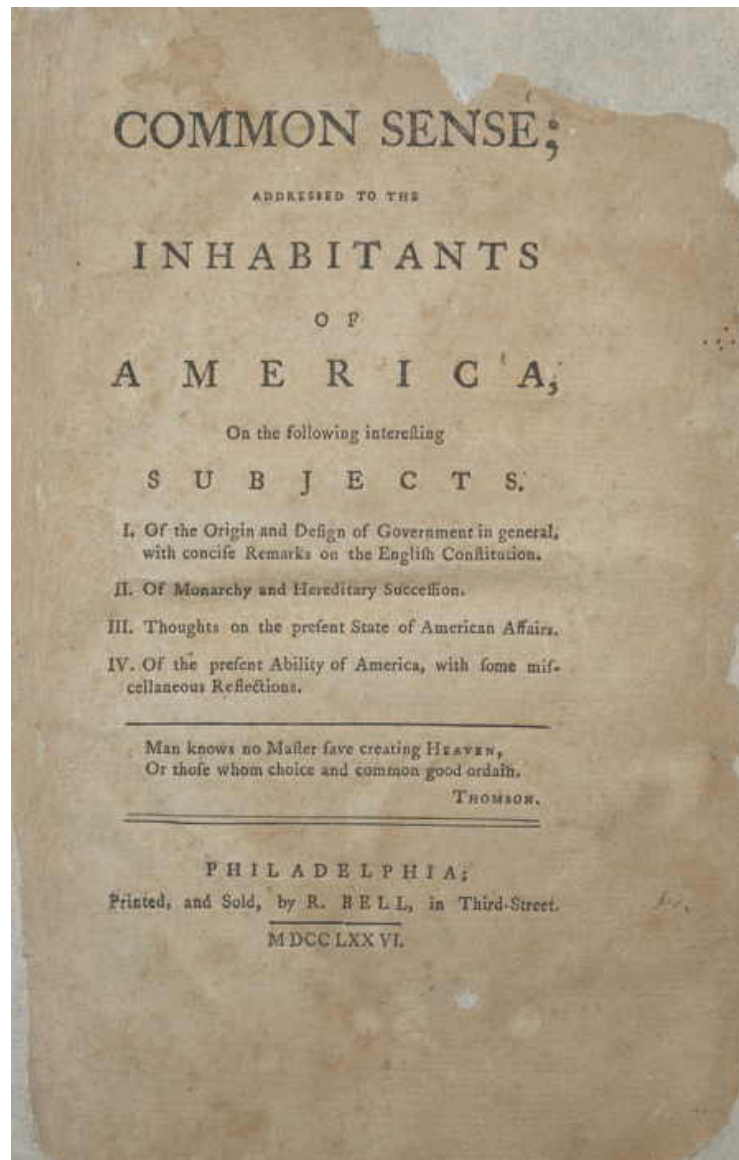


THOMAS PAINE,
Common Sense (1776, 1st ed.)



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[Thomas Paine], *Common sense; addressed to the inhabitants of America, on the following interesting subjects. I. Of the origin and design of government in general, with concise remarks on the English Constitution. II. Of monarchy and hereditary succession. III. Thoughts on the present state of American affairs. IV. Of the present ability of America, with some miscellaneous reflections.* (Philadelphia: Printed, and Sold, by R. Bell, in Third-Street. MDCCLXXVI (1776).)

Editor's Introduction

To make this edition useful to scholars and to make it more readable, I have done the following:

1. inserted and highlighted the page numbers of the original edition
 2. not split a word if it has been hyphenated across a new line or page (this will assist in making word searches)
 3. added unique paragraph IDs (which are used in the "citation tool" which is part of the "enhanced HTML" version of this text)
 4. retained the spaces which separate sections of the text
 5. created a "blocktext" for large quotations
 6. moved the Table of Contents to the beginning of the text
 7. placed the footnotes at the end of the book
 8. formatted short margin notes to float right
 9. inserted Greek and Hebrew words as images
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INTRODUCTION.

PERHAPS the Sentiments contained in the following Pages, are not *yet* sufficiently fashionable to procure them general Favour; a long Habit of not thinking a Thing *wrong*, gives it a superficial appearance of being *right*, and raises at first a formidable Outcry in defence of Custom. But the Tumult soon subsides. Time makes more Converts than Reason.

As a long and violent abuse of Power, is generally the Means of calling the right of it in question (and in Matters too which might never have been thought of, had not the Sufferers been aggravated into the enquiry) and as the King of England hath undertaken in his *own Right*, to support the Parliament in what he calls *Theirs*, and as the good People of this Country are grievously oppressed by the Combination, they have an undoubted Privilege to enquire into the Pretensions of both, and equally to reject the Usurpation of either.

In the following Sheets, the Author hath studiously avoided every Thing which is personal among ourselves. Compliments as well as censure to Individuals make no Part thereof. The wise, and the worthy, need not the Triumph of a Pamphlet; and those whose Sentiments are injudicious, or unfriendly, will cease of themselves unless too much Pains are bestowed upon their Conversion.

The Cause of America is in a great Measure the Cause of all Mankind. Many Circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the Principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested. The laying a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the natural Rights of all the Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling; of which Class, regardless of Party Censure, is the AUTHOR.

AUTHOR



COMMON SENSE.

Of the Origin and Design of GOVERNMENT in general, with concise Remarks on the ENGLISH CONSTITUTION.↵

SOME writers have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas, they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness *positively* by uniting our affections, the latter *negatively* by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher.

Society in every state is a blessing, but Government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one: for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries *by a Government*, which we might expect in a country *without Government*, our calamity is heightened by [2] reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of Kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of Paradise. For were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform, and irresistably obeyed, Man would need no other lawgiver; but that not being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property to furnish means for the protection of the rest; and this he is induced to do, by the same prudence which in every other case advises him, out of two evils to choose the least. *Wherefore*, security being the true design and end of government, it unanswerably follows, that whatever *form* thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us, with the least expence and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others.

In order to gain a clear and just idea of the design and end of government, let us suppose a small number of persons settled in some sequestered part of the earth, unconnected with the rest; they will then represent the first peopling of any country, or of the world. In this state of natural liberty, society will be their first thought. A thousand motives will excite them thereto, the strength of one [3] man is so unequal to his wants, and his mind so unfitted for perpetual solitude, that he is soon obliged to seek assistance and relief of another, who in his turn requires the same. Four or five united would be able to raise a tolerable dwelling in the midst of a wilderness, but *one* man might labour out the common period of life without accomplishing any thing; when he had felled his timber he could not remove it, nor erect it after it was removed; hunger in the mean time would urge him from his work, and every different want call him a different way. Disease, nay even misfortune would be death; for tho' neither might be mortal, yet either would disable him from living, and reduce him to a state in which he might rather be said to perish, than to die.

Thus necessity like a gravitating power would soon form our newly arrived emigrants into society, the reciprocal blessings of which, would supersede, and render the obligations of law and government unnecessary while they remained perfectly just to each other: but as nothing but Heaven is impregnable to vice, it will unavoidably happen that in proportion as they surmount the first difficulties of emigration, which bound [4] them together in a common cause, they will begin to relax in their duty and attachment to each other: and this remissness will point out the necessity of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral virtue.

Some convenient Tree will afford them a State-House, under the branches of which the whole Colony may assemble to deliberate on public matters. It is more than probable that their first laws will have the title only of REGULATIONS and be enforced by no other

penalty than public dis-esteem. In this first parliament every man by natural right will have a seat.

But as the Colony encreases, the public concerns will encrease likewise, and the distance at which the members may be separated, will render it too inconvenient for all of them to meet on every occasion as at first, when their number was small, their habitations near, and the public concerns few and trifling. This will point out the convenience of their consenting to leave the legislative part to be managed by a select number chosen from the whole body, who are supposed to have the same concerns at [5] stake which those have who appointed them, and who will act in the same manner as the whole body would act were they present. If the colony continue encreasing, it will become necessary to augment the number of the representatives, and that the interest of every part of the colony may be attended to, it will be found best to divide the whole into convenient parts, each part sending its proper number: and that the *elected* might never form to themselves an interest separate from the *electors*, prudence will point out the propriety of having elections often: because as the *elected* might by that means return and mix again with the general body of the *electors* in a few months, their fidelity to the Public will be secured by the prudent reflexion of not making a rod for themselves. And as this frequent interchange will establish a common interest with every part of the community, they will mutually and naturally support each other, and on this (not on the unmeaning name of king) depends the *strength of government; and the happiness of the governed*.

Here then is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the [6] world; here too is the design and end of government, viz. Freedom and Security. And however our eyes may be dazzled with show, or our ears deceived by sound; however prejudice may warp our wills, or interest darken our understanding, the simple voice of nature and of reason will say, 'tis right.

I draw my idea of the form of government from a principle in nature which no art can overturn, viz. That the more simple any thing is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered; and with this maxim in view I offer a few remarks on the so much boasted constitution of England. That it was noble for the dark and slavish times in which it was erected, is granted. When the world was over-run with tyranny the least remove therefrom was a glorious rescue. But that it is imperfect, subject to convulsions, and incapable of producing what it seems to promise is easily demonstrated.

Absolute governments, (tho' the disgrace of human nature) hath this advantage with them, that they are simple; if the people suffer, they know the head from which their [7] suffering springs; know likewise the remedy; and are not bewildered by a variety of causes and cures. But the constitution of England is so exceedingly complex, that the nation may suffer for years together without being able to discover in which part the fault lies, some will say in one and some in another, and every political physician will advise a different medicine.

I know it is difficult to get over local or long standing prejudices, yet if we will suffer ourselves to examine the component parts of the English constitution, we shall find them to be the base remains of two ancient tyrannies, compounded with some new Republican materials.

First.—The remains of Monarchical tyranny in the person of the King.

Secondly.—The remains of Aristocratical tyranny in the persons of the Peers.

Thirdly.—The new Republican materials, in the persons of the Commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England.

The two first by being hereditary are independent [8] of the People; wherefore in a *constitutional sense* they contribute nothing towards the freedom of the State.

To say that the constitution of England is a *union* of three powers reciprocally *checking* each other, is farcical, either the words have no meaning or they are flat contradictions.

To say that the Commons is a check upon the King, presupposes two things.

First.—That the King is not to be trusted without being looked after, or in other words, that a thirst for absolute power is the natural disease of Monarchy.

Secondly.—That the Commons by being appointed for that purpose, are either wiser or more worthy of confidence than the Crown.

But as the same constitution which gives the Commons a power to check the King by with-holding the supplies, gives afterwards the King a power to check the Commons by empowering him to reject their other bills; it again supposes that the King is [9] wiser than those, whom it has already supposed to be wiser than him. A meer absurdity!

There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of Monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is required.—The state of a king shuts him from the World, yet the business of a King requires him to know it thoroughly: wherefore, the different parts by unnaturally opposing and destroying each other, prove the whole character to be absurd and useless.

Some writers have explained the English constitution thus; the King say they is one, the People another; the Peers are an house in behalf of the king; the Commons in behalf of the People; But this hath all the distinctions of an house divided against itself; and tho' the expressions be pleasantly arranged, yet when examined they appear idle and ambiguous: and it will always happen, that the nicest construction that words are capable of, when applied to the description of some thing which either cannot exist, or is too incomprehensible to be within the compass of description, will be words of sound [10] only, and tho they may amuse the ear, they cannot inform the mind: for this explanation includes a previous question viz. *how came the King by a power which the People are afraid to trust and always obliged to check?* Such a power could not be the gift of a wise People, neither can any power *which needs checking* be from God: yet the provision which the constitution makes, supposes such a power to exist.

But the provision is unequal to the task, the means either cannot, or will not accomplish the end, and the whole affair is a *Felo de se*: for as the greater weight will always carry up the less, and as all the wheels of a machine are put in motion by one, it only remains to know which power in the constitution has the most weight, for that will govern: and tho' the others, or a part of them, may clog, or as the phrase is, check the rapidity of its motion, yet so long as they cannot stop it, their endeavours will be ineffectual: the first moving power will at last have its way, and what it wants in speed is supplied by time.

That the crown is this overbearing part in the English constitution needs not be mentioned [11] and that it derives its whole consequence merely from being the given of places and pensions is self-evident, wherefore, tho' we have been wise enough to shut and lock a door against absolute Monarchy, we at the same time have been foolish enough to put the Crown in possession of the key.

The prejudice of Englishmen in favour of their own government by King, Lords and Commons, arises as much or more from national pride than reason. Individuals are undoubtedly safer in England than in some other Countries: but the *will* of the King is as much the *law* of the land in Britain as in France, with this difference, that instead of

proceeding directly from his mouth, it is handed to the People under the more formidable shape of an act of Parliament. For the fate of Charles the first, hath only made Kings more subtile—not more just.

Wherefore laying aside all national pride and prejudice in favour of modes and forms, the plain truth is, that *it is wholly owing to the constitution of the People, and not to the constitution of the Government* that the Crown is not as oppressive in England as in Turkey.

An enquiry into the *constitutional errors*[12] in the English form of government, is at this time highly necessary; for as we are never in a proper condition of doing justice to others, while we continue under the influence of some leading partiality, so neither are we capable of doing it to ourselves while we remain fettered by any obstinate prejudice. And as a man who is attached to a prostitute is unfitted to choose or judge of a wife, so any prepossession in favour of a rotten constitution of government will disable us from discerning a good one.

Of MONARCHY and *hereditary succession*.↩

MANKIND being originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance: the distinctions of rich and poor may in a great measure be accounted for, and that without having recourse to the harsh ill-sounding names of oppression and avarice. Oppression is often the *consequence*, but seldom or never the *means* of riches: and tho avarice will preserve a man from being necessitously poor, it generally makes him too timorous to be wealthy.

[13]

But there is another and greater distinction for which no truly natural or religious reason can be assigned, and that is, the distinction of Men into KINGS and SUBJECTS. Male and female are the distinctions of nature, good and bad the distinctions of Heaven; but how a race of Men came into the World so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth enquiring into, and whether they are the means of happiness or of misery to mankind.

In the early ages of the World according to the Scripture chronology there were no Kings; the consequence of which was there were no wars; it is the pride of Kings which throws mankind into confusion. Holland without a King hath enjoyed more peace for this last century, than any of the Monarchical governments in Europe. Antiquity favours the same remark; for the quiet and rural lives of the first Patriarchs hath a happy something in them, which vanishes away when we come to the history of Jewish royalty.

Government by Kings was first introduced into the World by the Heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom. [14] It was the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry. The Heathens paid divine honours to their deceased Kings, and the Christian World hath improved on the plan by doing the same to their living ones. How impious is the title of sacred Majesty applied to a worm, who in the midst of his splendor is crumbling into dust!

As the exalting one man so greatly above the rest cannot be justified on the equal rights of nature, so neither can it be defended on the authority of scripture; for the will of the Almighty as declared by Gideon and the prophet Samuel, expressly disapproves of Government by Kings. All ante-monarchical parts of scripture have been very smoothly glossed over in monarchical governments, but they undoubtedly merit the attention of Countries which have their governments yet to form. "*Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's*" is the scripture doctrine of Courts, yet it is no support of monarchical government, for the Jews at that time were without a King and in a state of vassalage to the Romans.

Near three thousand years passed away [15] from the Mosaic account of the creation, till the Jews under a national delusion requested a King. Till then, their form of government (except in extraordinary cases where the Almighty interposed) was a kind of Republic administred by a judge and the elders of the Tribes. Kings they had none, and it was held sinful to acknowledge any Being under that title but the Lord of Hosts. And when a man seriously reflects on the idolatrous homage which is paid to the persons of Kings, he need not wonder that the Almighty ever jealous of his honor, should disapprove of a form of government which so impiously invades the prerogative of Heaven.

Monarchy is ranked in scripture as one of the sins of the Jews, for which a curse in reserve is denounced against them. The history of that transaction is worth attending to.

The children of Israel being oppressed by the Midianites, Gideon marched against them with a small army, and victory thro' the divine interposition decided in his favour. The Jews elate with success, and attributing it to the generalship of Gideon, proposed making him a king, saying, "*Rule [16] thou over us, thou and thy son and thy son's son.*" Here was temptation in it's fullest extent; not a kingdom only, but an hereditary one, but Gideon in the piety of his soul replied, "*I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you, THE LORD SHALL RULE OVER YOU.*" Words need not be more explicit; Gideon doth not *decline* the honour, but denieth their right to give it; neither doth he compliment them with invented declarations of his thanks, but in the positive stile of a Prophet charges them with disaffection to their proper Sovereign the King of Heaven.

About one hundred and thirty years after this, they fell again into the same error. The hankering which the Jews had for the idolatrous customs of the Heathens, is something exceedingly unaccountable; but so it was, that laying hold of the misconduct of Samuel's two sons who were entrusted with some secular concerns, they came in an abrupt and clamorous manner to Samuel saying, *behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a King to judge us like all the other nations.* And here we cannot but observe that their motives were bad, viz. that they might be *like* unto other [17] nations, *i. e.* the Heathens, whereas their true glory laid in being as much *unlike* them as possible. *But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, give us a King to judge us: and Samuel prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord said unto Samuel hearken unto the voice of the People in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, THAT I SHOULD NOT REIGN OVER THEM.* According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me and served other Gods: so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice, howbeit, protest solemnly unto them and shew them the manner of the King that shall reign over them. *i. e.* not of any particular King, but the general manner of the Kings of the Earth whom Israel was so eagerly copying after. And notwithstanding the great distance of time and difference of manners, the character is still in fashion. "*And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the People, that asked of him a King. And he said this shall be the manner of the King that shall reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots and to be his horse-men, and some shall run before his chariots.*" (This description agrees [18] with the present mode of impressing men) "*and he will appoint him Captains over thousands and captains over fifties, and will set them to car his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.*" (This describes the expence and luxury as well as the oppression of Kings) "*and he will take your fields and your vineyards and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give them to his officers and to his servants.*" (By which we see that bribery, corruption, and favouritism, are the standing vices of Kings.) "*And he will take the tenth of your men servants, and your maid servants, and your goodliest young men and your asses, and put them to his work: and he will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants, and ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen, AND THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR YOU IN THAT DAY*". This accounts for the continuation of Monarchy; neither do the characters of the few good Kings which have lived since, either sanctify the title, or blot out the sinfulness of the origin; the high encomium [19] given of David takes no notice of him *officially as a King, but only as a Man after God's own heart.* "*Nevertheless the People refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said nay but we will have a King over us, that we may be like all the nations, and that our King may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.*" Samuel continued to reason with them but to no purpose, he set before them their ingratitude but all would not avail, and seeing them fully bent on their folly, he cried out "*I will call unto the Lord and he shall send thunder and rain* (which then was a

punishment being in the time of wheat harvest) *that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, IN ASKING YOU A KING. So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the People greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the People said unto Samuel pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God that we die not, for WE HAVE ADDED UNTO OUR SINS THIS EVIL. TO ASK A KING*". These portions of scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered his protest against monarchical government is true, or the scripture is false. And a man hath good [20] reason to believe that there is as much of kingcraft, as priest-craft, in withholding the scripture from the Public in Popish countries. For Monarchy in every instance is the Popery of Government.

To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary succession; and as the first is a degradation and lessening of ourselves, so the second, claimed as a matter of right, is an insult and an imposition on posterity. For all men being originally equals, no *one* by *birth* could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others for ever, and tho' himself might deserve *some* decent degree of honours of his cotemporaries, yet his descendants might be far too unworthy to inherit them. One of the strongest *natural* proofs of the folly of hereditary right in Kings, is, that nature disapproves it, otherwise she would not so frequently turn it into ridicule by giving mankind an *Ass for a Lion*.

Secondly, as no man at first could possess any other public honours than were bestowed upon him, so the givers of those honours could have no power to give away the right of posterity, and tho' they might say "we choose you for *our* head" they could not without [21] manifest injustice to their children say "that your children and your children's children shall reign over *ours* for ever. Because such an unwise, unjust, unnatural compact might, (perhaps) in the next succession put them under the government of a rogue or a fool. Most wise men in their private sentiments have ever treated hereditary right with contempt; yet it is one of those evils, which when once established is not easily removed; many submit from fear, others from superstition, and the more powerful part shares with the King the plunder of the rest."

This is supposing the present race of Kings in the World to have had an honorable origin: whereas it is more than probable, that could we take off the dark covering of antiquity and trace them to their first rise, that we should find the first of them nothing better than the principal Russian of some restless Gang, whose savage manners or preeminence in subtilty obtained him the title of chief among Plunderers: and who by increasing in power and extending his depredations, overawed the quiet and defenceless to purchase their safety by frequent contributions. Yet his electors could have no idea of giving hereditary right to his descendants, because [22] such a perpetual exclusion of themselves was incompatible with the free and unrestrained principles they possessed to live by. Wherefore, hereditary succession in the early ages of Monarchy could not take place as a matter of claim, but as something casual or complimentary; but as few or no records were extant in those days, and traditionary history stuff'd with fables, it was very easy after the lapse of a few generations, to trump up some superstitious tale conveniently timed, Mahomet like, to cram hereditary right down the throats of the vulgar. Perhaps the disorders which threatened, or seemed to threaten, on the decease of a leader and the choice of a new one (for elections among ruffians could not be very orderly) induced many at first to favour hereditary pretensions; by which means it happened, as it hath happened since, that what at first was submitted to as a convenience was afterwards claimed as a right.

England since the conquest hath known some few good monarchs, but groaned beneath a much larger number of bad ones: yet no man in his senses can say that their claim under William the Conqueror is a very honourable one. A French Bastard [23] landing with an armed Banditti and establishing himself King of England against the consent of the natives,

is in plain terms a very paltry rascally original.—It certainly hath no divinity in it. However it is needless to spend much time in exposing the folly of hereditary right, if there are any so weak as to believe it, let them promiscuously worship the Ass and Lion and welcome. I shall neither copy their humility nor disturb their devotion.

Yet I should be glad to ask how they suppose Kings came at first? the question admits but of three answers, viz. either by lot, by election or by usurpation. If the first King was taken by lot, it establishes a precedent for the next, which excludes hereditary succession. Saul was by lot yet the succession was not hereditary, neither does it appear from that transaction there was any intention it ever should. If the first King of any country was by election that likewise establishes a precedent for the next; for to say that the *right* of all future generations is taken away by the act of the first Electors in their choice not only of a King, but of a family of Kings for ever, hath no parallel in or out of scripture but the doctrine [24] of original sin, which supposes the free-will of all men lost in Adam: and from such comparison, and it will admit of no other, hereditary succession can derive no glory. For as in Adam all sinned, and as in the first Electors all men obeyed; as in the one all mankind were subjected to Satan, and in the other to Sovereignty; as our innocence was lost in the first, and our authority in the last; and as both disable us from reassuming some former state and privilege, it unanswerably follows that original sin and hereditary succession are parallels. Dishonorable rank! inglorious connection! yet the most subtile sophist cannot produce a juster simile.

As to usurpation no man will be so hardy as to defend it; and that William the conqueror was a usurper is a fact not to be contradicted. The plain truth is, that the antiquity of English monarchy will not bear looking into.

But it is not so much the absurdity as the evil of hereditary succession which concerns Mankind. Did it ensure a race of good and wise men it would have the seal of divine authority, but as it opens a door to the *foolish*, the *wicked*, and the *improper*, it hath [25] in it the nature of oppression. Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent—selected from the rest of Mankind their minds are easily poisoned by importance; and the World they act in differs so materially from the World at large, that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interests, and when they succeed to the government are frequently the most ignorant and unfit of any throughout the dominions.

Another evil which attends hereditary succession, is, that the throne is subject to be possessed by a minor at any age; all which time the Regency acting under the cover of a King have every opportunity and inducement to betray their trust. The same national misfortune happens when a King worn out with age and infirmity enters the last stage of human weakness. In both these cases the Public becomes a prey to every miscreant, who can tamper successfully with the follies either of age or infancy

The most plausible plea which hath ever been offered in favour of hereditary succession, is, that it preserves a Nation from civil wars; [26] and were this true, it would be weighty; whereas it is the most barefaced falsity ever imposed upon mankind. The whole history of England disowns the fact. Thirty Kings and two minors have reigned in that distracted kingdom since the conquest, in which time there have been (including the Revolution) no less than eight civil wars and nineteen Rebellions. Wherefore, instead of making for peace, it makes against it, and destroys the very foundation it seems to stand on.

The contest for monarchy and succession between the houses of York and Lancaster laid England in a scene of blood for many years. Twelve pitched battles besides skirmishes and sieges were fought between Henry and Edward. Twice was Henry prisoner to Edward, who in his turn was prisoner to Henry. And so uncertain is the fate of war and the temper of a Nation, when nothing but personal matters are the ground of a quarrel, that Henry was taken

in triumph from a prison to a palace, and Edward obliged to fly from a palace to a foreign land: Yet as sudden transitions of temper are seldom lasting, Henry in his turn was driven from the throne and Edward [27] recalled to succeed him. The parliament always following the strongest side.

This contest began in the reign of Henry the sixth and was not entirely extinguished till Henry the seventh, in whom the families were united. Including a period of 67 years, viz. from 1422 to 1489.

In short, monarchy and succession have laid (not this or that kingdom only) but the World in blood and ashes. 'Tis a form of government which the word of God bears testimony against, and blood will attend it.

If we enquire into the business of a King we shall find that in some countries they have none; and after sauntering away their lives without pleasure to themselves or advantage to the Nation, withdraw from the scene and leave their successors to tread the same idle round. In absolute monarchies the whole weight of business civil and military lies on the King; the children of Israel in their request for a King urged this plea "that he may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles." But in countries where he is neither a judge nor a general as in England, a man would be puzzled to know what is his business.

[28]

The nearer any government approaches to a Republic the less business there is for a King. It is somewhat difficult to find a proper name for the government of England. Sir William Meredith calls it a Republic; but in its present state it is unworthy of the name, because the corrupt influence of the Crown by having all the places in its disposal, hath so effectually swallowed up the the power, and eaten out the virtue of the House of Commons (the Republican part in the constitution) that the government of England is nearly as monarchical as that of France or Spain. Men fall out with names without understanding them. For 'tis the republican and not the monarchical part of the constitution of England which English men glory in, viz. the liberty of choosing an House of Commons from out of their own body—and it is easy to see that when Republican virtue fails, slavery ensues. Why is the constitution of England sickly? but because monarchy hath poisoned the Republic; the Crown hath engrossed the Commons.

In England a King hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms, is to impoverish the [29] Nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society and in the sight of God, than all the crowned Russians that ever lived.

THOUGHTS, on the present STATE of AMERICAN AFFAIRS.↩

IN the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense: and have no other preliminaries to settle with the Reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves: that he will put *on* or rather that he will not put *off* the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been [30] ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms as the last resource decide the contest: the appeal was the choice of the King, and the Continent has accepted the challenge.

It hath been reported of the late Mr. Pelham (who tho' an able minister was not without his faults) that on his being attacked in the House of Commons on the score that his measures were only of a temporary kind, replied "*they will last my time.*" Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the Colonies in the present contest, the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.

The Sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a City, a County, a Province or a Kingdom; but of a Continent—of at least one eight part of the habitable Globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by the proceedings now. Now is the the seed time of continental union, saith, and honour. The least fracture now, will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the [31] wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new aera for politics is struck—a new method of thinking hath arisen. All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the 19th of April, *i. e.* to the commencement of hostilities, are like the almanacks of the last year; which tho proper then, are superceded and useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great Britain; the only difference between the parties, was the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it hath so far happened that the first hath failed, and the second hath withdrawn her influence.

As much hath been said of the advantages of reconciliation, which like an agreeable dream, hath passed away and left us as we were, it is but right, that we should examine the contrary side of the argument, and enquire into some of the many material injuries which these Colonies sustain, and always will sustain, by being connected with, and dependant on Great Britain. To examine [32] that connection and dependance on the principles of nature and common sense, to see what we have to trust to if separated, and what we are to expect if dependant.

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America hath flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, that the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness and will always have the same effect—Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument:—we may as well assert that because a child hath thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true, for I answer, roundly, that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessaries

of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.

But she has protected us says some. That she hath engrossed us is true, and defended the Continent at our expence as well as her [33] own is admitted; and she would have defended Turkey from the same motive viz. the sake of trade and dominion.

Alas! we have been long led away by ancient prejudices and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted the protection of Great Britain, without considering, that her motive was *interest* not *attachment*; that she did not protect us from *our enemies* on *our account*, but from *her enemies* on *her own account*, from those who had no quarrel with us on any *other account*, and who will always be our enemies on the *same account*. Let Britain wave her pretensions to the continent, or the continent throw off the dependance, and we should be at peace with France and Spain were they at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover last war ought to warn us against connections.

It hath lately been asserted in parliament, that the colonies have no relation to each other but through the Parent Country, *i. e.* that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys and so on for the rest, are sister colonies by the way of England; this is certainly a very round-about way of proving relationship, but it is the nearest and only true way of proving enemyship, [34] if I may so call it. France and Spain never were, nor perhaps ever will be our enemies as *Americans* but as our being the *subjects of Great Britain*.

But Britain is the parent country says some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore the assertion if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase, *parent* or *mother country*, hath been jesuitically adopted by the King and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe and not England is the parent country of America. This new World hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from *every part* of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still.

In this extensive quarter of the Globe, we [35] forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.

It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudice as we enlarge our acquaintance with the World. A man born in any town in England divided into parishes, will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of *neighbour*: if he meet him but a few miles from home, he drops the narrow idea of a street, and salutes him by the name of *townsman*: if he travel out of the country and meet him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town and calls him *countryman*. *i. e.* *county-man*: but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France, or any other part of *Europe*, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of *Englishmen*. And by a just panty of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America, or any other quarter of the Globe, are *countrymen*; for England, Holland, Germany, [36] or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in the same places on the larger scale, which the divisions of street, town, and county do on the smaller ones; Distinctions too limited for Continental minds. Not one third of the inhabitants, even of this province, are of English descent. Wherefore, I reprobate the phrase of parent or mother country applied to England only, as being false, selfish, narrow and ungenerous.

But admitting, that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing. Britain being now an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title: and to say that reconciliation is our duty, is truly farcical. The first king of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was a Frenchman, and half the Peers of England are descendants from the same country; wherefore, by the same method of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.

Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the Colonies, that in conjunction, they might bid defiance to the world: But this is mere presumption, the state of war is uncertain, neither do the expressions [37] mean any thing, for this Continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants, to support the British Arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Besides, what have we to do with setting the world at defiance. Our plan is commerce, and that well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe, because it is the interest of all Europe to have America a *free port*. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver will secure her from invaders.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation, to shew, a single advantage that this Continent can reap, by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages we sustain by that connection, are without number, and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance: Because any submission to, or dependance on Great Britain, tends directly [38] to involve this Continent in European wars and quarrels. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no political connection with any part of it. 'Tis the true interest of America, to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do, while by her dependance on Britain, she is made the make-weight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with Kingdoms, to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, *because, of her connection with Britain*. The next war may not turn out like the last, and should it not, the advocates for reconciliation now, will be wishing for separation then, because neutrality in that case, would be a safer convoy than a man of war. Every thing that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one over the other, was never the design of Heaven. The time likewise at which the Continent [39] was discovered, adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled encreases the force of it.—The Reformation was preceded by the discovery of America; As if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.

The authority of Great Britain over this Continent is a form of government which sooner or later must have an end: And a serious mind can draw no true pleasure by looking forward, under the painful and positive conviction, that what he calls "the present constitution," is merely temporary. As parents, we can have no joy, knowing that *this government* is not sufficiently lasting to ensure any thing which we may bequeath to posterity: And by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to discover the line of our duty rightly, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect, which a few present fears and prejudices

conceal from our sight.

[40]

Though I would carefully avoid giving unnecessary offence, yet I am inclined to believe, that all those who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation, may be included within the following descriptions. Interested men who are not to be trusted, weak men who *cannot* see, prejudiced men who *will not* see, and a certain set of moderate men who think better of the European world than it deserves; and this last class, by an ill judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this continent, than all the other three.

It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of present sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently brought to *their* doors to make *them* feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed. But let our imaginations transport us for a few moments to Boston; that seat of wretchedness will teach us wisdom, and instruct us for ever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The inhabitants of that unfortunate city who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence, have now no other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg. Endangered by the fire of their friends if [41] they continue within the city, and plundered by government if they leave it. In their present condition they are prisoners without the hope of redemption, and in a general attack for their relief, they would be exposed to the fury of both armies.

Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offences of Britain, and still hoping for the best are apt to call out. "*Come, come, we shall be friends again for all this.*" But examine the passions and feelings of mankind: Bring the doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell me, whether you can hereafter love, honour, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? if you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bringing ruin upon posterity. Your future connection with Britain whom you can neither love nor honour, will be forced and unnatural, and being formed only on the plan of present convenience, will in a little time, fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say, you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, Hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your [42] wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and still can shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover, and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which, we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. 'Tis not in the power of England or of Europe to conquer America, if she doth not conquer herself by *delay* and *timidity*. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected, the whole continent [43] will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man doth not deserve, be he, who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful.

'Tis repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose, that this continent can long remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain doth not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot at this time, compass a plan, short of separation, which can promise the continent even a year's

security. Reconciliation is *now* a fallacious dream. Nature hath deserted the connection, And Art cannot supply her place. For as Milton wisely expresses "never can true reconcilment grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."

Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and hath tended to convince us that nothing flatters vanity or confirms obstinacy in Kings more than repeated petitioning—and nothing hath contributed more, than that very measure, to make the Kings of Europe absolute. Witness Denmark [44] and Sweden. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for god's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

To say, they will never attempt it again is idle and visionary, we thought so at the repeal of the stamp-act, yet a year or two undeceived us; as well may we suppose that nations which have been once defeated will never renew the quarrel.

As to government matters 'tis not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice: The business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power so distant from us, and so very ignorant of us; for if they cannot conquer us, they cannot govern us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which when obtained requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness—There was a time when it [45] was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for government to take under their care; but there is something very absurd, in supposing a Continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England and America with respect to each other reverses the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself.

I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of Separation and independance; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that 'tis the true interest of this continent to be so; that every thing short of *that* is mere patchwork, that it can afford no lasting felicity,—that it is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back at a time, when, a little more, a little farther, would have rendered this continent the glory of the earth.

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As Britain hath not manifested the least inclination towards a compromise, we may be assured that no terms can be obtained worthy the acceptance of the continent, or any ways equal to the expence of blood and treasure we have been already put to.

The object contended for, ought always to bear some just proportion to the expence. The removal of North, or the whole detestable junto, is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A temporary stoppage of trade was an inconvenience, which would have sufficiently ballanced the repeal of all the acts complained of, had such repeals been obtained; but if the whole Continent must take up arms, if every man must be a soldier, 'tis scarcely worth our while to fight against a contemptible ministry only. Dearly, dearly, do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we sight for; for in a just estimation, 'tis as great a folly to pay a Bunker-hill price for law as for land. As I have always considered the independancy of this Continent, as an event which sooner or later must arrive, so from the late rapid progress of the Continent to maturity, the event could not be far of: Wherefore, on the breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth [47] the while to have disputed a matter,

which time would have finally redressed, unless we meant to be in earnest: otherwise it is like wasting an estate on a suit at law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant, whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer wisher for reconciliation than myself, before the fatal 19th of April 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen tempered Pharoah of England for ever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

But admitting that matters were now made up, what would be the event? I answer, the ruin of the Continent. And that for several reasons.

First. The powers of governing still remaining in the hands of the King, he will have a negative over the whole legislation of this Continent: And as he hath shewn himself such an inveterate enemy to liberty, and discovered such a thirst for arbitrary power; Is he, or is he not, a proper man to say to these Colonies, *you shall make no laws but [48] what I please.*" And is there any inhabitant in America so ignorant, as not to know, that according to what is called the *present constitution*, that this Continent can make no laws but what the King gives leave to; and is there any man so unwise, as not to see, that (considering what has happened) he will suffer no laws to be made here, but such as suit *his* purpose. We may be as effectually enslaved by the want of laws in America, as by submitting to laws made for us in England. After matters are made up (as it is called) can there be any doubt, but the whole power of the crown will be exerted to keep this Continent as low and humble as possible? Instead of going forward, we shall go backward, or be perpetually quarrelling or ridiculously petitioning.— We are already greater than the King wishes us to be, and will he not hereafter endeavour to make us less. To bring the matter to one point, Is the power who is jealous of our prosperity, a proper power to govern us? Whoever says *No* to this question is an *Independant*, for independancy means no more than whether we shall make our own laws, or, whether the King the greatest enemy this continent hath, or can [49] have, shall tell us "*there shall be no laws but such as I like.*"

But the King you'll say hath a negative in England; the people there can make no laws without his consent. In point of right and good order, there is something very ridiculous, that a youth of twenty-one (which hath often happened) shall say to six millions of people older and wiser than himself, I forbid this or that act of yours to be law." But in this place I decline this sort of reply, tho' I will never cease to expose the absurdity of it, and only answer, that England being the King's residence, and America not so, makes quite another case. The King's negative here is ten times more dangerous and fatal than it can be in England, for *there* he will scarcely refuse his consent to a bill for putting England into as strong a state of defence as possible, and here he would never suffer such a bill to be passed.

America is only a secondary object in the system of British politics, England consults the good of *this* country, no farther, than it answers her *own* purpose. Wherefore her own interest leads her to suppress the growth of *ours* in every [50] case which doth not promote *her* advantage, or in the least interferes with it. A pretty state we should soon be in, under such a second-hand government, considering what has happened! Men do not change from enemies to friends by the alteration of a name: And in order to shew that reconciliation *now* is a dangerous doctrine, I affirm, *that it would be policy in the King at this time, to repeal the acts for the sake of reinstating himself in the government of the provinces;* in order that HE MAY ACCOMPLISH BY CRAFT AND SUBTILTY, IN THE LONG RUN, WHAT HE CANNOT DO BY FORCE AND VIOLENCE IN THE SHORT ONE. Reconciliation and ruin are nearly related.

Secondly.—That as even the best terms which we can expect to obtain, can amount to no more than a temporary expedient, or a kind of government by guardianship, which can last no longer than till the colonies come of age, so the general face and state of things in the interim will be unsettled and unpromising: Emigrants of property will not choose to come to a country whose form of government hangs but by a thread, and who is every day tottering on the brink of commotion and disturbance: And numbers of [51] the present inhabitants would lay hold of the interval to dispose of their effects, and quit the continent.

But the most powerful of all arguments is, that nothing but independance i. e. a continental form of government, can keep the peace of the continent and preserve it inviolate from civil wars. I dread the event of a reconciliation with Britain *now*, as it is more than probable, that it will be followed by a revolt some where or other, the consequences of which may be far more fatal than all the malice of Britain.

Thousands are already ruined by British barbarity; (thousands more will probably suffer the same fate;) Those men have other feelings than us who have nothing suffered. All they *now* possess is liberty, what they before enjoyed is sacrificed to its service, and having nothing more to lose, they disdain submission. Besides, the general temper of the colonies towards, a British government, will be like that of a youth, who is nearly out of his time; they will care very little about her: And a government which cannot preserve the peace, is no government at all, and in that case we pay our money [52] for nothing; and pray what is it that Britain can do, whose power will be wholly on paper, should a civil tumult break out the very day after reconciliation? I have heard some men say, many of whom I believe spoke without thinking, that they dreaded an independance, fearing that it would produce civil wars: It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct, and that is the case here; for there are ten times more to dread from a patched up connection, than from independance. I make the sufferers case my own, and I protest, that were I driven from house and home, my property destroyed, and my circumstances ruined, that as a man sensible of injuries, I could never relish the doctrine of reconciliation, or consider myself bound thereby.

The Colonies hath manifested such a spirit of good order and obedience to Continental government, as is sufficient to make every reasonable person easy and happy on that head. No man can assign the least pretence for his fears, on any other grounds, than such as are truly childish and ridiculous, viz. that one Colony will be striving for superiority over another.

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Where there are no distinctions, there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation. The republics of Europe are all, (and we may say always) in peace. Holland and Swisserland, are without wars, foreign or domestic: Monarchical governments, it is true, are never long at rest; the Crown itself is a temptation to enterprising ruffians at *home*; and that degree of pride and insolence ever attendant on regal authority, swells into a rupture with foreign powers, in instances, where a republican government by being formed on more natural principles, would negotiate the mistake.

If there is any true cause for fear respecting independance, it is because no plan is yet laid down. Men do not see their way out—Wherefore, as an opening into that business I offer the following hints; at the same time modestly affirming, that I have no other opinion of them myself, than that they may be the means of giving rise to something better. Could the stragglng thoughts of individuals be collected, they would frequently form materials for wise and able men to improve into useful matter.

[54]

LET the assemblies be annual with a president only. The representation more equal. Their business wholly domestic, and subject to the authority of a continental congress.

Let each colony be divided into six, eight, or ten, convenient districts, each district to send a proper number of Delegates to Congress, so that each Colony send at least thirty. The whole number in Congress will be at least 390. Each Congress to sit and to choose a president by the following method. When the Delegates are met, let a colony be taken from the whole thirteen Colonies by lot, after which let the whole Congress choose (by ballot) a president from out of the Delegates of *that* province. In the next Congress let a Colony be taken by lot from twelve only, omitting that Colony from which the president was taken in the former Congress, and so proceeding on till the whole thirteen shall have had their proper rotation. And in order that nothing may pass into a law but what is satisfactorily just, not less than three fifths of the Congress to be called a majority.—He that will promote discord under a government so equally formed as this, would have joined Lucifer in his revolt.

[55]

But as there is a peculiar delicacy from whom, or in what manner, this business must first arise, and as it seems most agreeable and consistent, that it should come from some intermediate body between the governed and the governors, that is, between the Congress and the People, let a CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE be held in the following manner, and for the following purpose.

A committee of twenty six members of Congress, viz. Two for each Colony. Two members from each house of Assembly, or Provincial convention; and five Representatives of the people at large, to be chosen in the capital city or town of each province, for ■ and in behalf of the whole province, by as many qualified voters as shall think proper to attend from all parts of the province for that purpose; or if more convenient, the Representatives may be chosen in two or three of the most populous parts thereof. In this CONFERENCE thus assembled, will be united the two grand principles of business, *knowlege* and *power*. The members of Congress, Assemblies, or Conventions, by having had experience in national concerns, will be able and useful [56] counsellors, and the whole, by being impowered by the people, will have a truly legal authority.

The conferring Members being met, let their business be to frame a CONTINENTAL CHARTER, or Charter of the United Colonies; (answering, to what is called the Magna Charta of England) fixing the number and manner of choosing Members of Congress, Members, of Assembly, with their date of sitting, and drawing the line of business and jurisdiction between them: (Always remembering, that our strength and happiness, is Continental, not Provincial.) Securing freedom and property to all men, and above all things, the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; with such other matters as is necessary for a Charter to contain. Immediately after which, the said conference to dissolve, and the bodies which shall be chosen conformable to the said Charter, to be the Legislators and Governors of this Continent, for the time being: Whose peace and happiness, may God preserve. AMEN.

Should any body of men be hereafter [57] delegated for this or some similar purpose, I offer them the following extracts from that wise observer on governments DRAGONETTI.

"The Science says he of the Politician consists in fixing the true point of happiness and freedom. Those men would deserve the gratitude of Ages, who should discover a mode of government that contained the greatest sum of individual happiness, with the least national expence."

DRAGONETTI on Virtue and Rewards

But where says some is the King of America? I'll tell you Friend, he reigns above; and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain. Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honours, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the Charter; let it be brought forth placed on the Divine Law, the Word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the World may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the King is Law, so in free Countries the Law *ought* to be King; and there ought to be no other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, [58] let the Crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished, and scattered among the People whose right it is.

A government of our own is our natural right: and when a man seriously reflects on the precariousness of human affairs, he will become convinced, that it is infinitely wiser and safer, to form a constitution of our own, in a cool deliberate manner, while we have it in our power, than to trust such an interesting event to time and chance. If we omit it now, some [1] Massanello may hereafter arise, who laying hold of popular disquietudes, may collect together the desperate and the discontented, and by assuming to themselves the powers of government, may sweep away the liberties of the Continent like a deluge. Should the government of America return again into the hands of Britain, the tottering situation of things, will be a temptation for some desperate adventurer to try his fortune; and in such a case, what relief can Britain give? Ere she could hear the news, the fatal business might be done; and ourselves suffering [59] like the wretched Britons under the oppression of the Conqueror. Ye that oppose independance now, ye know not what ye do: ye are opening a door to eternal tyranny, by keeping vacant the seat of government. There are thousands, and tens of thousands, who would think it glorious to expel from the Continent, that barbarous and hellish power, which have stirred up the Indians and the Negroes to destroy us, the cruelty hath a double guilt, it is dealing brutally by us, and teacherously by them.

To talk of friendship with those in whom our reason forbids us to have faith, and our affections wounded thro' a thousand pores instruct us to detest, is madness and folly. Every day wears out the little remains of kindred between us and them, and can there be any reason to hope, that as the relationship expires, the affection will encrease, or that we shall agree better, when we have ten times more and greater concerns to quarrel over than ever?

Ye that tell us of harmony and reconciliation, can ye restore to us the time that is past? Can ye give to prostitution its former innocence? Neither can ye reconcile Britain and America. The last cord now is broken, [60] the people of England are presenting addresses against us. There are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature if she did. As well can the lover forgive the ravisher of his mistress, as the Continent forgive the murders of Britain. The Almighty hath implanted in us these unextinguishable feelings for good and wise purposes. They are the Guardians of his Image in our hearts. They distinguish us from the herd of common animals. The social compact would dissolve, and justice be extirpated the earth, or have only a casual existence were we callous to the touches of affection. The robber and the murderer would often escape unpunished, did not the injuries which our tempers sustain, provoke us into justice.

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is over-run with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the Globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her.—Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

**OF THE PRESENT ABILITY OF AMERICA, WITH SOME
MISCELLANEOUS REFLECTIONS.**

I Have never met with a man, either in England or America, who hath not confessed his opinion, that a separation between the countries, would take place, one time or other: And there is no instance, in which we have shewn less judgment; than in endeavouring to describe what we call, the ripeness or fitness of the Continent for independance.

As all men allow the measure, and vary only in their opinion of the time, let us in order to remove mistakes, take a general survey of things, and endeavour if possible, to find out the *very* time. But I need not go far, the enquiry ceases at once, for, the *time hath found us*. The general concurrence, the glorious of union all things, prove the fact.

'Tis not in numbers but in unity that our great strength lies: yet our present numbers are sufficient to repel the force of all the world. The Continent hath at this time the largest disciplined army of any [62] power under Heaven: and is just arrived at that pitch of strength, in which no single Colony is able to support itself, and the whole, when united, is able to do any thing. Our land force is more than sufficient, and as to Navy affairs, we cannot be insensible that Britain would never suffer an American Man of War to be built, while the Continent remained in her hands. Wherefore, we should be no forwarder an hundred years hence, in that branch than we are now; but the truth is, we should be less so, because the timber of the Country is every day diminishing.

Were the Continent crowded with inhabitants, her sufferings under the present circumstances would be intolerable. The more sea port Towns we had, the more should we have both to defend and to lose. Our present numbers are so happily proportioned to our wants, that no man need be idle. The diminution of trade affords an army, and the necessities of an army creates a new trade.

Debts we have none: and whatever we may contract on this account will serve as a glorious memento of our virtue. Can we [63] but leave posterity with a settled form of government, an independant constitution of it's own, the purchase at any price will be cheap. But to expend millions for the sake of getting a few vile acts repealed, and routing the present ministry only, is unworthy the charge, and is using posterity with the utmost cruelty; because it is leaving them the great work to do and a debt upon their backs from which they derive no advantage. Such a thought is unworthy a man of honour, and is the true characteristic of a narrow heart and a pedling politician.

The debt we may contract doth not deserve our regard if the work be but accomplished. No nation ought to be without a debt. A national debt is a national bond: and when it bears no interest, is in no case a grievance. Britain is oppressed with a debt of upwards of one hundred and forty millions sterling, for which she pays upwards of four millions interest. And as a compensation for her debt, she has a large navy; America is without a debt, and without a navy; but for the twentieth part of the English national debt, could have a navy as large again. The navy of England is not worth [64] at this time more than three millions and an half sterling.

No country on the globe is so happily situated, or so internally capable of raising a fleet as America. Tar, timber, iron, and cordage are her natural produce. We need go abroad for nothing. Whereas the Dutch, who make large profits by hiring out their ships of war to the Spaniards and Portuguese, are obliged to import most of the materials they use. We ought to

view the building a fleet as an article of commerce, it being the natural manufactory of this country. 'Tis the best money we can lay out. A navy when finished is worth more than it cost: And is that nice point in national policy, in which commerce and protection are united. Let us build; if we want them not, we can sell; and by that means replace our paper currency with ready gold and silver.

In point of manning a fleet, people in general run into great errors; it is not necessary that one fourth part should be sailors. The Terrible Privateer, Capt. Death, stood the hottest engagement of any ship last war, yet had not twenty sailors on board, [65] though her complement of men was upwards of two hundred. A few able and social sailors will soon instruct a sufficient number of active landmen in the common work of a ship. Wherefore, we never can be more capable to begin on maritime matters than now, while our timber is standing, our fisheries blocked up, and our sailors and shipwrights out of employ. Men of war, of seventy and eighty guns were built forty years ago in New-England, And why not the same now? Ship-building is America's greatest pride, and in which, she will in time excel the whole world. The great empires of the east are mostly inland, and consequently excluded from the possibility of rivalling her. Africa is in a state of barbarism; and no power in Europe, hath either such an extent of coast, or such an internal supply of materials. Where nature hath given the one, she has with-held the other; to America only hath she been liberal of both. The vast empire of Russia is almost shut out from the sea; wherefore, her boundless forrests, her tar, iron, and cordage are only articles of commerce.

In point of safety, ought we to be without a fleet? We are not the little people [66] now, which we were sixty years ago, at that time we might have trusted our property in the streets, or fields rather; and slept securely without locks or bolts to our doors and windows. The case now is altered, and our methods of defence, ought to improve with our increase of property. A common pirate, twelve months ago, might have come up the Delaware, and laid the city of Philadelphia under instant contribution for what sum he pleased; and the same might have happened to other places. Nay, any daring fellow in a brig of 14 or 16 guns might have robbed the whole continent, and carried off half a million of money. These are circumstances which demand our attention, and point out the necessity of naval protection.

Some perhaps will say, that after we have made it up with Britain that she will protect us. Can we be so unwise as to mean, that she shall keep a Navy in our Harbours for that purpose? Common sense will tell us, that the power which hath endeavoured to subdue us, is of all others, the most improper to defend us. Conquest may be effected under the pretence of friendship; and ourselves, after a long and brave resistance [67] be at last cheated into slavery. And if her ships are not to be admitted into our Harbours, I would ask, how is she to protect us? A Navy three or four thousand miles off can be of little use, and on sudden emergencies, none at all. Wherefore if we must hereafter protect ourselves, why not do it for ourselves? why do it for another?

The English list of ships of war, is long and formidable, but not a tenth part of them are at any one time fit for service, numbers of them not in being; yet their names are pompously continued in the list if only a plank is left of the ship: and not a fifth part of such as are fit for service, can be spared on any one station at one time. The East, and West Indies, Mediterranean, Africa, and other parts over which Britain extends her claim, make large demands upon her Navy. From a mixture of prejudice and inattention, we have contracted a false notion respecting the Navy of England, and have talked as if we should have the whole of it to encounter at once, and for that reason, supposed, that we must have one as large; which not being instantly practicable, have been made use of by a set of disguised Tories to discourage our beginning [68] thereon. Nothing can be farther from truth than this, for if America had only a twentieth part of the naval force of Britain, she would be by far an over match for her; because as we neither have, nor claim any foreign dominion, our whole force

would be employed on our own Coast, where we should, in the long run, have two to one the advantage of those who had three or four thousand miles to sail over, before they could attack us, and the same distance to return in order to refit and recruit. And although Britain by her fleet hath a check over our trade to Europe, we have as large a one over her trade to the West Indies, which, by laying in the neighbourhood of the Continent lies entirely at it's mercy.

Some method might be fallen on to keep up a naval force in time of peace, if we should not judge it necessary to support a constant Navy. If premiums were to be given to Merchants to build and employ in their service, Ships mounted with 20, 30, 40 or 50 guns (the premiums to be in proportion to the loss of bulk to the merchant) fifty or sixty of those ships, with a few guard ships on constant duty would keep up a sufficient Navy, and that without burdening [69] ourselves with the evil so loudly complained of in England, of suffering their Fleets in time of peace to lie rotting in the docks. To unite the sinews of commerce and defence is sound policy; for when our strength and our riches, play into each other's hand, we need fear no external enemy.

In almost every article of defence we abound. Hemp flourishes even to rankness, so that we need not want cordage. Our iron small arms equal to any in the World. Cannon we can cast at pleasure. Salt-petre and gun powder we are every day producing. Our knowledge is hourly improving. Resolution is our inherent character, and courage hath never yet forsaken us. Wherefore, what is it that want? why is it that we hesitate? From Britain we can expect nothing but ruin. If she is once admitted to the government of America again, this Continent will not be worth living in. Jealousies will be always arising; insurrections will be constantly happening; and who will go forth to quell them? who will venture his life to reduce his own countrymen to a foreign obedience? the difference between [70] Pennsylvania and Connecticut, respecting some unlocated lands, shews the insignificance of a British government, and fully proves, that nothing but Continental authority can regulate Continental matters.

Another reason why the present time is preferable to all others, is, that the fewer our numbers are, the more land there is yet unoccupied, which instead of being lavished by the King on his worthless dependants, may be hereafter applied, not only to the discharge of the present debt, but to the constant support of government. No Nation under heaven hath such an advantage as this.

The infant state of the Colonies, as it is called, so far from being against, is an argument in favour of independance. We are sufficiently numerous, and were we more so, we might be less united. 'Tis a matter worthy of observation, that the more a country is peopled, the smaller their armies are. In military numbers the Ancients far exceeded the Moderns: and the reason is evident, for trade being the consequence of population, men become too much absorbed thereby to attend to any thing else. [71] Commerce diminishes the spirit both of Patriotism and military defence. And history sufficiently informs us that the bravest achievements were always accomplished in the non-age of a Nation. With the encrease of commerce England hath lost it's spirit. The city of London, notwithstanding it's numbers, submits to continued insults with the patience of a coward. The more men have to lose, the less willing are they to venture. The rich are in general slaves to fear, and submit to courtly power with the trembling duplicity of a Spaniel.

Youth is the seed time of good habits as well in Nations as in individuals. It might be difficult, if not impossible to form the Continent into one Government half a century hence. The vast variety of interests occasioned by an increase of trade and population would create confusion. Colony would be against Colony. Each being able would scorn each other's assistance: and while the proud and foolish gloried in their little distinctions, the wise would lament that the union had not been formed before. Wherefore, the *present time* is the *true*

time for establishing it. The intimacy which is contracted in infancy, and the friendship [72] which is formed in misfortune, are of all others, the most lasting and unalterable. Our present union is marked with both these characters: we are young, and we have been distressed; but our concord hath withstood our troubles, and fixes a memorable A Era for posterity to glory in.

The present time likewise, is that peculiar time, which never happens to a Nation but once, *viz.* the time of forming itself into a government. Most Nations have let slip the opportunity, and by that means have been compelled to receive laws from their conquerors, instead of making laws for themselves. First they had a King, and then a form of government; whereas the articles or Charter of government should be formed first, and men delegated to execute them afterward: but from the errors of other Nations, let us learn wisdom, and lay hold of the present opportunity—*To begin government at the right end.*

When William the Conqueror subdued England, he gave them law at the point of the sword; and untill we consent that the seat of government in America be legally and authoritatively occupied; we shall be in [73] danger of having it filled by some fortunate ruffian, who may treat us in the same manner, and then, where will be our freedom? where our property?

As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government, to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government hath to do therewith: let a man throw aside that narrowness of soul, that selfishness of principle, which the niggards of all professions are so unwilling to part with, and he will be delivered of his fears on that head. Suspicion is the companion of mean souls and the bane of all good society. For myself, I fully and conscientiously believe, that it is the will of the Almighty, that there should be diversity of religious opinions among us. It affords a larger field for our Christian kindness: were we all of one way of thinking, our religious dispositions would want matter for probation: and on this liberal principle, I look on the various denominations among us, to be like children of the same family differing only in what is called their Christian names.

In page 54 I threw out a few thoughts [74] on the propriety of a Continental Charter, (for I only presume to offer hints, not plans,) and in this place I take the liberty of re-mentioning the subject, by observing, that a Charter is to be understood as a bond of solemn obligation, which the whole enters into, to support the right of every separate part, whether of religion, personal freedom, or property. A right reckoning makes long friends.

In a former page I likewise mentioned the necessity of a large and equal representation; and there is no political matter which more deserves our attention. A small number of Electors, or a small number of Representatives, are equally dangerous. But if the number of the Representatives be not only small, but unequal, the danger is increased. As an instance of this I mention the following; when the Associators petition was before the House of Assembly of Pennsylvania: twenty eight members only were present, all the Bucks County Members, being eight, voted against it, and had seven of the Chester Members done the same, this whole Province had been governed by two counties only, and this danger it is always exposed to. The unwarrantable [75] stretch likewise, which that house made in their last sitting, to gain an undue authority over the Delegates of that Province, ought to warn the People at large, how they trust power out of their own hands. A set of instructions for the Delegates were put together, which in point of sense and business would have dishonour'd a school-boy, and after being approved by a few, a very few without doors, were carried into the House, and there passed in *behalf of the whole Colony*: whereas, did the whole Colony know, with what ill-will that House hath entered on some necessary public measures, they would not hesitate a moment to think them unworthy of such a trust.

Immediate necessity makes many things convenient, which if continued would grow into oppressions. Expedience and right, are different things. When the calamities of America required a consultation, there was no method so ready, or at that time so proper, as to appoint persons from the several Houses of Assembly for that purpose; and the wisdom with which they have proceeded hath preserved this Continent from ruin. But as it is more than probable that we shall never be without a CONGRESS, [76] every well wisher to good order, must own, that the mode for choosing members of that body, deserves consideration. And I put it as a question to those, who make a study of mankind, whether *representation and election* is not too great a power for one and the same body of men to possess? When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember, that virtue is not hereditary.

It is from our enemies that we often gain excellent maxims, and are frequently surprised into reason by their mistakes, Mr. Cornwall (one of the Lords of the Treasury) treated the Petition of the New-York Assembly with contempt, because *that* House, he said, consisted but of twenty six members, which, trifling number he argued could not with decency be put for the whole. We thank him for his involuntary honesty. [2]

TO CONCLUDE, however strange it may appear to some, of however unwilling they may be to think so, matters not, [77] but many strong and striking reasons may be given, to shew, that nothing can lettle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined declaration for Independance. Some of which are,

First.—It is the custom of Nations when any two are at war, for some other powers not engaged in the quarrel, to step in as Mediators and bring about the preliminaries of a Peace: but while America calls herself the Subject of Great Britain, no power however well disposed she may be, can offer her mediation. Wherefore, in our present state we may quarrel on for ever.

Secondly.—It is unreasonable to suppose, that France or Spain will give us any kind of assistance, if we mean only, to make use of that assistance for the purpose of repairing the breach, and strengthening the connection between Britain and America; because, those powers would be sufferers by the consequences.

Thirdly.—While we proress ourselves the Subjects of Britain, we must in the eye of foreign Nations be considered as Rebels. The precedent is some-what dangerous to [78] *their peace*, for men to be in arms under the name of Subjects: we on the spot can solve the paradox; but to unite resistance and subjection, requires an idea much too refined for common understanding.

Fourthly.—Were a manifesto to be published, and dispatched to foreign Courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured, and the peaceable methods we have ineffectually used for redress, declaring at the same time, that not being able any longer to live happily or safely, under the cruel disposition of the British Court, we had been driven to the necessity of breaking off all connections with her; at the same time, assuring all such Courts, of our peaceable disposition towards them, and of our desire of entering into trade with them: such a memorial would produce more good effects to this Continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain.

Under our present denomination of British Subjects, we can neither be received nor heard abroad: the custom of all Courts is against us, and will be so, until by an Independance we take rank with other Nations.

[79]

These proceedings may at first appear strange and difficult, but, like all other steps which we have already passed over, will in a little time become familiar and agreeable: and until an Independance is declared, the Continent will feel itself like a man who continues putting off some unpleasant business from day to day, yet knows it must be done, hates to set about it, wishes it over, and is continually haunted with the thoughts of it's necessity.

FINIS.

[Publisher's Statement]↩

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Endnotes [↩](#)

- [1] Thomas Anello, otherwise Massanello, a fisherman of Naples, who, after spiring up his countrymen in the public market place, against the oppressions of the Spaniards, to whom the place was then subject, prompted them to revolt, and in the space of a day became king.
- [2] Those who would fully undertand of what great consequence a large and equal Representation is to a State, should read Burgh's Political Disquisitions.