

Haman's Vanity
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A sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons on the fifteenth of June 1643, being the day of their public thanksgiving.

Now in the twelfth month (that is the month Adar) on the thirteenth day of the same, when, the King's commandment drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them).

Esther 9:1

Of all people, the true Church of God has the best friends—and the most enemies. In the Revelation it is said to be “clothed with the sun,” and to “walk in white robes.” It carries in one hand the lamp of truth, and in the other hand, the beauties of holiness; against both of which there is in wicked men a malignant and an active contrariety.

Which vein of opposition hath run down from the days of Cain to this very hour, and hath erected its rigour in all the methods of serpentine designs and in all the furies of dragon-like rage and cruelties.

But still the great God (who is “the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in the day of trouble,” Jeremiah 14:8) has stepped down in the nick of time, either to crush that insolent fury, or to defeat those artificial plots of his and his Church's adversaries.

Amongst the many instances which may be given, this (here in the text) is as remarkable as any, and as suitable to this day's occasion.

If you please to look back to the third chapter, you shall light upon one Haman (an Agagite), a person of ignoble origins, and of an accursed race, and of as wicked a nature. He, being hoisted up (like some excrementitious vapour) into the place of great dignity and power solely by the beams and warmth of his prince's favour, improves this sudden greatness and affection, not as a cloud to refresh, but only as a thunder-bolt to ruin and destroy the Church of God, for he falls into serious consultation, how and when to put them all to the sword. He is almost a whole year in the ripening of this bloody and abhorred design.

And now (all things being ready for the birth), he presumes to play the game above board, yet politically; for considering that his own name and strength were insufficient axes to bear and wheel on so grand a mischief, he therefore cunningly insinuates the work into the king, Ahasuerus, and easily interests him therein; whereby the mischievous design gained countenance and authority.

But mark how he gained both these: not by an ingenuous relation, but only by a forged calumny, and by a taking accusation of the Jews: four things he surmiseth against them.

First, that they were an *infamous* people (“There is,” saith he in chapter 3:8, “a certain scattered and dispersed people”) as if they had been a company only of poor, wandering, shifting, and shuffling vagabonds.

Secondly, that they were an *humorous* people (“their laws are diverse from all people”), an odd people, and such who loved to be singular.

Thirdly, that they were a *factious and rebellious* people (“neither keep they the King’s laws”). They must see Scripture or Law, or else no obedience from them.

Fourthly, they were a *dangerous* people (“It is not for the King’s profit to suffer them”). As long as these live, you must not think to tax and get what you please.

And hereupon his modest request is, that therefore they might be all destroyed, no more than that, and no less.

Ahasuerus (without any judicial enquiry and hearing the parties thus accused) suddenly credits this courtier’s report, and gratifies him in his suit: For the effectual dispatch whereof there issues forth a commission under his seal (being first drawn by one or both his secretaries) and directed to the lieutenants, and governors, and rulers of every province, “to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all the Jews, young and old, little children and women in one day, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,” as you may expressly read in the third chapter, the twelfth and thirteenth verses.

How Haman and his complotters bless themselves and rejoice, that their design got on thus prosperously, and even long for the day when all must be put in execution, you may easily imagine.

And indeed the day drew very near; but then, (O take notice of the wheel which turns every wheel; of the first mover that disposeth of every motion!) the never-failing God interposeth himself, discovers, disturbs, disappoints all this destructive plot formed against the Jews, in the city Shushan and other provinces.

The sum of all is this: condemned Mordecai is advanced, Esther's request for herself and people is accepted, the plotting enemy is discountenanced and hanged, and the whole design is quite altered. "For in the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command, and his decree drew near to be put in execution; in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them."

Which words contain in them three passages.

First, the *maturity of a bloody design*: ("The day for the decree to be put in execution drew near").

Secondly, *the confidence of blood-sucking adversaries* ("In the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them").

Thirdly, *the contradiction of all this by a good God* ("Though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them").

I could out of all these parts take occasion, to discourse of many excellent points: as first, the depth of that implacable enmity which lies and swells in the hearts of wicked men against the Church of God. Secondly, the studious activity of that malice and hatred, as not to be satisfied and extinguished without the blood and ruin of God's people. Thirdly, the several ways and degrees of divine permission, in giving scope to the wickedly active and acting principles in the adversaries of his Church, with the true reason thereof, and how much divine wisdom, unspottedness, justice, and sovereignty appears such a permission. Fourthly, the three fatal plague-tokens (if I may so call them) of unsuccessfulness, and imminent ruin to the adversaries of God's people: namely, first, bloodiness of intention; secondly, nearness of execution; thirdly, boldness of expectation.

But I must have respect to you, and the work of this day: and therefore I shall only touch at two other propositions, which are these.

First, that God can and will make unsuccessful the bloodiest contrivances, and the hopefulest confidence of his church-destroying adversaries.

Secondly, that he can and will make them, as successful in respect of his Church; so reflexively pernicious in respect of its adversaries.

Point of Doctrine. I begin with the first of these, namely, that *God can and will make unsuccessful the bloodiest contrivances, and the hopefulest confidences of his church-destroying adversaries.* You may in the text read a decree for the killing of the Jews, and the nearness of time for the executing of it, and the enemies' confident hopes; and yet God's sovereign defeating and frustrating of all.

Before I confirm this truth, give me leave to premise three particulars.

First, that there is a difference to be made twixt the *molestation* of a church and the *desolation* of a church. The adversaries may be winds to toss this ark, but they shall never be rocks to split it.

What Luther confidently spake of himself, "*Impellere possunt, sed in totum prosternere non possunt: Crudeliter me tractare possunt, sed non extirpare: Dentes nudare, sed non devorare; Occidere me possunt, sed in totum me perdere non possunt.*"

Or what we maintain against the Papists and Arminians concerning habitual faith; that same may as truly be affirmed of the church militant (the proper subject of faith): *Premi potest, suppressi non potest*; she may be oppressed, but she shall never be suppressed: *concuti potest, excuti non potest*: she may be shaken, but she cannot be shivered.

"We are troubled," saith the apostle, "on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." As St. Hierom once spoke to his freind, "*Scias hominem Christo deditum mori posse, vinci non posse,*" a Christian may die, but he cannot be overcome. So the church may often be disturbed, but it shall never be destroyed.

Secondly, You must distinguish twixt *probability*, and twixt *infallibility* of destruction. The Church of God may fall into such an eclipse, into such an hour of temptation, that not only in the insulting fancies of the enemies, but also in all the commentaries of human reason, it may not only seem, but really be in the very way, nay, upon the very brink of destruction. It may (as David once did) "walk in the shadow of death"; destruction may be as near to it as the shadow is to the body; so near, that with Peter she may cry out, "Master! Save us, or else we perish."

But yet *eventual* and *infallible* destruction shall not befall it; God will step in and prevent that. You may read in one of the Psalms, that the Church was as near to destruction as a lamb sticking between the teeth of a lion was near to be devoured; and yet God took the prey out of the teeth (Psalm 124:6-7); and as near to destruction as the bird is to catching, which is fallen into the net, and entangled; and yet God broke the net, and the bird escaped. Again, as near to destruction as the brand is to burning which is thrown into the fire; and yet God hath snatched his Church out, even as a fire-brand is snatched out of the fire. When David was hemmed in with Saul's army, yet God made a way for him to escape. When Peter was fettered in prison, and the next morning to be executed, yet God by an Angel delivered him. When the three children were cast in to the fiery furnace, yet God preserved them. When Daniel was thrown to the lions, yet God kept him. When Abraham was lifting up the knife to kill Isaac, yet God stayed his hand.

When the city of Leyden was so long, and so strictly besieged (as I think) by the Duke of Alva, that they were forced for their sustenance to search and scrape the dunghills, and boil old leather, and so forth. And the duke, in the language of blasphemy, threatened the defendants: why that very night the winds turned, and the tide swelled, and the waters came in, and forced him to raise the siege.

Thirdly, you must distinguish twixt a particular person, and twixt a church. It may oftentimes so fall out, that the cruel designs of wicked adversaries may prevail to the destruction of this or that individual person (if that may be styled a destruction, which yet eventually redounds to the enlarging of the Church: for seed when it is sown multiplies the more; and *sanguis martyrum* is *semen ecclesiae: facundi sant martyrum rineres*) but they shall never prevail to the ruin of the Church.

Herod, in Acts 12:2, kills James with the sword, and yet in verse 24, for all that "the word of God grew and multiplied." It is one thing to take a rafter out of the house, another to demolish the house itself; to loose a board in the ship, and another thing to loose the ship itself. It is with the Church in persecuting times, as it is with wheat in the sifting; perhaps some grains may slip through, and yet the bulk may and doth remain behind. The adversaries must first learn the art to kill God, as they have already the malice to fight against God, before they shall be able utterly to destroy the Church of God; for God (when they come to destroying work, to root out his Church) will certainly infatuate and prevent them.

And this I shall assay to confirm partly by Scriptures, partly by instances, and partly by reasons.

First, by *Scriptures*, which give no hopes of good speed to any destructive designs: the phrases with which such wicked intentions are set forth, and by which God expresseth himself against them, do abundantly manifest it:

The *Scriptures* style these wicked ruinous designs, sometimes *dreams*, and dreams are but pleasant follies and delusions, the empty bubbles of the mind, children and tales of fancy, idle and fruitless notions; mere babbles.

Sometimes *fits of madness*: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” (Psalm 2:1). Mad men are persons of strange conceits and adventures, yet foolish, impossible, inconsistent, vain. They will pull the sun out of heaven, and remove mountains, but they cannot; such irrational and furious heats are there in wicked men against Christ, and against his Church, and just to as much purpose.

Sometimes *abortive or untimely fruits*, which hasten out before their just time, live not, but die. Let that of David (speaking of the adversaries of God's Church) serve in stead of all: “Behold! He travelleth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.” Here is a womb to breed a wicked plot, and a time of travail and birth, but all that it comes unto is a lie or falsehood; no such child of destruction as was imagined.

Again, let us peruse those phrases by which God expresseth himself against these destructive plots of his Church's adversaries; sometimes he is said to despise *their image*: “O Lord! When thou awakest thou shalt despise their image” (Psalm 73:20). Wicked men are in most respects but images; rather the images of men, than men; rather the images of Christians, than Christians; that religion unto which they do pretend is but an image or form of godliness. And so, their destructions of the Church are but images; they are the draughts, the portraitures or colours of a destruction, but shall be no real destruction; for God despiseth, condemneth, slighteth, or makes void that image.

And sometimes God is said to *laugh at them*, and *have them in derision*; to see how sillily furious and busy they are in building of a Babel, in stopping the course of the sea, in allaying vanities and impossibilities to undermine Christ and his Church. Now after all, what have they got? &c. And sometimes he is said to *blow upon them*, and blast them, and bridle them, and disappoint them, and to bring all their counsels and confederacies to naught, as you may read in Isaiah 37:27-29, and in Psalm 17:13. All which expressions do manifestly demonstrate this truth, that God can and will make all their designs, attempts, and hopes unsuccessful.

Secondly, by instances. And here the field of testimony is very large; you cannot dip into any one age of the world, there is no chronology either sacred or ecclesiastical wherein you can read or find, that in such a year, or at such a time God suffered his enemies utterly to destroy his Church.

Tis granted, you may light on several ages wherein the Church hath sailed on the waves, and perhaps swam in rivers of blood: but when the enemies attempted the utter subversion of it, still God hath stepped in, and defeated the adversaries, and rescued his own people: I will give you a taste of some places.

When Pharaoh (that Egyptian adversary) from oppression, advanced to the destruction of the Israelites, then God looks down, pities his people, delivers them with an outstretched arm, and not only defeats but destroys their adversaries.

Sennacherib (that Assyrian adversary) no less will serve his turn, then blasphemy against God, and a full ruin of Hezekiah and Jerusalem; and for this he prepares a mighty host. But then God puts his bridle into the mouth of this wild horse, smites his camp, turns back himself, and which is more, suffered him to be slain too.

The like may be instanced in Antiochus Epiphanes, and in the Pagan persecutions of the Church, which when they were cast out like a flood to drown the Church. Constantine the Great was then raised up to stave off that destructive fury, and so he did by his conquests over Maxentius and Maximinus: Yea, that infamous apostate Julian after all his unsuccessful plots and actings, at his death, blasphemously confessed, *Vicisti Galilae!* that Christ was too hard for him.

What should I speak of the defeatings and boundings of the antichristian plots and furies, which have been acting above these thousand years; and notwithstanding all their lying, decrees, devices, attempts, burnings, murdering, resolves, confederacies, assistances with the power of Emperors, Kings, Rulers, they hitherto cannot, nor ever shall be able to destroy the Church of Christ: the Church yet lives, and shall spread more and more.

Thirdly, *by reasons*; the reasons to convince men of this truth shall be taken, first, from God. Secondly, from Christ and his Church. Thirdly, from the enemies themselves.

First, from God.

I do confess that, were the Church left hand to hand with her enemies, and had not a God to side with it, she were no more able to sustain herself against the policy of her enemies, than the lamb against the foxes; nor against the fury of them, than the sheep against the lions; or as a little spark of fire against an ocean of water. *Gaudeo quod Christus Dominus est, alioqui totus desperassem*, writes Myconius to Calvin, upon the view of the Church's enemies.

But there is a God, and that God is on the Church's side: and this, some of the enemies of God have confessed; "Let us flee," said the Egyptians, "from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them, against the Egyptians" (Exodus 14:25).

Beloved, I beseech you to observe, that there is on the Church's side,

First, *the Covenant of God*: in which he doth engage all his glorious attributes to be not only a reward, but also a shield unto his people: as you may expressly read in Genesis 15:1. So that if *omniscience* be able to see, and *omnipotence* be able to hinder; assuredly none of the adversaries' plots and attempts shall ever succeed to the destruction of his Church, though they may be fair for it, and very near.

Secondly, *the affections of God*: and we all know that the affection of love is of all other the most tender, and the most active; now if either relations, or donations, or estimations can discover, and entitle to affections, then is the Church sure of God's affections, for:

The *relations* twixt God and his people, are that of a father to his child ("Israel is my son, my first borne," Exodus 4:22) and that of an husband to a wife ("Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name," Isaiah 54:5) and that of a King to his subjects (whose affections to his people one shadows out by the pelican). Now can you imagine that a tender father, a loving husband, a just king will not (if they can help it) suffer children, wife, subjects to be wholly destroyed.

The *donations* of God to his people are wonderful. If greatest bounties be the characters of dearest love, surely then God wants not of love to them, for he hath given his Christ to them, his Spirit to them, himself to them, and will give eternal glory to them: And after all this, will he (think you) suffer his contemptible and conquered enemies, and vassals to conquer and destroy them.

The *estimations* of God touching his people are singular, his thoughts of them are precious, and high, and honourable; and therefore he styles them his friends, his house, his temple, his garden, his vineyard, his jewels, his delight, his kings and priests, nay the apple of his own eye. Now is it possible to fancy, that God will suffer his wretched and despised adversaries to destroy his anointed, to plunder him of his jewels, nay to tear out from him the very apple of his eye?

Thirdly, *the providence of God*: this Providence which our late complotters were pleased so to scoff at, this is on the Church's side.

And what is this Providence of God? Surely it is the right hand of his Covenant, the actual vigour of his infinite attributes: It runs to and fro through all the world, and orders all the motions of heaven and earth.

Four things are very considerable in it.

First, it is an *universally intimate eye*, diving into all the faculties, and risings, and framings, and actings of all and every creature: "I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me," saith God of Sennacherib (Isaiah 37:28).

So that there is no one nature, no one faculty, considerable in the natural or moral frame of it; no kindling of one thought, no grudging of one desire, no hatching of any one imagination, no whispering of one word; but all lies as naked to divine providence, as the eminentest mountain lies obvious to the brightest noon day of the sun.

The masks of actions, and curtains veil only towards the eyes of men, but there is no darkness towards him who is light itself.

Secondly, it is an *universally sovereign wheel*; upon the pleasure of which all actions and issues are commanded: as the motion and stay of the wheels which Ezekiel saw were according to those of the living creatures. There is no creature a maker of itself, or that can be a Lord over his own heart and works, and events: All these fall under the ordering of God, the supreme agent, and that with an unavoidable subjection and determination, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10).

Thirdly, it is an *infinite dispensation*. There is nothing requisite, either to the impediton of the Church's enemies, or to the conservation of the Church itself, but is to be found in Divine Providence: And therefore in Zechariah it is set out by seven eyes and by seven lamps. And in Ezekiel it is set out by faces and wings, and hands, to express that sufficiency of God's Providence, for all means of helps to his endangered churches.

Fourthly, it is a *watchful sentinel*. "He that keeps Israel, doth neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4). Excellent is that place in Isaiah 27:3, speaking of a vineyard (which you know doth represent the Church for her own weakness, for choiceness, for delight, and for fruitfulness), he adds, "I the Lord do keep; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

Now sum up all this, there is a special providence of God which clasps the Church, as the feathers of the hen doth the chicken. And it consists of activity, and of perfect knowledge, and of sovereign authority, and of all-helping sufficiency, and of most tender vigilancy for his people, and against their enemies. Must you not then grant me my position, that he will frustrate all destructive plots and attempts, though never so hopeful and near?

Secondly, from Christ and his Church.

Here I might show you (but time will cut me off, that I may not spread it) four things in him, which assure us that his Church's adversaries shall not prevail to ruin it.

As first the ancient conquests of all the Church's adversaries, amongst which the *world* is one. All Christ's conquests are for his Church; and shall conquered enemies now conquer?

Secondly, the dearest purchase of Christ: for so the Church is, which he ransomed by his heart blood; and will he now suffer them to be destroyed?

Thirdly, the foundation to his Church: the Scriptures style him the *cornerstone*, and that Rock upon which the house was built, which no waves nor storms could wash or drive down.

Fourthly, the Head of his Church: will he be an head without a body? Read at your leisure in what a benign aspect he stands towards his members in Revelation 10:1, and in what a severe posture he draws out himself, and all the armies of heaven against his enemies in Revelation 19:11-21.

Thirdly, from the enemies themselves, who, though they swell much in their own eyes, and seem to be the disposers of all men, and presume they can do what they list; and like some of the persecuting emperors will think themselves to be a kind of gods; yet—

First, they are but *men* at the most, and men at the best; and what is man? That which is no more than man is no less than vanity; mere man is but the dream of a dream; but the generation of a fancy, but a vanity, but the curious picture of nothing; a poor, feeble, unable, dying flash.

Secondly, they are but *naked men*; they have no God with them, or for them; did God ever command them to destroy his Church? Did he ever promise unto them in that service either assistance or reward? Assuredly wicked adversaries have nothing but what hell and wicked men can help them with.

Thirdly, they are but *wicked men*; hearken how the Scripture styles them, Haters of God; Enemies to God; Fighters against God: the very reason why they contend against the people of God is because they see anything of God in them: and shall wicked men be stronger than God?

Fourthly, they are the *only persons cursed of God*, and fully threatened, even in this, that they attempt the destruction of the people of God: Take that one place for all in Zechariah 12:2-4: “Behold! I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all people round about, when they shall be in the siege both again Jerusalem. And in that day will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: All that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord or Hosts, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness, and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and I will smite every horse of the people with blindness.”

Are blind hordes and mad riders likely to prevail? And in verse 6, “And I will made the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf, and they shall devour all the people round about on the right hand and on the left.” Shall the wood prevail against the fire?

Besides all this, the Lord doth deliberately (as I may so speak) set himself against them: he directs his arrows at them, and doth so earnestly pursue them, that he not only makes their designs unprosperous, but likewise (in the event) to themselves pernicious, which is the second point, and comes now briefly to be handled.

Second Point of Doctrine. That God can make the bloodiest contrivances, and most hopeful confidences of his church-destroying adversaries not only unprosperous, but also pernicious or hurtful to themselves. The design in the text is turned quite contrary, and the Jews have rule over them who presumed to have destroyed and ruined them.

Thus *saepe in magistros scelera redierunt suos.*

There are three things which I have observed concerning the Church's distresses and deliverances. First, the deliverances of it have been (usually) at the times of eminent extremities. The wicked are not always high enough to be destroyed, and the people of God are not always low enough to be delivered: but eminent extremities have ordinarily been God's opportunities.

That eminent deliverance out of Egypt was when their burdens were doubled, and Pharaoh would not hearken to them.

That singular deliverance out of Chaldea was at such a time when their condition was as the dry bones of which God said to the prophet, "Can these bones live?"

That deliverance also out of the antichristian and last troubles shall be, when the two witnesses are slain, "and the enemies make merry" (Revelation 11:7-8,10-11).

Secondly, the deliverance of the distressed and endangered Church hath been (usually) crowned with the addition of some new and singular mercy: As—

When the Church was delivered out of the Egyptian bondage, they were then led away to Canaan.

When they were delivered out of the Chaldean captivity, the temple thereupon was rebuilt, and filled with the glorious presence of Christ. When the churches shall be delivered from the great antichristian plots and cruelties, there is promised unto them a New Jerusalem, a new heaven and a new earth.

Thirdly, the eminent rescues of the Church have been, and shall be conjoined with the eminent destruction of its adversaries: When the Israelites were delivered out of Egypt, their deliverance was accompanied with the destruction of Pharaoh and of all his host.

When the Jews were delivered out of Babylon, it was with the destruction of the Chaldean monarchy by the Persians. And when the Church shall be delivered from the antichristian cruelties, it shall be with the utter fall of Babylon, which shall be thrown like a millstone into the sea, and never rise any more.

Use of Application. But I cannot prosecute this notable subject according to the dignity of it, I will rather leave it, than mangle it; the time is almost fled, I will do what I can to post after it: give me leave to make some useful applications of all this to ourselves, and then I will commit the work, and ourselves to God's blessing.

The uses which I shall make of all which hath at this time been spoken by me, and of late hath been observed by yourselves, I shall reduce unto three heads.

First, of exhortation to a seasonable duty, the duty of thankfulness: "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men" (Psalm 107:8). Surely this is a singular work, and yet men are heavy to it, or else David would never have pressed it so affectionately: in another place he brings three arguments at once to move us to praise God: Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God, it is pleasant, and praise is comely" (Psalm 141:1). Two of these arguments respect us: It is our emolument and good: we get more mercies by being thankful for our mercies; and it is our graceful, as well as gracious ornament; an unthankful man is an ugly and ill-favoured man; but thankfulness is a most becoming garment to a Christian; and it is God's contentment; of most music he delights in this: there are four things which are very pleasant to God. First, an upright heart; secondly, an humble spirit; thirdly, a believing soul; and fourthly, a thankful breast.

That this sweet note of thankfulness may be the better raised, give me leave to descant a little upon that miserable and unfortunate design against yourselves and the city, lately contrived, and intended to have been put in execution.

There are at the least ten remarkable dashes in it:

First, the *horror* of it: and less I cannot style it; Livy reports of a design to dispatch the whole senate of Rome in one hour; and at Carthage there was a project to cut off at once the noblest and truest family to the state.

But this unhappy plot (had it taken effect) might have proved the funeral of all our sanctuaries; the grave of all our religion; the doomsday of all our liberties; the ruin of country, of city, of Parliament, of all.

Secondly, the *unnaturalness* of it: For Nero (that monster of mankind) to wish that Rome had but one head, which he might take off with one blow; for him to set Rome on fire, and solace himself in beholding the flames and ashes of it; this was but like himself; such barbarous acts were no way strange for his monstrous disposition. And for papists to contrive the blowing up of a Parliament, this agrees full well with the modest principles of their bloodthirsty and cruel religion.

But for men who profess the Protestant Religion, yet to contrive the ruin of it: for members of a Parliament to devise the ruin of a Parliament: for them who so seriously have protested (and not without some execrations) the defense and preservation of all, thus maliciously to entrap and hazard the safety and subsistence of all—what is this, but viper-like to gnaw out the bowels of that country which bred them, and of that Parliament which all this while hath defended and preserved them?

Thirdly, the *cruelty* of it: What could have been expected less, than that of Simeon and Levi (brethren in iniquity) who (after a pretense of favour) “came boldly upon the City of Shechem, and slew all the males with the sword” (Genesis 34:25)? Nay, I fear the tumult might have ended like that of “Shalman who spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle, and the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children” (Hosea 10:14).

Here might you have heard the confused noise of the warriors, there might you have seen garments rolled in blood; one street flaming with fire, another street groaning under the wounds of death: some crying out, ‘Kill and murder them!’; others crying out, “O pity and spare us!’ In one house perhaps the parishioner hunting after his minister to brain him; in another house the son laying hold on his father to pistol him: some hiding themselves, and then burnt; others hasting to fly, and running only upon the point of the sword and spear beforehand disposed to every corner to slay them. One calls out, ‘O spare the Parliament!’; another, ‘O spare the city!’; another, ‘O spare my father, spare my mother, spare my tender children!’ But in this rage nature would have been forgotten, law would have been forgotten, religion would have been forgotten, relation would have been forgotten; because before this, the fear of God would have been forgotten.

Fourthly, the *madness* of it: every sinner is a fool, and Solomon saith, a madman too. Did ever any wise man think to repair his house by subverting the foundations of it? Or to preserve himself by splitting his ship? Or imagine to stand Parliament should fall? Good Lord! That any should so forfeit themselves in devising, or rather in believing, that these men who would have ruined one world, could make another; or that they would prove restorers of our liberties, who contrived the lawless and merciless ruins of all our safeties!

Fifthly, the *injustice* of it: "What is my trespass, what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?" said Jacob to Laban (Genesis 31:36). May not this Parliament say as much to all them who so bloodily act against them?

You know well enough that familiar story of Aristides, whom a person desired to write his name in the shell to be banished, and only for this reason, because all said that he was a just man.

O how unjust it is, and I fear will stand upon infamous record to our posterity, that many of their ancestors fought to destroy their own refuges against destruction: struck at them who (to avoid the stroke of justice) are risen up to strike all; as if thieves and robbers should arm themselves to judge the Judge who durst to question and judge them.

Sixthly, the *ingratitude* of it: "By thy Providence worthy deeds are done to this Nation," said Tertullus unto Felix. Within these few years, O how we groaned under the burdens of conscience by an high commission? And under the burdens upon our liberties by heavy taxations: the learned speeches of some of the complotters are palpable witnesses to what I now speak; and through God's blessing on the Parliament's care and pains we are eased of both.

And now after all to be like the unthankful Romans, to condemn that African Scipio who had saved all their State. Or to be like that monster (of whom I have read) who that night that his prince pardoned and released him, got out and slew him. To burn that ship which brought us to shore: to wound that physician who healed our wounds; the lion did not thus to the poor man who eased him of a thorn in his foot. It is the very dregs of basest ingratitude to return the sourest of mischiefs for the sweetest of kindnesses.

Seventhly, the *hypocrisy* of it: under the pretense and affectation of peace, to intend the most dismal and abhorred of cruelties.

I have read of Garnet the Jesuit, who upon a treatise of equivocation, plasters on this title, *A Treatise Against Lying and Fraudulent Dissimulation*: And truly this plot fell nothing short of that artifice; for under the name of peace, a more savage destruction is intended; only Amasa is the more complementally saluted, that he might not see the sword of Joab.

For my part, if yet truth might have the vanguard, and justice might have the body; I should rejoice that peace might bring up the rear: Nay, if that place seems too low, let them all stand in rank, so that truth may still have the right hand.

But this is no new plot to whet swords, and yet talk of peace: there was an overture of peace from Spain with England, when at the same time the armada was to set sail. And that forever odious massacre in France was gilded over with the solemnity of nuptials: Heathens have been more candid this way, than the papists by far.

Eighthly, the *impiety* of it: with what a contempt of fasting, and scorn at our depending on God's providence, was the time for the execution of this plot designed: what religion are these men made of; who after so sacred and solemn a protestation, could yet studiously contrive the perfidious breach of the same? What a mocking of God is this? What a mocking of men? What a mocking of their own consciences?

I fear that some of them took the protestation much like as Arius (that infamous heretic) took his, who having been condemned in a general council (as Socrates relates) and by the commandment of Constantine exiled; and by the violent mediation of some recalled, so that he would conform to the Nicene faith; he having writ down his own private creed, and thrust it into his bosom, when he came into the presence of the emperor, and had the Nicene faith propounded to him, being, demanded whether he really did, and constantly would hold that faith, he (clapping his hand upon his bosom where into his own written creed had been formerly committed) answered and vowed, that he did, and would constantly hold and profess that faith, meaning not that Nicene faith; but that contained in his bosom.

Ninthly, the *policy* of it: and I assure you, the more secret our dangers are, the more dangerous they are: the poison destroys more surely than the drawn sword: And therefore the Jesuits (it hath been their trick of old) do seal up all their intended mischief with an oath of secrecy. You know well the oath of secrecy which Gerard the Jesuit gave to Catesby and Piercy when the Parliament was to be blown up. And in this plot, to hand it on from any discovery, at least something near an oath for secrecy is contrived: But that was not all the policy, for the very manner of conveyance and drawing others in, also was exquisitely subtle: This seal was always ready to be clapped on any tempered wax, and in truth it found many a discontented, and self-seeking, and malignant spirit easily to take the impression.

Nor was this all, but just like the papists in the powder-treason, who before the execution of it, varnished it with the title of some famous exploit for the deliverance of the persecuted Catholics: and had it succeeded, then they had provided their proclamations also in a readiness to be dispersed, and so to beguile the people. I wonder that our present complotters should thus hit on the Jesuits molds, unless there be some Jesuits' wits in this design.

Lastly, the *nearness* of it: the work was ripe, and the day to act their infamy, and our ruin was very near: Thus were we sold, thus were we in the valley of the shadow of death and knew it not.

But notwithstanding all this, and more than this (for more there was than this, which I forbear to mention, for that I like his art well, who drew one weeping behind a curtain), the design is abortive. Mordecai is yet alive, and so is the city Shushan, and so is the Parliament; God hath defeated all, and turned it to the contrary, as my text doth speak.

O that for all this wonderful mercy of God we could now learn to bless him and thank him: it is he, he alone who hath made our enemies liars unto us, and hath hitherto been the God of our mercies, and of our safeties.

The soul of man may be compared to a clock, and the faculties of that soul to wheels, and the mercies of God to plummets, which should make every wheel to move with thankfulness: And so let it be with us this day.

Let our judgments move with a thankful admiration of God's goodness, and wisdom, and care, and watchfulness over us.

Let our memories move with thankful recordings, and laying up, and giving out these and other of God's works of God's providence over us: God would have some of the manna laid up in a golden pot: he is willing to give, but not to lose his mercies: mercies must not be written in water, but in brass. It is reported of Trapezuntius (a great scholar) that fell into so great a sickness, that he lost all his learning, and he forgot his own name: It would be more than a sickness in us, to forget God in his wonders of mercies towards us.

O Sirs! In one mercy there may be many things worthy of our best remembrance: there may be many wonders in one mercy, and there may be many mercies in one mercy; and there may be many lessons in one mercy; and there may be many future supports in one mercy: therefore forget not to get a thankful memory.

Let our *affections* move with thankfulness. The heart of man is like an instrument, and every affection is like a string, and every mercy should be like a curious singer to make the music of thankfulness. O that we could love such a God more, fear such a God more, delight and rejoice in such a God more.

Let our *tongues* move with thankfulness: As in a lottery at every prize the trumpet doth sound, so upon the receipt of every mercy, our lips should sound out the praises of the God of our mercies.

And let our *lives* move with thankfulness too: mercies should be an anchor to hold us fall to God, not a tide to carry us away from him: They should be as a shower of rain to the rose, which thereby proveth more fresh and sweet: He is the thankful Christian, who becomes a better Christian; A good life is the best transcript of any mercy.

Use 2. The second use shall be of *caution* and *advice*, and indeed some items are not superfluous in this busy and dangerous age: My advice is threefold.

First, if any plotter, or intended actor for this late design be here present, my earnest counsel unto him is only this, *repent*: Even Judas, who betrayed his Master, when he saw what was done, repented: and wilt thou be worse than Judas? Tell not me that thou hast vowed our destruction, or art bound up by an oath of secrecy. The casuists, all of them will fully resolve thee, *in malis* it is not only lawful but necessary, *mutare propositum et rescindere votum*; wicked vows bind us to repentance, but not to performance: to confession, not to commission; to detect, not to effect.

And verily this is the way to find mercy with God and man: both of them as yet throw out unto you this plank: they offer mercy to you, though you intended none to them; Joseph was able to weep, and to forgive, and to nourish those his brethren who once would have killed him, and did sell him for a slave.

Secondly, if any of you touch this golden scepter of mercy which is held out unto you, then in the next place take heed and abhor forever any such like future entangling.

I will but tell you a tale which I find in Sir Edward Cook, it is somewhat homely, but you may make a good use of it. The fable is of the cat, and the mice: The cat, having a long time preyed upon the mice, the poor creatures at the last for their safety contained themselves within their holes; but the cat, finding his prey to cease (as being sufficiently proved to be their enemy) devised this course: He changeth his hue, gets on a religious habit, shaveth his crown, and walks gravely by the holes of the mice.

And yet perceiving that they kept their distance, and only peeped out, as suspecting the worst, he gravely bespeaks them thus, *Quod fueram non sum, caput aspice tonsum*. Hereupon some of them, being more credulous than wise, came forth, but were quickly snatched up.

The cat, finding this colourable design to take, after awhile comes again, thinking to draw them out again with the same garb of gravity, and sweetness of rhetoric; but now the formerly beguiled mice grew wiser, and would come forth no more, only they gave him this short answer, *Cor tibi restat idem, vix tibi praesto fidem*; we know you too well to trust you anymore: make the application of it to yourselves.

Thirdly, to all of you, who are as yet innocent; the Lord keep you faithful and steadfast, and never suffer you to stain your consciences with treachery. There are three which an honest English heart will never be brought to betray: his God, his Sovereign, and the Parliament: for besides the irreligiousness of such perfidiousness, two other snuffs ever follow it.

One is a *perpetual infamy*: For this epitaph only will be set upon the tomb of such a treacherous person, 'Here lies the grave of England, The sepulcher of a Parliament, and the murderer of his own city.'

Another is a *sure unsuccessfulness*: I never read of any yet who finally prospered against God, against truth, or against our English Senate. When you have done all you can, this you shall find to be the sum of all treacherous plots, *viz.* a deep malice, a proud contrivance, a subtle inveigling, a large expense, a vain confidence, a near acting, an unexpected discovery, a just punishment, and a perpetual shame.

The last use shall be of *instruction*, principally to you (right honourable) of the Parliament, and indefinitely to all the rest of us.

First, to *circumspection*: Christ had his own disciples to beware of men and fore-told that a man's enemies should be those of his own house.

It is a sad time, when we may justly cry out as he once did ὃ φίλοι, οὐδεὶς φίλος: O my friends, I have no friends: Treachery (I fear) is more at work this day than open hostility.

Some have said that Bohemia, and the Palatine were put off by treachery: Some say that Ireland, I mean the Protestants there, are rather betrayed than conquered; and I pray God this be not England's condition this day. Sure we are, that all over this poor nation, either a devouring sword, or a false spirit doth too much prevail; in country it works, in the city it works, in the army it works, in the church it works, yea in the Parliament itself it works: O Lord, that ever any should form a sword to destroy us, who yet can gloss over a speech as if he were a shield to defend us.

There was one (once) who wished that all his body were made of Christ all, that so his inward sincerity might be transparent to all eyes: And another I have read of, who might he have had the molding of himself, light should have been his body, and truth should have been his soul.

Such windows as these are but notions: do you rather study and peruse men at the doors of their actions, and then my humble counsel will not be unseasonable, to watch yourselves, to watch your enemies, and most of all to watch your friends.

Secondly, to *resolution*: Be not dismayed by any of these renewed plottings and attempts against you: As the designs against you are many; so the discoveries of them from God have been constant and seasonable; and those should not so much flat you, as these should raise and quicken you.

It may fall out (and I pray God it may) that as King Ahasuerus here in the history of my text; though he was deceived by Haman, and by him incensed against the Jews even to decree and seal their destruction, yet God did turn about his heart, and turned all to the contrary. So he may also persuade the heart of our king to apprehend and to abhor the subtle and bloody intentions of our adversaries, and to return amongst you with his presence and countenance, which would be his eternal honor, your sweetest comfort, and all our much desired blessing.

Thirdly, to *exactness of pious action*: you see what great things God hath done for you; O repent in good earnest, humble yourselves in your fasts in good earnest, pray and seek to God in good earnest, do and work for God in good earnest, and for the piety of us all in good earnest: do not *ficta loqui*, nor *ficta agere*: this is no time for fencing sport.

Remember still that your worst enemies lie in your own breasts: and your surest friend lives in heaven; get conquest over sins, and that will be the compendious way to get victory over sinners, and to allure God unto you; And pray much. O said a great person, "I fear the prayers of Knox"; prayer is none of your weakest weapons to prevail with God, and to prevail against all plotting and attempting enemies.

Fourthly, to *constancy of dependence on God alone*: It is better (saith David, Psalm 118:8) to trust in the Lord, then to put confidence in man.

Luther on that place calls it *artem artium, et mirificam ac suam artem non sidere hominibus, et sacrificium omnium gratissimum et suavissimum, et cultum omnium pulcherrimum*, to trust in God is the art of arts, the wonderful and great art, and so forth.

I beseech you when you hear of policies, use means, but still trust on God's wisdom; when of powers, use means, but trust on God's omnipotency; when of contrary events, use means, but still trust on God's fidelity: Though men may fail you, though friend may fail you, though strength may fail you, though expectations may fail you, though reason, though counsel, though your own hearts may fail you; yet, yet still depend on God; he never yet hath failed, he never, never will fail nor forsake the righteous who dare trust upon him.

FINIS