

Speech 18 was to the Second Protectorate Parliament in a body on 8th May 1657.

Refuses the Title of King.

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MR. SPEAKER,

I come hither to answer That that was in your last Paper to your Committee you sent to me 'yesterday;' which was in relation to the Desires that were offered me by the House in That they called their Petition.

I confess, that Business hath put the House, the Parliament, to a great deal of trouble, and spent much time. I am very sorry for that. It hath cost me some 'too,' and some thoughts: and because I have been the unhappy occasion of the expense of so much time, I shall spend little on it now.

I have, the best I can, revolved the whole Business in my thoughts: and I have said so much already in testimony to the whole, I think I shall not need to repeat what I have said. I think it is 'An Act of' Government which, in the aims of it, seeks the Settling of the Nation on a good foot, in relation to Civil Rights and Liberties, which are the Rights of the Nation. And I hope I shall never be found one of them that go about to rob the Nation of those Rights:-but 'always' to serve it what I can to the attaining of them. It has also been exceedingly well provided there for the safety and security of honestmen in that great natural and religious liberty, which is Liberty of Conscience.-These are the great Fundamentals; and I must bear my testimony to them; as I have done, and shall do still, so long as God lets me live in this world: That the intentions and the things are very honourable and honest, and the product worthy of a Parliament.

I have only had the unhappiness, both in my Conferences with your Committee, and in the best thoughts I could take to myself, not to be convinced of the necessity of that thing which hath been so often insisted on by you,-to wit, the Title of King,-as in itself so necessary as it seems to be apprehended by you. And yet I do, with all honour and respect, testify that, coeteris paribus, no private judgment is to be in the balance with the judgment of Parliament. But in things that respect particular persons,-every man who is to give an account to God of his actions, he must in some measure be able to prove his own work, and to have an approbation in his own conscience of that which he is to do or to forbear. And whilst you are granting others Liberties, surely you will not deny me this; it being not only a Liberty but a Duty, and such a Duty as I cannot without sinning forbear,-to examine my own heart and thoughts and judgment, in every work which I am to set my hand to, or to appear in or for.

I must confess therefore, though I do acknowledge all the other 'points,' I must be a little confident in this, That what with the circumstances which accompany human actions,-whether they be circumstances of time or persons (Straitlaced Republican Soldiers that have just been presenting you their Petition), whether circumstances that relate to the whole or private and

particular circumstances such as compass any person who is to render an account of his own actions,-I have truly thought, and I do still think, that, at the best, if I should do anything on this account to answer your expectation, at the best I should do it doubtingly. And certainly whatsoever is so is not of faith. And whatsoever is not so, whatsoever is not of faith, is sin to him that doth it,- whether it be with relation to the substance of the action about which that consideration is conversant, or whether to circumstances about it (Thinskinned Republicans, or the like "circumstances"), which make all indifferent actions good or evil. I say "Circumstances (Yes); which make all indifferent actions good or evil. I say "Circumstances" (Yes); and truly I mean "good or evil" to him that doth it. (Not to you Honourable Gentlemen who have merely advised it in general.)

I, lying under this consideration, think it my duty-Only I could have wished I had done it sooner, for the sake of the House, who have laid such infinite obligations on me (With a kind glance over these honourable faces: all silent as if dead, many of them with their mouths open); I wish I had done it sooner for your sake, and for saving time and trouble; and for the Committee's sake, to whom I must acknowledge I have been unreasonably troublesome! But truly this is my answer, That (although I think the Act of Government doth consist of very excellent parts, in all but that one thing, of the Title as to me) I should not be an honest man, if I did not tell you that I cannot accept of the Government, nor undertake the trouble and charge of it-as to which I have a little more experimented than everybody what troubles and difficulties do befall men under such trusts, and in such undertakings-(Sentence irrecoverable)-I say I am persuaded to return this answer to you, That I cannot undertake this Government with the Title of King. And that is mine answer to this great and weighty Business.