Speech to the Commissioners at the Guild Hall (August 1621 [i.e. 30 July 1621])

John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 4149, ff. 323r–327v

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An[n]o xix Iacobi

The Bishope of Lincolne Lorde Keeper of the great seale of Englande his speeche in the yeilde hall of London for the Colectinge of the subsedij the Day of August An[n]o 1621.

My Lordes and Gentlemen.

I shall not neede to speake many wordes, vpon the occasion of this o[u]r meeting, You haue heard by the reading of the Comission, that it is a gathering of a part of that Subsidie, w[hi]ch was graunted by the parliament, as yet assembled, as a supplie and a support to the manifold occasions of the kinges expences. /

Payment of Subsedies is no newe thing, but hath his begynnyng from the lawe of God, the Lawe of reason, and the contynuall practise of this Kingdome. Now for Godes Lawe it is apparant by the demonstrations of St Paule in the 13. to the Romans the .6. & .7. verses: Princes are Godes servantes, attending contynually vpon great and weightie busynesses, Render therefore (saith the Apostle) a Tribute to whome tribute belongeth; and custome to whome custome is due, where eu[er]y word hath his full weight, and would be putt into the ballance. /

First Princes they are servantes, and to deny that w[hi]ch is due vnto s[er]vantes is scarce honestie; Secondly they are Godes s[er]vantes, and to deny that w[hi]ch is due vnto

Godes

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Godes servantes is impietie; Thirdly they are contynually attending (that is) diligent servantes, and to deny that w[hi]ch is due vnto diligent servantes, is a strange kind of obstinacy. Fourthly they are servantes attending vpon the Church, and comon wealth, and to denye that w[hi]ch is due to such servantes of the Church and Comon~~alty~~ welth, is Titanisme and Barbarrity (and princes are all these) Besides o[u]r Sauio[u]r Christ when he lived vpon the earth, neuer for ought wee read, handeled any Coyne with his blessed handes except that Denarium or tribute {munis Tovonibuæ Tu[m] xnvbs}) Math. 22.19: that Coyne was like vnto that Spanish Royall Invented by Augustus, or as some thinke by Tiberius. A Subsedye gathered towardes the building of the pallace, this o[u]r blessed Sauiour handeled, and all owed the impositions, and the vse, as it appeareth by these wordes; Giue vnto Cæsar that which is Cæsars; soe that the payment of subsedies is grounded on the lawe of God. /

And for the Lawe of reason, compared to the Lawe of God, is like the dawning of the daie, to the breake of the morning, it is the same light, but a little more clowded, or of the same ground; and the lawe of reason teacheth vs, that they who care for all must be releeued by all; there is a pollitique body, as well as a naturall body and as eu[er]y vayne of the body must be

content

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content to bleede a little for the conservation of the whole; soe eu[er]y particular p[er]son must be content to emptie themselues a little, for the conservation of the land, wee all owe wages to o[u]r servantes and beare them out in their casualties, and adventures; And the Philosopher saith: Domus est Initius reipublicæ, eu[er]y family is a broode egge of the Com[m]on wealth; now if wee deale soe iustly, and take such care for the private, lett vs not turne Nabals to the publique; For the contynuall practize of this kingdom it is not vnknowne to many here p[re]sent, (whoe by reason of their Ciuill life, cannott but be conversant, in o[u]r native Histories) that o[u]r kinges of old, were not wont to receaue but to impose subsedies, for when the Saxon Kinges wanted any releefe, towardes the repayring of their Citties, Castles, bridges, and military expeditions, they imposed it vpon the people, as appeareth: by these ould names, the remainders of ould tymes Bridgbook, burghbooke, hidag, Dangeld, and such like w[hi]ch meetes vs in o[u]r bookes euery where; The Normans whoe you maye sweare lost nothing of their owne, imposed these subsedyes, as occasion required, For William the Conqueror imposed Six s. vpon euery hide of land; hee had ex vna quaq[ue] hida sex sollid[orum]. saith math[ew] Parris, William Rufus he had auxilium suæ terræ, that is an ayd of his land, without any act of

Parliament

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Parliament, as Hindon reportes in the life of H[enry] the .2. this manner of subsedie the Normans kept and observed vntill the tyme of King John, whoe in his great Charter of Liberties, made a voluntary act to impose noe subsedies but per com[m]une consiliu[m] Regni. /

As appeares by Math[ew] Parris, hence the old statute of 51 .H[enry] the .3. de Tallage of imposing noe subsedies, without the consent of the .3. estates had its begynnyng, w[hi]ch confirmed by the statute of 25. of Edward the .1. hath euermore contynued in vse, betwixt the people and good kinges of this Realme vnto this daie. /

Nowe the motives Indusing the p[ar]liam[en]t to p[re]sent his Ma[jes]tie with these subsedies are sett downe in the p[re]amble, and weare inlarged vnto you, I doubt not, but that noble and learned Lo[rd] when you were prepared for the gathering of the former subsidies, and therefore I shall not need to speake much. /

1. You must remember that these .19. Yeres, vnder the protecc[i]on of o[u]r gratious soueraigne, wee haue enioyed daies and peace, euery man hath lived vnder his owne vyne, and vnder the shade of his owne figtree, and the voyce of the turtell hath byn heard in o[u]r land and tributum est pr[e]tium pacis, saith

Osorius

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Osorius in his 5. booke, Subsedyes are but salaryes, w[hi]ch wee paie vnto princes as paymentes for o[u]r peace. /

2. You must remember that these 10. yeres, the King hath lived, as one wrytes of the Oyster proprio suo with his owne moysture, without maintenance or support, besides the ordinary

revenewes of the Crowne (I thinke it will trouble any man here to find out soe long a cessation of Subsedies, in the raignes of o[u]r Kinges and Queenes, from the Conqueror to o[u]r soueraigne. /

3. You must remember these contynuall exhaustmentes vpon great Ambassadors, whereby he hath purchased vnto vs by the effusion of his Treasure, that peace w[hi]ch was wont to cost vs the effusion of blood. /

4. You must remember the soe many strange p[re]sidentes of exemplary iustice, whereby his ma[jes]t[i]es reigne, hath byn much beautified and adorned, and Iustice in a Kingdom, of all thinges on the earth, comes nearest to that pearle, that the wise man in the Ghospell would sell all to p[ur]chase. /

5. You must remember the p[re]sent estate of his ma[jes]ties Exchequer, w[hi]ch I note, not to displaye his wantes, but to extoll his goodnesse, non nosti Longas regibus

esse

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esse manus; Doe you not knowe, that Kinges haue long handes, if they list to vse them, this is that w[hi]ch made Plinie saie fassi nunquam mala causa nisi sub bone princepe, the cause of the Exchequer is neu[er] bad, but when the prince is good and gratious. /

6. You must remember, and he is a villaine that will not remember, his ma[jes]ties last proclamac[i]on, w[hi]ch I maye call his proclamac[i]on of grace, wherein besides many causions of Expedic[i]on of Iustice, and favo[u]r in releeving of trades and many significations of his care ou[er] his people, hath voluntarily and freely out of his goodnes, proclaymed 37. revocations of monopolies, pattentes, and supposed greevances, w[hi]ch 37. Revocations thus linked together, and hung about the neck of o[u]r state, makes up that catena aurea, such a Chaine of pearle, as noe com[m]on welth vnder heauen, but would willingly buy vp with as many subsedies; /

These (Gentlemen) are tokens, graces and tastes of his ma[jes]ties fauo[u]r vpon all in generall, but he hath powred out more especiall favo[u]rs vpon yo[u]r Cittie in p[ar]ticular Posuit te tanquam an[n]ullam in dextra, he placeth yo[u]r Cittie as a bracelett on his arme, and ^{as} his signett

on his

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on his right hand, and hath walled it about with soe many privelidges, prerogatiues minuities and Charters, as Roome of old was said to be Epitome totius orbis, a short abridgment of the whole world. /

Loe this Cittie is as he said of Athens {### ######## #####}, the very England of Englandes, and at this daie the very treasury and storehouse of all the kingdome, soe [tha]t there needes noe more motives for the gathering of this part of the subsedies. /

Nowe I come to the sesuall circumstances concerning these subsedies, w[hi]ch are 2. 1. the p[er]sons. 2. the som[m]es. /

For the persons, w[hi]ch are not considered vno ordine with a difference, for they are either filij Regis or aliem natiues or aliens, and these ither denizens, and these either sesuable by

rate, or by Polle; now this distinction of strangers was in Christes tyme, he tooke notice of it, math[ew] .17.25. and good reason that strangers should somewhat exceede the native, for looke what good lawes they haue established, by spilling of their owne blood, and their ancesto[u]rs, what fauo[u]rs they haue procured from their good Kinges and princes, what puritie of religion they haue settled by the martyrdom of their Forefathers,

to all

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to all this milke and hony, to all these graces spirituall and Temporall is the stranger admitted at the first hower; Therefore grudge not to giue a little when you finde freely you enioye soe much; besides if you reflect vpon the p[re]sent state of Christendome, w[hi]ch I beseech almightie God to settle and compose, me thinkes it resembles the Kingdom of Egipt, clowded and couered with clowdes of Darknes, and ratteling of armo[u]r; But this Iland is officina pacis a nest of peace, where all the scattered strangers are glad to ~~reserve~~receaue for a refuge; now blessed be God, and o[u]r gratious soueraigne, vnder whose protection, wee haue equally enioyed theise blessinges of peace. /

Nowe I come from the person to the summes, w[hi]ch be lowe and easie, arising either out of landes, or goodes Landes if they be worth xx s. p[er] annu[m], and goodes amounting to 3 li. besides s[er]vantes and children of strangers, w[hi]ch shall paie 4d. by the poll, all these portions and proportions, these doe fall out soe easie and soe small, that they forbeare lopping and topping, and take only the pruninges, but Landes are of a higher rate

then goodes

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then goodes, for terra manet in eternu[m] and euer since that blessing in the 1. of Genesis the .11. Landes haue byn the most fructifying, returning all possessions, but goodes are called Mobilia, moveable fortunes, because they are further of from eternitie then Landes, they are of a more fading, flitting nature, and that is the goodnes of God to vs, that they are no more p[er]manent and fixed, for by the due considerac[i]on of thinges here belowe, wee are drawne to more certeinty of thinges aboue, now the 5. Leviable from the landes of natives, is 2s. 8d.; from a stranger .5s. 4d. halfe as much more, for the goodes of natives 20d. of a stranger, denizen, or no denizen .3s. 4d. and this is the small some leviable at this tyme. /

I should now speake of the manner of levying but it is not soe proper for this tyme, I referre you to .3. most certayne thinges. /

1. To yo[u]r owne p[er]vsall of the act. /

2. To yo[u]r conference with mr Recorder, and the rest of yo[u]r learned counsell. /

3. To yo[u]r owne former experience. wherein if you be ignorant or defective

remember

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remember that gratious King per quem licuit esse negligentem, by whose Indulgence, you haue almost forgotten howe to leavie subsedies, whome I pray God alwaies to blesse in himselfe, in his issue, posteritie, and his people. /

Other manuscript witnesses

- Alnwick Castle, MS 556, pp111–114
- British Library, Stowe MS 156, ff. 62v–65v
- Bodleian Library, MS Eng. hist. d. 144, ff. 77r–78v
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D 723, ff. 29r–30v
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS G.b.9, ff. 205v–210r
- Nottingham University Library, Cl LP 18
- Senate House, University of London, MS 20, ff. 248v–254r

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https://mpese.ac.uk/t/WilliamsSpeechCommissionersGuildhall1621.html