

**NEUTRALITY IN TIME OF DANGER TO THE
CHURCH, AN ABANDONMENT OF THE FAITH,
AND VERY SHORT-SIGHTED WORLDLY
POLICY: AN ADMONITION TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, DELIVERED IN
A SERMON ON SOUTH-HACKNEY CHURCH,
ON SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 1835**

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Neutrality in Time of Danger to the Church, an abandonment of the faith, and very short-sighted worldly policy: an admonition to the members of the Church of England, delivered in a sermon on South-Hackney Church, on Sunday, April 5, 1835 by H. H. Norris

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H. H. NORRIS

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An Admonition

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

DELIVERED IN A SERMON

AT SOUTH-HACKNEY CHURCH,

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 1835,

BY THE REV. H. H. NORRIS, M.A.

Rector of the said Parish,

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S, AND LLANDAFF, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE
EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.

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NEUTRALITY

IN TIME OF DANGER TO THE CHURCH, AN
ABANDONMENT OF THE FAITH, &c.

ESTHER, chap. iv. verse 14.

“ If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed ; and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this ? ”

THE Book of Esther receives its designation from a Jewess of that name, who found that favour in the eyes of Ahasuerus, the Persian monarch, that, in preference to a large assemblage of the fairest young virgins submitted to his choice, he raised her, from an obscure condition, to be the Queen of that mighty empire. To her it is that the text is addressed by her kinsman Mordecai, who had brought her up, and been secretly instrumental in her advancement. It is therefore the expostula-

tion of a Jewish foster-father with his adopted child, whom, amidst the rebuke and blasphemy of a Heathen metropolis, he had sedulously nurtured in the principles of true religion. The occasion which called it forth, appears, upon the face of it, to have been a backwardness on her part to exert the influence belonging to her high station in averting from the Jews generally some great evil with which they were menaced; and its purpose is, to make her sensible of how little avail to her own safety was the timid policy she was disposed to pursue—to call back her thoughts to the lessons of her youth on God's over-ruling providence in the affairs of men, with special reference to her own nation—and to put her upon considering how far the providing against the impending emergency may have been in the Divine counsels in her remarkable elevation—and thus to brace up the energies of her mind to a resolution better befitting that light of revelation it was her privilege to enjoy, and the distinguished token of the Divine favour towards her which she had already received.

To put you in full possession of the force of this remonstrance, it will be necessary, in the first place, to state the case to which it applies; and when that has been done, and the grounds have been explained by which Mordecai's strong language of rebuke and intimidation is supported, I will then shew you how we are affected by it, and make the practical application to ourselves.

The parties then to be regarded as principals on the occasion are the Jews—the Church of God under the old dispensation, whilst the partition wall separated them from all other nations, as His peculiar people. At the period before us they had been released by Cyrus from their long captivity about twenty years; but, as during its continuance many of them had formed establishments, and realized property in the different places they had been sent to colonize, and a new generation had sprung up whose local attachments were of course biassed in favour of the land of their nativity, the parties so circumstanced, in very many instances, preferred remaining in their present abodes, to availing themselves of the permission granted to return to Judea; and thus, though upwards of fifty thousand did go back thither, there was still, as the context states, a large residue dispersed among the Heathen inhabitants, in all the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the Persian empire*.

Of this number was Mordecai, who held a post in the King's household which required his daily attendance at the palace gate; and who so little affected worldly greatness that, even after Esther became the royal consort, and after he had, in addition to this title of consanguinity, established the strongest personal claim to advancement by the detection of a conspiracy against the life of Ahasuerus, he still studiously concealed the fact of

* Esther iii. 8.

his relationship to her, and as studiously suppressed his plea of merit for the momentous service he had performed, and went on, as before, executing unobtrusively his subordinate office of "sitting at the King's gate."

It was here that the offence was taken in revenge of which the destruction referred to in the text was plotted and contrived. For, it having pleased Ahasuerus to "promote Haman," and not only to "set his seat above all the princes that were with him," but to command, moreover, that "all the King's servants that were in the King's gate should bow before him, and do him reverence," Mordecai would do neither the one nor the other; and when questioned as to the grounds of his refusal, replied "that he was a Jew^b," intimating thereby that his religion forbade it; and though, with reference to his own honour, he was, as we have seen, so indifferent, that he may almost be said to have clung to his comparatively humble station (his own concealment of his pretensions, as was subsequently proved, being the only bar to his rivalling even Haman in pre-eminence), yet where the honour and authority of God were concerned, his spirit disdained compromise, and he was resolutely unbending.

With respect to Haman, it must now be remarked that, on the first introduction of his name,

^a Esther, iii. 1, 2.

^b *Ibid.* iii. 4.

the sacred historian describes him as "*the Agagite*," i. e. of the posterity of the nation, the Amalakites, over which that Agag reigned, whom the Prophet Samuel, in fulfilment of the Divine judgment, but partially executed by Saul, "hewed in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal^b," and of which the Scriptural memorial is that, "not fearing God," they were implacable in their enmity against his chosen people, whom, without the slightest provocation, they were ever seeking either to injure or destroy^c.

This, I say, is specially to be noted, for the designation is no common-place appendage to Haman's name, but is designedly affixed as the index to his conduct on the present occasion. It brings his parentage under observation—the whole race of Amalek—and calls to remembrance all their evil will, so spitefully self-engendered, and treasured up with aggravated malignity through so long a lapse of years, from the first going out of Israel from Egypt, when, taking advantage of their being "faint and weary, they smote the hindmost of them," whose very feebleness ought to have been their protection; to the day of Jerusalem's extreme distress, when, instead of the commiseration due from neighbours and relations, they cheered her destroyers with the encouraging acclamation,

^a Esther, iii. 1.

^b 1 Sam. xv. 33.

^c Deut. xxv. 17, 18. Judg. vi. 3, 5. 2 Chron. xx. 10, 11. Ps. lxxxiii. 7.

"Down with her! down with her, even to the ground!" and thus it points to the source from whence was derived that rancorous spirit, which so raged in Haman that the mere sight of Mordecai sitting at the King's gate, when the rest of the attendants were doing him obeisance, robbed the royal distinctions lavished upon him of all their pleasurable sensations^b, and stimulated, to that exorbitance, his craving for revenge, that "he thought it scorn," as the history states, "to lay hands on Mordecai alone," but set his heart upon destroying "all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai."

To accomplish this atrocious purpose some address was necessary, in so fabricating a charge against them that the fiat of the Persian Monarch might be obtained for their extermination. It was indeed true that "their laws were diverse from those of all people^d;" but still they were God's laws; and God had not left Himself without witness to all the world that they were of His appointment, or that "in keeping of them there was great reward."

On this diversity, however, Haman founded his accusation. It was a truth which could not be disputed, and was obviously a specious ground on

^a Ps. cxxxvii. 7.

^b Esther v. 13.

^c Esther iii. 6.

^d *Ibid.* 8.