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# CALM ADDRESS

TO OUR

*American* Colonies.

BY

The Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY.



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CALM ADDRESS, &c.

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*Brethren and Countrymen,*

1. **T**HE grand question which is now debated, (and with warmth enough on both sides) is this, Has the English Parliament power to tax the American Colonies?

In order to determine this, let us consider the nature of our Colonies. An English Colony is, a number of persons to whom the King grants a charter, permitting them to settle in some far country as a corporation, enjoying such powers as the charter grants, to be administered in such a manner as the charter prescribes. As a corporation, they make laws for themselves; but, as a corporation subsisting by a grant from higher authority, to the controul of that authority, they still continue subject.

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Considering this, nothing can be more plain, than that the supreme power in England has a legal right of laying any tax upon them for any end beneficial to the whole empire.

2. But you object, "It is the privilege of a Freeman and an Englishman to be taxed only by his own consent. And this consent is given for every man by his representative in parliament. But we have no representation in parliament. Therefore we ought not to be taxed thereby."

I answer, This argument proves too much. If the parliament cannot tax you, because you have no representation therein, for the same reason it can make no laws to bind you. If a freeman cannot be taxed without his own consent, neither can he be punished without it: for whatever holds with regard to taxation, holds with regard to all other laws. Therefore he who denies the English parliament the power of taxation, denies it the right of making any laws at all. But this power

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over the Colonies you have never disputed: You have always admitted statutes, for the punishment of offences, and for the preventing or redressing of inconveniencies. And the reception of any law draws after it by a chain which cannot be broken, the necessity of admitting taxation.

3. But I object to the very foundation of your plea. That "every free man is governed by laws to which he has consented," as confidently as it has been asserted, it is absolutely false. In wide-extended dominions, a very small part of the people are concerned in making laws. This, as all public business must be done by delegation, the delegates are chosen by a select number. And those that are not electors, who are far the greater part, stand by, idle and helpless spectators.

The case of electors is little better. When they are near equally divided, almost half of them must be governed, not only without, but even against their own consent.

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And how has any man consented to those laws, which were made before he was born? Our consent to these, nay and to the laws now made even in England, is purely passive. And in every place, as all men are born the subjects of some state or other, so they are born passively, as it were consenting, to the laws of that state. Any other than this kind of consent, the condition of civil life does not allow.

4. But you say, *You are intitled to life, liberty, and property, by nature: and that you have never ceded to any sovereign power the right to dispose of these without your consent.*

While you speak as the naked sons of nature, this is certainly true. But you presently declare, *Our ancestors at the time they settled these Colonies, were intitled to all the rights of natural-born subjects, within the realm of England.* This likewise is true: but when this is granted, the boast of original rights is at an end. You are no longer in a state of nature, but sink down to Colonists, A 3. governed

governed by a charter. If your ancestors were subjects, they acknowledged a Sovereign: if they had a right to English privileges, they were accountable to English laws, and had *ceded* to the King and Parliament, *the power of disposing, without their consent, of both their lives, liberties, and properties.* And did the parliament cede to them a dispensation from the obedience which they owe as natural subjects? or any degree of independence, not enjoyed by other Englishmen?

5. *They did not indeed, as you observe, by emigration forfeit any of those privileges: but they were, and their descendants now are intitled to all such as their circumstances enable them to enjoy.*

That they who form a Colony by a lawful charter, forfeit no privilege thereby, is certain. But what they do not forfeit by any judicial sentence, they may lose by natural effects. When a man voluntarily comes into America, he may lose what he had when in Europe. Perhaps he had a right to vote  
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for a knight or burges: by crossing the sea he did not *forfeit* this right: But it is plain, he has made the exercise of it no longer possible. He has reduced himself from a voter to one of the innumerable multitude that have no votes.

6. But you say, *As the Colonies are not represented in the British Parliament, they are entitled to a free power of Legislation. For they inherit all the right which their ancestors had, of enjoying all the privileges of Englishmen.*

They do inherit all the privileges which their ancestors had: but they can inherit no more. Their ancestors left a country, where the representatives of the people were elected by men particularly qualified, and where those who wanted that qualification were bound by the decisions of men whom they had not deputed. You are the descendants of men who either had no votes, or resigned them by emigration. You have therefore exactly what your ancestors left you: not a vote in making laws, nor in chusing legislators, but the happiness

pirates of being protected by laws, and the duty of obeying them.

What your ancestors did not bring with them, neither they nor their descendants have acquired. They have not, by abandoning their right in one legislature, acquired a right to constitute another, any more than the multitudes in England who have no vote, have a right to erect a Parliament for themselves.

7. *However the Colonies have a right to all the privileges granted them by royal charters, or secured to them by provincial laws.*

The first clause is allowed: they have certainly a right to all the privileges granted them by royal charters. But as to the second, there is a doubt: provincial laws may grant privileges to individuals of the province: But surely, no province can confer provincial privileges on itself. They have a right to all which the King has given them; but not to all which they have given themselves.

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A corporation can no more assume to itself privileges which it had not before, than a man can, by his own act and deed, assume titles or dignities. The legislature of a Colony may be compared to the vestry of a large parish; which may lay a cess on its inhabitants, but still regulated by the law; and which (whatever be its internal expences) is still liable to taxes laid by superior authority.

The charter of Pennsylvania has a clause admitting in express terms, taxation by Parliament. If such a clause be not inserted in other charters, it must be omitted as not necessary; because it is manifestly implied in the very nature of subordinate government: all countries which are subject to laws being liable to taxes.

It is true, the first settlers in *Massachusetts-Bay* were promised *an exemption from taxes for seven years*. But does not this very exemption, imply, that they were to pay them afterwards?

If there is in the charter of any Colony a clause exempting them from taxes  
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for ever, then undoubtedly they have a right to be so exempted. But if there is no such clause, then the English Parliament has the same right to tax them as to tax any other English subjects.

8. All that impartially consider what has been observed, must readily allow, that the English Parliament has an undoubted right to tax all the English Colonies,

But whence then in all this hurry and tumult? Why is America all in an uproar? If you can yet give yourselves time to think, you will see, the plain case is this :

A few years ago, you were assaulted by enemies, whom you were not well able to resist. You represented this to your Mother-country, and desired her assistance. You was largely assisted, and by that means wholly delivered from all your enemies.

After a time, your Mother-country desiring to be reimbursed for some part of the large expence she had been at, laid a small tax, (which she had always a right to do) on one of her Colonies. But

But how is it possible, that the taking this reasonable and legal step, should have set all America in a flame?

I will tell you my opinion freely; and perhaps you will not think it improbable. I speak the more freely, because I am unbiassed: I have nothing to hope or fear from either side. I can gain nothing either by the Government or the Americans, and probably never shall. And I have no prejudice to any man in America: I love you as my brethren and countrymen.

9. My opinion is this. We have a few men in England, who are determined enemies to Monarchy. Whether they hate his present Majesty on any other ground, than because he is a King, I know not. But they cordially hate his office, and have for some years been undermining it with all diligence, in hopes of erecting their grand idol, their dear Commonwealth upon its ruins. I believe they have let very few into their design: (although many forward it, without knowing any thing of the matter)

ter) but they are steadily pursuing it, as by various other means, so in particular by inflammatory papers, which are industriously and continually dispersed, throughout the town and country : by this method they have already wrought thousands of the people, even to the pitch of madness. By the same, only varied according to your circumstances, they have likewise inflamed America. I make no doubt, but these very men are the original cause of the present breach between England and her Colonies. And they are still pouring oil into the flame, studiously incensing each against the other, and opposing under a variety of pretences, all measures of accommodation. So that although the Americans, in general, love the English, and the English, in general, love the Americans, (all, I mean, that are not yet cheated and exasperated by these artful men) yet the rupture is growing wider every day, and none can tell where it will end.

These good men hope it will end in the total defection of North America from  
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from England. If this were effected; they trust the English in general would be so irreconcilably disgusted, that they should be able, with or without foreign assistance, intirely to overturn the government: especially while the main of both the English and Irish forces, are at so convenient a distance.

10. But, my brethren, would this be any advantage to *you*? Can *you* hope for a more desirable form of government, either in England or America, than that which you now enjoy? After all the vehement cry for liberty, what more liberty can you have? What more religious liberty can you desire, than that which you enjoy already? May not every one among you worship God according to his own conscience? What civil liberty can you desire, which you are not already possess'd of? Do not you sit without restraint, *every man under his own vine*? Do you not, every one, high or low; enjoy the fruit of your labour? This is real, rational liberty, such as is enjoyed by Englishmen alone; & not by any other people

people in the habitable world. Would the being independent of England make you more free? Far, very far from it. It would hardly be possible for you to steer clear, between anarchy and tyranny. But suppose, after numberless dangers and mischiefs, you should settle into one or more Republics: would a republican government give you more liberty, either religious or civil? By no means. No governments under heaven are so despotic as the Republican: No subjects are governed in so arbitrary a manner, as those of a Commonwealth. If any one doubt of this, let him look at the subjects of Venice, of Genoa, or even of Holland. Should any man talk or write of the Dutch government, as every cobbler does of the English, he would be laid in irons, before he knew where he was. And then wo be to him! Republics shew no mercy.

11. "But if we submit to one tax, more will follow." Perhaps so, and perhaps not. But if they did; if you were taxed (which is quite improbable) equal with  
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with Ireland or Scotland, still were you to prevent this by renouncing connexion with England, the remedy would be worse than the disease. For O! what convulsions must America feel before any other government was settled? Innumerable mischiefs must ensue, before any general form could be established. And the grand mischief would ensue, when it was established; when you had received a yoke which you could not shake off.

12. Brethren, open your eyes! Come to yourselves! Be no longer the dupes of designing men. I do not mean any of your countrymen in America: I doubt whether any of these are in the secret. The designing men, the Ahithophels, are in England; those who have laid their schemes so deep and covered it so well, that thousands who are ripening it, suspect nothing at all of the matter. These well-meaning men, sincerely believing, that they are serving their country, exclaim against grievances, which either never existed, or are aggravated  
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above measure, and thereby inflame the people more and more, to the wish of those who are behind the scene. But be not you duped any longer: do not ruin yourselves for them that owe you no good will; that now employ you only for their own purposes, and in the end will give you no thanks. They love neither England nor America, but play one against the other, in subserviency to their grand design, of overturning the English government. Be warned in time. Stand and consider before it is too late; before you have entailed confusion and misery on your latest posterity. Have pity upon your mother country! Have pity upon your own! Have pity upon yourselves, upon your children, and upon all that are near and dear to you! Let us not bite and devour one another, lest we be consumed one of another! O let us follow after peace! Let us put away our sins; the real ground of all our calamities! Which never will or can be thoroughly removed, till we fear God and honour the King.

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