

The Doctrine of Life, or Of Man's Redemption. 1658;
How Tirzana Beguiled the King

... A Prosopopeia on Solomon's fall, by the Temptations of his idolatrous wives to the ruin of his Kingdome and posterity, in granting them the liberty of conscience for the practice of their idolatrous Rites, framed by way of Dialogue between King Solomon, and Tirzana the Queen.

by Edward Holyoke (1638 - 1660)

TIRZANA, being a Princess of the house of Moab and being called for, did enter into the presence of King Solomon, and after some dalliance with her, and after she had fitted his humor by giving him all the best content she could, she took the opportunity and said: "My Lord, King Solomon, I have an humble request to make unto your gracious Majesty, I pray you, say me not nay."

KING. "What is that, my sweet Tirzana?"

QUEEN. "My most gracious Lord and Sovereign, I have been some years with you, and though you have often spoken to me to be a proselyte to the religion of Israel's Commonweal, yet I cannot bring my heart unto it. You well know that my education was not in the way and manner of Israel, and my affection is not toward it; it is not so pleasing to me, for I cannot forget my father's house nor forsake his religion. In this case I shall blemish my father and my mother, brethren, and sisters, and people, in case I should apostatize from our ancient religion, and in my opinion far the better. We have more zeal in ours, and many more pleasures to give man and woman content than is in your profession. Your religion is very cross to man's nature and is urged with great terror

and strictness; your religion reproves thoughts, words, and most men's actions.

“No religion under heaven doth so as yours, and that makes so few to embrace it. Yea, many of Israel have formerly been more addicted unto ours, and the worships of neighbors' Nations than to this of Israel, and they will not follow it but by compulsion of governors, whereas religious worships should be freely exercised according to every man's conscience; which if your subjects should be left unto, you well know which way the tide will run. It is a pitiful thing that man of a noble and free spirit should be so tired with hard injunctions and heavy burdens as with bands, cords, and fetters; and, it may be, that reformation that your noble Father endeavored, and yourself have prosecuted, would not and will not be so convenient, as due liberty, which would be a more noble design than rigid reformation. And if antiquity make things reverend, then our religion is more ancient, or if not more, yet as equal for antiquity, for aught I can learn (I am but a poor historian being a woman), but I am able to prove the religion of our God Chemosh to be about four hundred and fifty years old. This I can attest and prove by your own records, and you had yours but in the wilderness when ye came out of Egypt.”

KING. Then said King Solomon: “What, my Tirzana, doth all your speech tend unto?”

QUEEN. “I humbly crave your Grace's favor to finish my speech. I remember I have heard my Father and Grandfather speak what plenty of peace and prosperity our God Chemosh hath given us; nay, what victories we have had against our mighty enemies, the giants called Emims; and as it was your God that conquered the Chanaanites for you, so it was our God Chemosh that conquered the tall, great and terrible giants, the Emims, for us. Yea, which I am loath to utter, our God Chemosh hath given our Fathers power over Israel for twenty years together. Oh, should not we then have a most devout opinion of our

religion? But why should I your handmaid thus be bold to speak to your royal and sacred Majesty? Your great favor and respect unto me hath quickened my spirit.”

And then with an humble deportment of body with her face to the ground, she said: “The intent of all my speech is that it would please my Sovereign Lord the King to grant my small request. I humbly beseech that I may have leave to build a Chapel on Mount Olivet to worship our famous and reverend *Numen*, Chemosh the God of my Fathers.”

KING. “What is this I hear from you, my Dear? Did your speech drive at this? Oh I may not do this; Jehovah our most holy Lord God whom we worship in his holy Temple is the true everlasting God, and He can command nothing but what is good and perfectly good, so that we need not add any thing, and He forbids nothing but what is evil, which we must not disannul; and He is the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, and it is most requisite that man should subject himself to the Most High, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and God above all Gods. And therefore all the children of men must be subject to his laws, and whosoever harden himself against him by disobediance shall never prosper.

“And whereas you talk of strictness, etc., you are to know, man by nature is born a wild ass colt, and there is no taming of corrupt nature but by a strict course of holy laws, which to a regenerate and godly soul is an easy yoke, and to which he is willingly subject. Yea, man by nature is sometimes so refractory that he will not be brought unto God but by affliction; yea, neither law nor affliction profits till the Lord himself deal with the heart, such perverseness is in man. It is most true that man is addicted to his own vain heart, and accounts the law of our God most vile, and is altogether contrary to God, and would run to all licentiousness, if there were not holy and just laws, and good government (God’s ordinance) to keep men within bounds.

“2. And whereas you talk that man is of a noble and free spirit, you are deceived in your apprehensions. He is of a most ignoble spirit, ready to fall into all vile opinions, and to all sin and wickedness, and to follow all temptations to evil. As for his freedom of spirit, he is free indeed to all evil as an horse rushing into the battle and not one spark of that celestial fire is in him to any good till God put it in him, and maintain it when He hath so infused it. Man’s mind, will and affections are all corrupt, and in himself no healing can be found....

“3. Whereas you talk of due liberty, my beloved Tirzana, I would have thee to consider all the reformation we can possibly attain unto by the careful industry of my royal authority and of our priests and prophets and schools will not come to that purity and exactness that the Lord our God requires. Many imperfections in omissions and commissions will appear continually through the lusts of corrupted nature that war in our souls, by reason of the darkness of the understanding, and the untractableness of the will and the affections. And none that have a feeling of the most holy Lord God, and of his truth in the heart, but find this thus. And therefore to give the least liberty to thy opinion is such a design that will provoke to anger our gracious and mighty Lord God, and if I give liberty to thy opinion, why not to the abomination of Moloch of the Children of Ammon, and to the opinion of Ashtaroth, the abomination of the Zidonians?

“And so in the end to root out the holy faith of the Son of God, our great high Priest Melchizedek, and then that you desire will prove an evil impetuous, to the downfall of truth and godliness, and hardly ever be reclaimable. Yea, let me enforce this further, that there cannot be any liberty granted in any respect to false worships and ungodly opinions. Such liberty will bring us and our posterity to miserable bondage as our Fathers felt in the Wilderness, and in the times of the Judges. And if we that now live and our posterity do not keep close to that reformation which is now settled in Israel’s Commonweal, Jehovah our God, who is a jealous God, will destroy this glorious Temple that we have built to his

name, and shake this kingdom by many grievous calamities: and at last weed us out of this good land that He hath given to us and to our Fathers. Therefore you speak most unworthily, to call our reformation rigid....

“4. I will inform you a little more because you boast of antiquity in your opinion and religion; you are deceived, for our holy faith is as old as the first man and woman that was created. Yours is but of late, from a God newly come up, and indeed no true God....

“5. I must warn you of a great error:—whereas you say your Chemosh conquered the Emims for your ancestors, no such matter; it was our merciful God that destroyed those giants and gave you their land. This our mighty Lord God did, because your Father Lot loved our Father Abraham, and did follow his faith and holy religion; and he did bless our Father Abraham, and God blessed him, and for this cause our God gave AR unto the children of Lot for a possession. And this you may read in our holy stories, Deut. ii. 9. And your God is a false God, an idol, but our Jehovah is the Eternal Lord God who made the Heavens and the Earth, and a jealous God, and will be very angry with us if I should grant in his land any more Temples to be builded than his own. And you cannot be ignorant of this, nor your own kindred, that our Eternal God is not such as your false Gods, even all our Enemies being judges. And you have heard of these things by our Priests and Prophets, and all my Court still have told you these things. Therefore, my Dear, thou art much mistaken in all thy speeches, and thou hast been instructed in an evil manner. I have, as you have heard, spoken to you in an easy and mild frame of language to persuade thee; therefore be advised by me if ever thou hope of comfort in the world to come. Do as your Father Lot did, and do as Ruth your faithful and godly Countrywoman did, forget thy kindred and thy Father’s House, and serve the Lord our God with a good heart.”

Although the King had thus brayed her as wheat with a pestle in a mortar, yet her folly departed not from her. But having this denial, tears fell from her eyes which bedewed her cheeks; having her Handkercher in her hand, with snubs of umphs and impths, fell at the King's feet, and further said: "Oh, and it please my gracious Lord the King, it is but to build a Chapel for me and my maids, and some of my retainers, which cannot fancy this worship of Israel. I will promise your Majesty that not one of Israel shall come into our holy places."

KING. "This may not be done; it will be a snare unto my subjects to set up the abomination of Chemosh in Jehovah's land. I may not do it."

QUEEN. "Oh why doth my gracious Lord call our religion the abomination of Chemosh? I assure your Majesty by the faith of a woman that there shall be door-keepers, that none of Israel shall come to have communion with us in our worships. It is for myself and retinue, and some of mine own nation as they have occasion to come and see me in their visits."

KING. "I may not, I may not do it. I pray thee talk no more of this matter."

QUEEN. "Ymph, umph," tears. And thus she is dismissed and departs the presence of the King. But yet another time assaults the King, and sends an honorable personage, her brother, beforehand, a notable insinuating crafty instrument, who on a time came to Solomon's Court, and having seen and heard an excellent concert of music, of instruments of all sorts, as also the voices of singing men and singing women, which he admired and praised, and extolled the King, as if all had been of his invention. Also he magnified the King for his excellent endowments in contriving his plots for buildings, and his wisdom in natural philosophy, and his rare gift in song, and his wonderful instinct to speak of the natures, virtues and effects of trees, shrubs and herbs, of fowls, beasts, fishes and creeping things, etc. And that "all Princes of the Earth that

come to visit your Majesty, and bring their physicians with them, will carry notes and writings home with them that shall stand all ages and people in great stead forever. And as for your religion in worshipping Jehovah in his holy Temple, he is the great God, and above all Gods, and all your performances are glorious. But yet other nations have much joy, content and comfort, every nation in serving their own Gods. For they cannot be persuaded to embrace your devotions, as too strict and rigid. You may not add any thing to what your God commands, nor take away any thing he forbids. But we may add any thing as just occasion calls for, and sometimes take away what was not so fitting, which things are rational to all nations, for what is it but may be amended? Yea, I have heard of your Priests, Prophets and learned men that there will be a great alteration in your religion after some certain time, that all this service that you do shall be ended as if it had never been, for they do say there shall be another manner of kingdom, priests and temple, and sacrifices, and worships. These things considered, is it not an hard thing to persuade your bordering Princes to embrace your religion which shall have such a great change among yourselves?...

“And for these causes it is that those honorable women, that your royal Majesty hath taken into so near society to yourself, and into your most honorable Court, cannot be drawn to your religion, and among the rest my most honored and noble sister, your sacred Majesty’s consort, to whom you have manifested such love and respect in an high degree, for which all the family of my father and mother do much rejoice. And although your most excellent Majesty have given her (out of your gracious respect to her) good counsel, and she is much grieved that she cannot give content to her most Sovereign Lord in changing her judgment in religion from that she was educated in: wherefore if I may be so bold to implore your Grace’s favor on her behalf in granting her small request to build her a Chapel on Mount Olivet to satisfy her mind, it is but her fancy. I am sorry, for my part, she cannot comply with your devotions. She is but a woman, and I hope no hurt will accrue to yourself or kingdom, and if I may have leave of your sacred Majesty to

say it is but too much strictness, for I am well persuaded of your religion, that you may be saved with your profession, and so I hope we shall as soon also come to the Elysian Fields of all happiness as well as you.”

At this speech of the Queen’s brother the King was somewhat moved, and began to be angry; but he fell at the King’s feet and besought him that he might “speak two or three words more in my sister’s behalf, and I hope I may speak freely that you did covenant with my sister that she should use her conscience, and that she and her attendants of our nation should have free exercise of their devotions, and therefore let it please your Majesty, give us leave to put you in mind of your promise; and how can they perform their devotions unless they have a place of assembly, else it had been better for her never to have come to the land of Israel. But as you had given us cause to admire your special love to my sister; so we humbly pray, let us have no occasion to distrust it. And let me say one thing more: it will marvellously affect our nation, and it will persuade them that you love us, if you please to grant this request to the noble daughter of our liege Sovereign Lord the King of Moab, my father; and yet one thought more comes into mind which I suppose will be pleasing to your sacred Majesty, that if you perceive any damage or danger is likely to issue upon it, you may pull down every stone of the building and level it with the ground.”

KING. The King said: “Trouble me no more with these matters; I will grant no such thing. Your speeches are unsavory and full of ignorance. I could answer all your fond allegations, but it is not for Kings to dispute with them that have nothing to do with us in such cases. Where the word of a King is, there power is, and let that suffice you.”

This brother went and told his sister of all the discourse with the King and of his denial, at which report she fell sick and was very sad. Upon which the King gave her a visit and she wept abundantly. Now the King had some relenting in his heart, for the King perceived it was grief and

trouble of heart. He spake very kindly and tenderly to her. A man of ingenuity cannot endure, unless a Nabal, a Fool, a Churl, to see his near and dear consort to weep, a woman endowed with excellent parts of wit, understanding, grace of speech, courteous, loyal, comely, sweet and beautiful, and what may give a man content (I speak simply of man and woman). The King, after he had in a most pleasant manner saluted her, departs, and then her spirit was revived, color began to be in her cheeks, and lightsomeness in her countenance.

Although a woman be as a man's self very desirable; yet in case of religion, and the worship of the Most High, who is a jealous God, and his worship is pure and holy, and will not abide our thresholds to be set by his thresholds, in this case we must deny ourselves (as not to be servants of men, much less of women) and her that is most dear of earthly comforts, that lies in the bosom, and dearer than all other relations whatever, rather than to be a means that the name of Jehovah be profaned by false worships. He that doth not so, the Son of God saith, is not worthy of him. The story of our first parents must be conferred. When our first Father was persuaded by his Wife with herself to break the commandment—it should seem she persuaded him, for it is said: "Because thou hearkenest to the voice of thy wife." And ever since women are weak to be seduced, but strong, even Satan's engine, to seduce the man with her enchantments (for so they may be very well called) of her eyelids, lips, tears, etc. The Son of God laid this danger before his people. And Satan put this in practice by his wicked Prophet, Numb. xxiv. and xxv. 1, 2. And Satan thus dealt by the Janneses and Jambreses under the New Testament times, who did and do creep as Serpents into houses, to lead captive silly women laden with sins and led away with divers lusts. II. Tim. iii. The wife she is still at home with her children and servants, and how insensibly doth she corrupt them. And if a woman be active, she will corrupt other women, and after a little while men follow their wives, and corruptions gangrenate quickly and spread far. This the Apostle foretold, which came to pass afterward, but

especially concerning Mahomet and in the Papacy. Pardon this digression.

QUEEN. About certain months after that, the King had called for this honorable and royal Lady. She prepares herself in all costly raiment, cloth of gold and silver of curious needle-work, with chains of inestimable jewels about her neck, that the beams of her spankled raiment with the precious gems made radiant beams (the sun shining through the windows) upon the walls of the King's palaces as she passed; and at last enters the chamber of presence, honored virgins attending her, and presents herself before the King, with her orient eyes, damask rosy cheeks, twinkling eyelids, cherry lips, and all festivity and grace of speech, with comely and pleasant deportment fell at the King's feet. The King took her up by the hand and falls a-kissing her with all loving embracements.... The next morning she retired herself to a close secret chamber by, and after she had washed and perfumed herself and had put on other change of raiment very costly, craves leave to do her humble duty, and take her leave of the King, whom when the King saw, he was taken again with her eyelids, and closes her fast in his arms.

Then she ponders how she may enforce her old errand and after much and pleasant compliment with the King, as soon as she had perceived she had entangled him, then she utters the oracles of the old Serpent, and saith to the King:

“How do I admire and wonder at the great respect and love that my Sovereign Lord doth manifest to me, his handmaid, that he should afford such his amiable society! I do perceive your most ardent and endeared love to me above any of your honorable women; your kind and fervent desire towards me though most unworthy hath fired my heart towards your sacred Majesty. I am your servant, and at your Grace's command, and so ever will be to perform all loyal and dutiful observance. I would I were able to express the fervency of my heart unto my Sovereign Lord; and seeing it hath pleased the King so royally to manifest himself, I hope

I may present and importune my former humble request unto my Lord, my gracious Sovereign, for the building of a Chapel for my maids, and my household servants and attendants. It shall not be so much for myself as for them, whom I humbly confess are not worthy to come into the confines of Jerusalem, your holy City, much less into the Palaces of Zion, the City of David your father. Your love is so great unto me, which if I should distrust I should most highly offend. For I know you hate Atheism, and as it is an abomination unto you, it grieves my heart that I have no place of devotion to resort unto, when all the ladies of Israel may resort unto your Temple, and I and my maids sit moping at home all amort; as they worship their God so would I love my God, the God of my Father.”

And she gave the King a gentle stroke on the breast and said: “My noble consort, my Sovereign, my royal Lord, I know I have your heart, I know you love me, and what shall or can be wanting from a loving heart,” etc., etc.

And the King being ravished with her love, and with such words sweeter than honey, softer than oil, and all subtle flatteries, and after some discourse the King was captivated with her dalliance and snared with her devilish devices, and her hands were as bands; she persuaded him, she enticed him, and forced him to yield, that she had his license to build a Temple on Mount Olivet to Chemosh, the Devil, the idol, the abomination of Moab.