure them out; but will trouble Nations for an Interest which is but mixed, at the best,-made up of iron and clay like the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's Image: whether they were more Civil or Spiritual was hard to say. But their continuance was like to be known beforehand; (Yes, your Highness!) iron and clay make no good mixtures, they are not durable at all!-

You have now a godly Ministry; you have a knowing Ministry; such a one as, without vanity be it spoken, the world has not. Men knowing the things of God, and able to search into the things of God,-by that only which can fathom

those things in some measure. The spirit of a beast knows not the things of a man; nor doth the spirit of man know the things of God! "The things of God are known by the Spirit."-Truly I will remember but one thing of those, 'the misguided persons now cast out from us:' Their greatest persecution hath been of the People of God;-men really of the spirit of God, as I think very experience hath now sufficiently demonstrated!-

But what's the reason, think you, that men slip in this age wherein we live? As I told you before, They understand not the works of God. They consider not the operation of His Laws. They consider not that God resisted and broke in pieces the Powers that were, that men might fear Him;-might have liberty to do and enjoy all that that we have been speaking of! Which certainly God has manifested to have been the end; and so hath He brought the things to pass! Therefore it is that men yet slip, and engage themselves against God. And for that very cause, saith David (Psalm Twenty-eighth), "He shall break them down, and not bind them up!"

If, therefore, you would know upon what foundation you stand, own your foundation 'to be' from God. He hath set you where you are. He hath set you in the enjoyment of your Civil and Spiritual Liberties.

I deal clearly with you, I have been under some infirmity; (His Highness still looks unwell.) therefore dare not speak farther to you;-except to let you know thus much, That I have with truth and simplicity declared the state of our Cause, and our attainments in it by the industry and labour of this Parliament since they last met upon this foundation-You shall find I mean, Foundation of a Cause and Quarrel thus attained to, wherein we are thus estated. I should be very glad to lay my bones with yours; (What a tone!)-and would have done it, with all heartiness and cheerfulness, in the meanest capacity I ever yet was in, to serve the Parliament.

If God give you, as I trust He will-("His blessing" or "strength:" but the Sentence is gone.)-He hath given it you, for what have I been speaking of but what you have done? He hath given you strength to do what you have done! And if God should bless you in this work, and make this Meeting happy on this account, you shall all be called the Blessed of the Lord. (Poor Oliver!-The generations to come will bless us. You shall be the "repairers of breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in!" And if there be any higher work which mortals can attain unto in the world, beyond this, I acknowledge my ignorance 'of it.'

As I told you, I have some infirmities upon me. I have not liberty to speak more unto you: but I have desired an Honourable Person here by me (Glancing towards Nathaniel Fiennes, him with the Purse and Seal.) to discourse, a little more particularly, what may be more proper for this occasion and this meeting.