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*Bamford's Coffee House, March 17-*  
A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,  
ON

JANUARY the 30th, 1781,

AT

GREAT ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

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By WILLIAM COOKE, M. A.

GREEK PROFESSOR, FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, AND ONE OF HIS  
MAJESTY'S PREACHERS AT WHITEHALL.

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C A M B R I D G E,

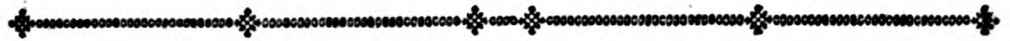
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MDCCLXXXI.





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S E R M O N, &c.



DEUT. xxviii. 49.

THE LORD SHALL BRING A NATION AGAINST THEE FROM  
AFAR, FROM THE END OF THE EARTH.

**A**MONG the corruptions of sentiment civil and religious, which may probably provoke God's displeasure against us, and involve us either in the curse of the text, or in calamities similar and equivalent to it, we may without scruple rank that malignant prejudice, which has prevailed of late years against this day's solemnity. Be men ever so inclined to censure and condemn those measures and miscarriages which betrayed the unhappy Prince, whose fate we commemorate, to the severest sufferings, and a most cruel death; humanity would still require, that they approve and applaud that magnanimous patience, wherewith he is allowed

lowed on all hands, to have endured those sufferings, and to have sustained that death;—The same principle which might tempt them to execrate his existence, should prompt them also to revere his memory. — But if it be considered, that the murder of a king by the hands of his subjects is a thing in itself of great national infamy, inflamed and aggravated in the present instance by circumstances of the most flagrant enormity — as — that it was not in battle, or in the confusion of a tumult, but in the cool hour of forethought, and deliberate malice — that it was not decreed as a punishment, but devised as an expedient — not in satisfaction of public justice, but in prosecution of private ambition — against law — yet under the forms of law — and with the mockery of all judicial sanctity; — the event of this day in this its complex character, of popular jealousy — dissent and distraction — treasonable and rebellious war which preceded it on the one hand, and of that lawless tyranny, oppression, and slavery which followed it on the other, even exclusively of all regard to afflicted majesty, must surely challenge our commiseration as men, our compunction as citizens. — Then too if we bear in mind, that we are christians professed, and bound by that profession to a belief in God, *whose mercy is over all his works — by whom kings reign and princes decree justice — in whose hand is the power of the earth — who bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity;* without whom no commotions and convulsions of states and nations can be brought to effect, and who turns the pride and presumptuous passions of men, to their destruction, and to his own glory. — With what face shall we oppose ourselves to the wisdom of government,

vernment, which appoints this day to religious service, such as shall remind us of God's judgments in confounding these kingdoms, of his mercy in restoring them, and by prayer and humiliation, worthily dispose us to deprecate his wrath, and to implore his favour?

And thus are we slid upon as great a question, as can engage and exercise the human wit and imagination here below. A question no other than the mysterious method of God's providence in ordering and controuling the affairs of men. — How to reconcile foreknowledge in God with freewill in man — fate and liberty — certainty and contingency — event and prophecy! Yet, whatever difficulties may thwart and obstruct this inquiry, how short soever our endeavours may come of their solution; the speculation itself will suggest such reflections, as shall glorify the power and wisdom of God, and yield abundant use and comfort to ourselves — both in our private consideration as men, and in our public as a people.

That the whole scheme of creation, and its important consequences — the fall of our first parents — the promise of redemption — the deluge — the renewal of the world — the renewal of the promise in the covenant made with Abraham, and the final ratification of it in the incarnation of Christ — together with the fortunes and fates of christianity — were all in the predeterminate view and contemplation of God; God's acknowledged attributes would force us to believe, were not that belief enjoined by the word of the Spirit in the mouth of the apostle, affirming of all true christians,

christians, that God has chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world — having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus to himself — and of the gospel dispensation, that it is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord — according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began. — Yet notwithstanding we profess, that man has been ever free — that no necessity determines the human will — that our first parents fell through their own voluntary corruption — that wilful sin was the destruction of the first world — and, that it was ever in the power of all men, as under the Jewish dispensation, to profelyte unto God; so under the christian, to embrace the faith, and by living up to its laws, and in its sacred duties, to become of themselves with the assistance of the Spirit, the *peculiar, predestinate and elect people of God.*

The Jews had the whole volume of their future destiny unrolled and opened to them by God's ministers, their prophets; and the penal consequences were presignified to them of their declension and lapse into the idolatrous licence of the neighbour nations. — Yet they stoned their prophets, and slighted their predictions — and were thus driven headlong by their own carnal conceits and lusts after strange gods, into all those miseries and disgraces, which nothing hindered, but they might have avoided by a strict adherence to their law, and devotion to the God of their fathers. — After their return from captivity, when that signal deliverance

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ance had impressed them so deeply, as to deter and constrain them from future idolatries, it was not yet of such weight as to check their impieties. — From open opposition they presently betook themselves to secret machination — from violence to stratagem — and thought to cozen and elude that omnipotent power, whom they had so much to their cost presumed to resist. — The moral precepts of their law they sacrificed to the ritual — the spiritual tenour and effect of it they explained and glossed away, and contenting themselves with the bare ceremonial practice and observance of it, made that practice and observance the cover of their vice, and of as great wickedness of every kind, as could undo a nation. — And thus was it that their own free and uninfluenced guilt and depravity, made them ripe for that curse denounced on them in the text so many ages before, *the Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth.* — And as their barbarous persecutions and slayings of the prophets, were types of those cruelties, wherewith they *persecuted unto the death* their last great prophet the Messiah — so did their criminal duplicities and prevarications of heart, fill up their measure in that perfidious pretext, concerted by malice for the crucifixion of Christ — the fear of the Romans. — Which odious pretence, whereby they fondly thought to gain and propitiate the Roman power by a murderous act, which the Roman magistrate disclaimed, and at the same time shelter their spiteful conspiracy against their King and Saviour, brought up under God, the Romans against them, and made them in the overthrow of their kingdom, and in the dispersion of their people, an illustrious monument of God's justice in the fight  
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of all nations, and of that vengeance which he is ever determined to take on hypocrisy in religion, and on treason in government.

The fate of the Romans is of as pregnant argument to our purpose, as that of the Jews. — Here was a people, who from small origin and imperceptible beginnings, having fallen accidentally upon a military policy, when the opportunity of their situation offered a commercial one — with principles of liberty inwrought in their government, which are not thought favourable to foreign conquests; — in spite of all impediments, by mere human efforts, without visible interposition of Heaven in their support, increased and prospered to that degree, as to advance their little predatory inroads on their neighbours, into warlike expeditions against the greatest nations, spread their triumphs through all the then flourishing world, and crown them with the subversion and spoil of the Jewish state and sceptre. — And yet the Romans were as unworthy to execute judgment on the Jews, as the Jews had been on the Canaanites of old. — They had been always discontented, craving, ambitious — factious at home, perfidious abroad — Their inward corruptions had ever kept pace with their external success and splendour. — They had adopted the vices of all their conquered nations, and had pushed them to the most flagitious extremes; — till at length sunk in degeneracy and effeminate sloth, they suffered in their turn, what the Jews had suffered at their hands, and eventually fulfilled the same prophecy of the text — for the Lord brought a nation against them *from afar, from the end of the earth.*

Thus

Thus we see in the history of either most extraordinary people, that though the natural causes and consequences of human passion, conducted each to their several destinies; yet their fates were knit together by an invisible hand, and both were instances of God's moral government, and instruments at the same time, of those great designs which his providence had projected and prepared for us. — To faith in *Christ crucified*, it was necessary that the Jews should fulfil the prophecies in freely conspiring against the Lord of Life. — To the propagation and progress of the christian religion, it was necessary that the world should be subdued and pacified — which the Roman power was destined to accomplish. — To the fulfilling of the particular prophecy in the text, it was necessary that that power should be brought against Jerusalem, and that the Jews exterminated and scattered abroad, should witness Christianity to the most distant Gentiles — and to the same end, the fulfilling of prophecy, it was still further necessary, that as Rome by its rise and prosperity, made open way to the gospel liberty, so should it also by its decline and fall, give room for the usurpations of the Papal tyranny.

This then is the question — How it should be, that men's wills operate freely, unconstrained by any foreign forcible impression, and without sensible struggle and contestation from Heaven, and whilst that they have a mere natural event and issue, are yet swayed and directed by a presiding providence, to the display of God's might or mercies in the world? Allowing this, that God takes advantage of men's passions, and conducts them finally according to his will; allowing  
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God's providence in all its extent, how shall we conciliate the independency of man, with his implicit dependency on the power of God, and keep our liberty detached and distinct from an unnatural and harsh necessity? Shall it be said, that men are free to form their resolutions and habits, but that God may present to them such objects of temptation, as they shall assume and appropriate by their own will and concupiscence? — And yet we are told that God tempts no man, but that every one is tempted of his own passions and lusts. — Or shall we say, that the principles and beginnings of action are in the power of man; but that the events of them are controuled by the Almighty, and that thus we may connect and unite our liberty with a supreme overruling influence? But how shall events disappoint our hopes, but by human means, and the agency of others? — This may shift the difficulty, but it does not remove it. Who is there, but in his life, has had his projects of happiness, whereto he has counted upon the concurrence of others, who beyond his expectation have crossed his designs, and that too, to his good, which he may have afterwards acknowledged, though at the time neither perceived by him, nor intended by them? How is it, that God has wrought such a testimony of himself into the very nature of things, as that vice should even here be its own punishment — that disgust and anxiety should embitter pleasures, — and the wicked to a man envy the good? — that though the world be overrun with sin and wickedness, yet virtue is still in honour — that there are no righteous forsaken, — no merit friendless, — that those who look up to God for their provision and maintenance, are more tranquil and at ease, than those

those of the most ample and assured riches and revenues. How is it with the grace of God? — Man is free to obtain — to lose — to recover it. — It acts not vehemently, not impetuously — yet effectually towards a change in the Man, who may be sure of its effects, when he doubts its operations. — That God's allseeing eye pervades and penetrates the heart, and converts the lusts of individuals, and the pride of princes to the manifestation of his justice, his honour and glory, — Such is our faith — evidenced and confirmed to us, by the fates of men and of nations. — But to accord and harmonize God's will with man's will — his prescience with our free agency — this is far beyond Us — it is a mystery which commands our awe and reverence — explanations of it on our parts would at best be but *lying vanities*. — It is our's to state — to assert — to defend it: — to maintain man free, and God omnipotent. *To whom hath he given power to declare his works; and who shall find out his noble acts? Who shall number the strength of his majesty, and who shall also tell out his mercies? As for the wondrous works of the Lord, there may nothing be taken from them, neither may any thing be put unto them, neither can the ground of them be found out.*

Since then the secrets of the divine œconomy in the management and controul of human affairs, are so subtle and remote, as to baffle our most sagacious search and scrutiny; and since it becomes us all as reasonable creatures to turn those notions of the Deity, which are not of intellectual, to our moral and religious use and improvement; — We may do well to reflect, — that it is no disparagement, but on the contrary highly creditable to man, to be under the  
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inspection.

inspection and guidance of the great Being, who made him. — That our concerns and actions, as on the one hand they do not float and fluctuate, the sport of indefinite and capricious chance, so on the other, are not tied and captivated by an inflexible irremissible fate: — That the failures of our hopes, and the disappointments of our views, are providentially contrived and compassed, — for our temporal benefit — perhaps for our future: — and as this cannot take place, but by the intervention of others, actuated by strange inexplicable influence, — that such a consideration should make us kindly and compassionately affected to all those, who shall traverse our measures and defeat our ends: — and that as our distresses under God, and discomfitures here, may plead possibly in our behalf, for indulgence from him hereafter, so that the conscience of God's sovereign — superintendance over us, and of our own free and unbiassed agency, should keep us vigilant and on guard against the deceitfulness of sin — the desertion of our duty — the neglect of our religion.

But then as the shades of private and public character are contiguous and coincident; as when we offend God, we offend man too, by the prevalence of our example and the connexion of our crimes; — religion is of civil as well as of moral obligation, and the love of God must contain the love of our country. — The providence of God is partial and particular: — it levels us all: — rich and poor, great and humble, wise and ignorant, by birth, fortunes, honours, attainments how proudly soever separated and distinguished, — we are but one object of it. What God has joined together shall

shall man put asunder? Shall we dissociate what he combines? — What casuistry, what chicanery, what statejesuitism shall make good subjects of bad men, and commend those to the confidence of a people, who are rejected and reprobated of God? — Private vice in God's sight is public iniquity. — Have we pride in our rights, and do we forget that they have no foundation but self-love — that interested and intolerant principle which society scorns, law chastens, and religion abominates? — Do we aim at uncontrouled democracy, which has ruined every government wherever it was, and this once; — and yet forget, whose heat, whose violence, whose ambition made that democracy necessarily dependent, and that dependence the only surety and security of our freedom? — Are our heads giddy with liberty, and forgetting too on what precipices we stand, do we devour all flatteries, which may soothe us in the conceit of it, and feel like the Athenian at the funeral oration, high spirited and elate — with great thoughts of heart, and gallant imaginations of the dignity of a British citizen?

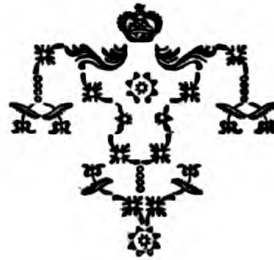
We have lived to see the same steps, which led to a ruinous rebellion with us in the last century, paced again and prosecuted in this: — new tables erected — new covenants made — tribunitial assemblies selfconstituted, passing arbitrary censures on the acts of the legislature, in contempt of law, in defiance of authority, — with an inhumanity dishonourable to a civilized nation, — and with that wantonness of impunity, which takes even from sedition the miserable merit of plot and artifice. Are such to be put in mind — that they may be the authors of evil, yet not of good — that they

they may bring things into confusion with us, yet be unable possibly to recover them to order? — That they may be but infatuated vessels of God's wrath, poured out both on themselves and on us? — God permitted not those who had embroiled their king in war, to reestablish him in peace — but brought *a nation* against them *from afar* — far enough from their expectation — and gave them up to the fury of a fanatic army — king and people with them. — Was it ever but with us, and with the Jews at their last siege, that faction at home, and foreign war joined forces to a nation's ruin? — Was it ever but with us that falshood, slander, and contumelious calumny made havock of all characters; ushered daily and hourly into general notice, with the frankness of truth, the parade of literature, — and consigned to posterity in the same bottom, with the inventions of our wit, and the produce of our studies? Are not these immoralities (to pass over our vices) sufficient of themselves to bring judgment upon us? — Have we had no intimations, no signs of such judgment? — We have seen our metropolis in flames — the lives and fortunes of its citizens exposed to assassination and rapine — the public faith endangered — the common property of the kingdom, of ourselves, of our families — all at stake together. — The hurricane has visited our once flourishing isles, and swept away fertility with the *bezom of destruction*. — A mob! — A storm! — Thus with *the fool* we say in our hearts *there is no God*. — If these be not intended warnings from Heaven — for God's sake let us receive them as such. — Let the memory of our preservations and escapes, work in us such a state and disposition of heart and mind, as shall become us, if we suffer. — Let us put away all thoughts, vain glorious



glorious of ourselves, contemptuous of others, disrespectful of our rulers, disregardful of our God — and at the expence only of our lusts, return to those duties, which are collectively due from us — to the best natured of all governments — to the purest of all religions —

“ To thee O God! in whose presence we stand, whose  
“ grace alone gives us courage to approach thee; prepared,  
“ we trust, in all contrition of soul, most humbly, most  
“ devoutly to acknowledge, that if we are delivered from the  
“ great and manifold dangers which threaten these king-  
“ doms, and from the cruel combinations of all our ene-  
“ mies; — it is thy hand and thy right arm which saves us, —  
“ no worth — no virtue — no deservings of our's — at least  
“ — not of a people.”



1911

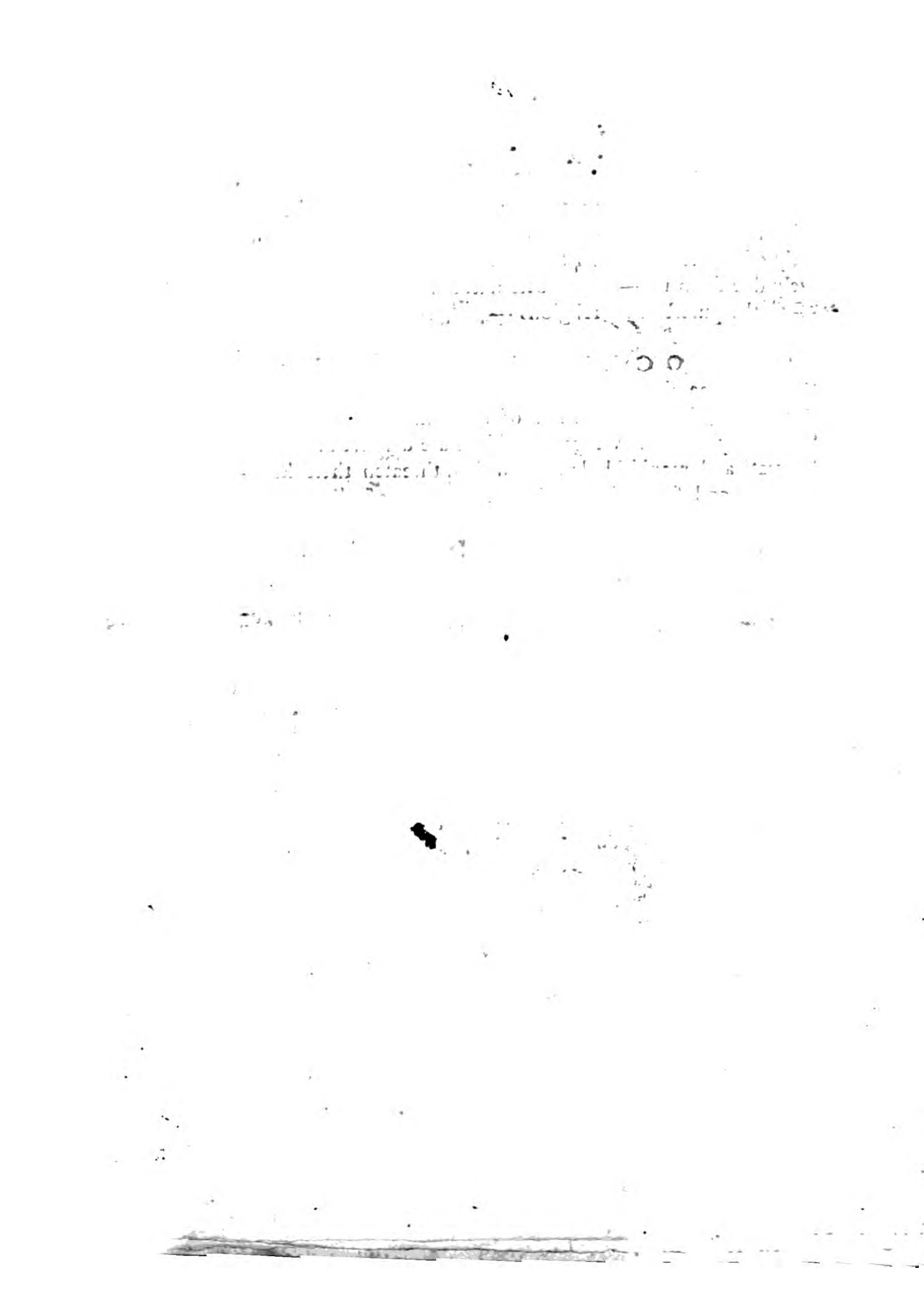
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