

Nvi3 Withold thy fiery steeds great God of light

Notes. In the only known source, this poem is attributed to “Wm. T:”. The poem answers several specific libels circulating c.1622-23, including “From such a face whose Excellence”—which implicitly identifies the favourite Buckingham as James’s Ganymede—and “If Saints in heaven cann either see or heare”, the 1623 verse petition to the late Queen Elizabeth. The poem also replicates some of the arguments made by James himself in “O stay your teares yow who complaine”, while adding a fascinating section marrying an attack on libelling with an attack on Puritanism. Bellany (Politics 260-61) offers a brief analysis of the ideological significance of the poem’s anti-Puritanism.

“In the distast of Englands Licentious Libellers”

Withold thy fiery steeds great God of light¹

And hurry not the Day from gloomy Night,

Adorne no more the woods, nor paynt with flowers

The Earths swart² Brest: allot old Time no howers;

Let without order undistinguished slide

5

All humane Actions; be no more a Guide

To prowde insulting Man; that hawghty Clay

Which spurnes at Power, & Justles from the way

Gods upon Earth;³ who prowdly dare confine

The will of Princes to theyr Crooked Line

10

As if, by frighted reason things showld run

And make a Father Pupill to the Son.

Monsters of Nature! boldly which deny

Annonited Greatness such a liberty

As Cottage Thatch injoyes; One only Friend

15

Forcing th’ Affection hartily to tend

An equall faith to all: or else to loose

The benefitt of Judgment, skill to choose.

Cannott a Princes Love be limited

Without the nick-name of a Ganimed?⁴ 20
 Nor may they Clip⁵ true freindships virgin Wast
 Withowt the breach of being pure & Chast?
 That libelling Muse to punish Heaven be just
 From selfe-sex-beawty with princes lust.
 Reward, the Crowne of meritt, virtues life 25
 Must be divorc'd from kings; as man & wife
 From one another may (so neare a Tye
 There is 'twixt kings & Liberality):
 Desert must starve, unless the People say
 The king hath leave to give his owne away; 30
 For theyr Amen is Text: unless they all
 Doe give Consent, guifts are Apocriphall.⁶
 If that his sacred Highness wold advance
 With good advise from them, & not by Chance;
 Nor take on trust such persons as are knowne 35
 Not to theyr deep Judgments, but his owne,
 He then might scape a Libell; wold he ware
 Some White-Eyed-Brother;⁷ whose religious feare
 Makes him a separatist⁸ from things profane
 And all the vanities which come frome Spayne: 40
 Some silenc'd Teacher,⁹ one whose Trencher Zeale¹⁰
 Consumes the uncleane Birds at many a Meale:
 Were such as these to eminency browght
 His Majestie were then discreetly tawght
 How & upon whom, to dispose & place 45
 The riches of his favor & his Grace:
 No Guift so great but then wold easily down
 Were it a Corparation¹¹ or a Towne:
 Nay should his State so Ebb by's liberall hand
 As yf with Richard he showld farme his Land¹² 50

Why, 'twas a kingly virtue, no sordid vice
Far from the staine of Peasant Avarice.
'Tis not Allegiance breeds this Truth, but Gayne¹³
That's theyr Relligion; for a match with Spayne
France or Low-Countryes, 'tis no matter which 55
So they may Saint it, Cosen & grow rich.

Oh these are they whose irreligious hearts
Full frawght with mischeife, send the poyson'd darts
Of fowle aspersion 'mongst the Acts of kings
Adders & serpents whose envenom'd stings 60

Blyster the tender Palme of Quiett sway
Hiss peacefull kings to spitt at obay¹⁴
For if his goodness shall extended be

To those ungrossd in theyr society
Then rayling Rimers unchristian & unfitt 65
Must vilify theyr king: advance theyr witt:

The person gracd, with upstart, Parasite
Defam'd,¹⁵ & other Titles infinite;
As if the king to high Estate wold rayse
Persons of no meritt; & place his Bayes¹⁶ 70

On undeserving Heads: Or if he did
Shall we dare Contradict, or he be Chid?

Nor doe they only seeke to countermand
The God like Actions of his sowle & hand
But now his sports¹⁷ must be denyd. The Game 75

As pedegreed from kings by royall name,
Is growne sowre & distastfull, bycause the Cry
Of Fowler's heard, when unrelented dye

Some of his rayling subjects;¹⁸ whose envious spleene
Must Crack heavens Vault, & invoke a Queene¹⁹ 80
To give a schedule to th' Almightyes hand:

What daring Ignorance was this? what Land
 Unless Nature & Hell conspir'd a Truce
 Did ever yet such horrid births produce?
 Could else that monstrous Hydra-headed thinge²⁰ 85
 Blaspheme a Diety, & profane a king?
 But Thow art patient Heaven! & James will be
 A God on Earth by imitating Thee:
 Yet thow art Just divinest power, & wilt
 Repay in judgments prose theyr riming Guilt; 90
 Thy Pace is slow, but sure; & let those witts
 Which scoff the sacred Majesty that sitts
 On Englands blessed Throne; who nimbly play
 In frisking satires with his sweete delay
 Whose sharpe-tooth'd Libells curle & twinge the hayre 95
 Of our Apollo²¹ gentle as the Ayer
 Know; that those glorious beames which heretofore
 They durst to obnubilate,²² not adore
 Shall singe theyr wings; & when they least intrust
 Hee'le rayse his head, & shake them into Dust. 100

Source. Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.14, fols. 52v-54r

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¹ *Withold...God of light*: the poet is addressing the sun god, Phoebus Apollo, whose “fiery steeds” pull the chariot of the sun.

² *swart*: dark.

³ *Gods upon Earth*: i.e. kings.

⁴ *Ganimed*: Ganymede, the Trojan boy kidnapped by a besotted Jove, and a contemporary term for a sodomite. The poem is countering allegations levelled in libels that the royal favourite Buckingham was James I's “Ganymede” (see Section L).

⁵ *Clip*: embrace.

⁶ *For they Amen...Apocriphall*: playing on the distinction between true scripture (“text”) and unreliable scripture (“Aprocriphall”). The shift to religious allusions marks the opening of the anti-Puritan section of the poem.

⁷ *White-Eyed-Brother*: contemptuous term for a Puritan, or hotter sort of Protestant. Puritans were often caricatured as rolling their eyes (revealing the whites) when in spiritual transport.

⁸ *separatist*: the word is deliberately chosen to allude to those (in reality very few) “Puritans” who urged separation from the Church of England.

⁹ *Some silenc’d Teacher*: a (presumably Puritan) preacher suspended from his living, either for refusing to conform to the dictates of the Book of Common Prayer and subscribe to royal authority, or, like a number of preachers in the early 1620s, for broaching sensitive political subjects in the pulpit.

¹⁰ *Trencher Zeale*: anti-Puritan satire focused chiefly on hypocrisy, and prominent among the sins the hypocritical Puritan committed was the sin of gluttony. “Trencher” is a knife or a flat plate.

¹¹ *Corporation*: town incorporated by royal charter.

¹² *As yf with Richard...farme his Lande*: possible allusion to the wastrel policies of the late-medieval English king, Richard II. Holinshed reports that “The common brute [rumour] ran, that the king had set to farme [i.e. leased out] the realme of England unto sir William Scroope, earle of Wiltshire, and then treasurer of England, to sir John Bushie, sir William Bagot, and sir Henrie Greene, knights” (29-30).

¹³ *Gayne*: Puritan greed for money was another element of the hypocrisy charged by their enemies.

¹⁴ *Hiss peacefull...obay*: A gap in the manuscript indicates a missing word.

¹⁵ *The person gracd...Defam’d*: several libels branded Buckingham and other Jacobean favourites as social “upstarts” and as corrupt feeders on the public good (“parasites”).

¹⁶ *Bayes*: bays; laurel wreaths.

¹⁷ *his sports*: reference to James’s passion for hunting, attacked by a number of early 1620s libels.

¹⁸ *the Cry...his rayling subjects*: probably an allusion to the charge made in the last stanza of “From such a face whose Excellence”.

¹⁹ *Crack heavens Vault...a Queene*: allusion to “If Saints in heaven cann either see or heare”, couched as the petition of “the Commons of poore distressed England” to the late Queen Elizabeth.

²⁰ *that monstrous Hydra-headed thinge*: the Hydra was a nine-headed mythological monster slain by Hercules; here it refers to the populace, often dismissed by early Stuart social elites as the “many-headed monster”.

²¹ *Apollo*: the great Greek god of the sun (and much else); here standing for James.

²² *to obnubilate*: to cloud; to darken.
