Supplication to the House of Lords (22 April 1621)

Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon

Transcript

Norfolk Record Office, MC 1207/2, 808x1, ff. [*v]–[2r]

[*v]

[*Right margin:* Submission and supplication of the lo[rd] Chancelour Bacon to the Lords in Parliament./]

[1r]

To the Right Ho[noura]ble the Lordes of Parliam[en]t in the vpper howse assembled./

The humble submission and supplicac[i]on of the Lo[rd] Chauncelor.

Ytt may please yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps I shall humblie crave att yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps handes a benigne interpretac[i]on of that w[hi]ch I shall nowe write, for {wordes} wordes w[hi]ch come from a wasted spiritt, and an oppressed mynd, are more safe in beinge deposited in a noble construcc[i]on, then beinge Circled w[i]th anie reserved caution. This beinge moved, and as I hope obteyned in the nature of a protecc[i]on, to all that I shall saye, I shall nowe make into the rest of that where^w[i]th~~{}~~ I shall att this tyme trouble yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps a verie strange entrance. For in the middest of a state of as greate affliction, as I thinke a mortall man can endure, (honour beinge aboue life) I shall begynn w[i]th the profession of gladnes in some thinges. The first is, that hereafter the greatnes of a Iudge or magistrate shalbee noe sanctuarye or protecc[i]on of guiltynes, w[hi]ch in fewe words is the begininge of a golden ^world~~worlde~~. The next. that after this example itt is like, that Iudges will flye from anie thinge, that is in the likenes of corrupc[i]on (though itt weare att a greate distance) as from a Serpent, w[hi]ch tendeth to the purginge of the Courtes of Iustice, and the reduceinge them to their dewe honour and splendor: And in theise twoe poynts (God is my witness) that though itt bee my fortune, to bee the Anvill ^on w[hi]ch theise good effects are beaten and wrought, I take noe small comforte: Butt to pass from the motions of my hart whereof God is onlie Iudge, to the merittes of my Cause, whereof yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps are Iudges vnder God, and his Leiften[a]nt. I doe vnderstand that there hath been heretofore expected from mee some Iustificac[i]on: And therefore I haue chosen onlie ^one Iustificac[i]on in stead of all other, out of the Iustificac[i]ons of Iob: For after the cleare submission and confession w[hi]ch I shall nowe make vnto yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps I hope I maie saye and iustifie, w[i]th Iob {in} theise words. I haue not hidd my synn as did Adam, nor consealed my falts in my bosome. This is the onlie Iustificac[i]on w[hi]ch I will vse, ytt resteth therefore that w[i]thout figg leaves, I doe ingeinousl{y} confess and acknowedge, that havinge vnderstood the p[ar]ticulers of t{he} Charge, not formallye from the howse but enoughe to informe m{y} Conscience and memorie, I finde matter sufficient and full, {to} move mee to desire the ^defence~~offence~~, and to move yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps to Condemme & Cens{ure me}

[1v]

Neyther will I trouble yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps by singlinge these p[ar]ticulers w[hi]ch I thinke maye fall of. *Quid te exemta iuvat spinis de pluribus vna,* neyther will I prompt yo[u]r

Lo[rdshi]ps to observe vpon the proofes where they come not home or the scruple touchinge the creditt of the wittnesses; neyther will I represent vnto yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps howe farr a defence in divers thinges extenuate the offence in respect of the tyme or manner of as the like circumstances but onlie leave theise things to springe out of yo[u]r owne noble thoughts and observac[i]ons of the evidence & examinac[i]ons themselves, and Charitablye to wynde aboute the p[ar]ticulers of the Charge here and there, as God shall putt you in mynd, and soe submitt my selfe wholie to yo[u]r pyetye and grace; And nowe that I haue spoken to yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps as Iudges, I shall saye a fewe words to you as Peeres and Prelates, humblye Com[m]endinge my Cause to yo[u]r noble mindes and magnanimous affecc[i]ons. Yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps are not simplie Iudges but Parliamentarie Iudges, yow haue a further extent of arbitrarye power, then other Courts, and if yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps bee not tyed by the ordynarie Course of Courts or presidents, in poynts of strictnes and severitye, much more of mercye and mitigac[i]on: And yet if anie thinge that I shall move might bee contrarie to yo[u]r honorable and worthie ends to introduce a reformac[i]on, I should not seeke. Butt herein I beeseech yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps to giue mee leave to tell you a storie. Titus Manlius tooke his sonnes life for givinge battaile against the prohibic[i]on of his gen[er]all, not manie yeares after the like severitie was pursued by Papi~~{rius}~~rius Cursor the dictator against Quintus Maximus, whoe beinge vpon the poynt to bee sentensed by the intercession of some princypall p[er]sons of the Senate, was spared: Wherevpon Livye maketh this grave and gratious observasion: *Neque minus firmata est disciplina militaris periculo Quinti Maximi qu[am] miserabili ~~{p}~~ suplicio~~{}~~ Titi Manlij*: The discipline of Warr was noe less established by the questioninge of Quintus Maximus, then by the punishm[en]t of this Manlius: And the same reason is of the reformac[i]on of Iustice, for the questioninge of men of ~~e~~ eminent places hath the same terror, though not the same rigour w[i]th the punishm[en]t; But my case stayeth not there. For my humble desier is, that his Ma[jes]tie would take the Seale into his hands w[hi]ch is a greate downefall and may serve, I hope in itt selfe for an expiac[i]on of my faults. Theref{ore if} mercye and mittigac[i]on

[2r]

be in yo[u]r power, and doe noe waye cross yo[u]r {ends} whie should I not hope of yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps favours and Comiserac[i]on. Yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps would bee pleased to ~~beholde~~ beholde yo[u]r Chiefe patterne the Kinge our Sou[er]aigne, a Kinge of incomparable Clemencie, and whose hart is inscrutable for wisedome and goodnes; Yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps will remember that there satt not three hundred yeeres before a Prince in yo[u]r howse, and never such a Prince whose presence deserveth to bee made memorable by Records and Acts mixt w[i]th mercye and iustice. Yo[u]r selves are eyther Nobles (and Compassion ever beateth in the Vaynes of Noble bloud) or Reverend Prelates whoe are the servants of him that would not breake the bruised Reede nor quench the smoakinge flax: Yow all sitt vpon an highe stage and therefore cannot but bee more sensible of the Changes of the world and of the fall of anie in high place: Neyther will yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps forgett, that there are *vitia temporis* as well as *vitia hominis* and that the beginninge of reformac[i]ons hath the Contrarye power to the poole. Bethesba, for that had strength to cure onlie him, that was first cast in, and this hathe com[m]onlye strength to hurt him onlie that is first cast in: And for my part I wishe itt might staie there and goe noe further.

Lastlie I assure my selfe yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps haue a noble feelinge of mee as a member of yo[u]r owne bodye, and one that in this verye Session had some tast of yo[u]r lovinge

affecc[i]ons w[hi]ch I hope was not a lighteninge before the death of them, but rather a sparke of that grace w[hi]ch nowe in the Conclusion will more appeare: And therefore my humble suite to yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps is, that my penetent submission may bee my sentence, and the loss of the Seale my punishm[en]t and that yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ps will spare my further sentence, but recomend mee to his Ma[jes]ties Grace and pardon for all that is past: Gods holie spiritt bee amongest yow:/

Yo[ur] Lo[rdshi]ps humble servant and supliant

Fra[ncis] S[ain]t Alban C[h]anc[ellor] /

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https://mpese.ac.uk/t/BaconSupplicationLords1621.html