

broadside reporting the Battle of Lexington & Concord, 19 April 1775; 1775 (detail)

1775: “With Triumph crown AMERICA — Farewell England”

The Outbreak of the American Revolution: A Selection from Letters, Essays, Sermons, Newspaper Reports, Declarations, Poetry & Song, A Debate & A History

1774 _____

Sept.-Oct.: FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS meets in Philadelphia; issues a petition to the king, a bill of rights, a list of grievances, and letters to the American colonists and to the inhabitants of Great Britain. The petition is rejected.

1775 _____

9 Feb.: Parliament declares the colony of Massachusetts to be in a state of open rebellion.

April-June: Military confrontations with casualties occur between Patriots and British troops in Massachusetts and New York, initiating a state of war between the colonies and Great Britain.

May: SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS convenes in Philadelphia, issues final appeals and declarations, and creates the continental army. The Congress remains the central governing body of the colonies throughout the Revolution.

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—A NEWSPAPER DEBATE ON THE EVE OF WAR, 1774-1775—

“Massachusettensis” & “Novanglus” (Daniel Leonard & John Adams)
The Massachusetts Gazette & The Boston Gazette, December 1774–April 1775, EXCERPTS



In the four months between the first military confrontation of the Revolution in December 1774,² and the battle of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, a final newspaper debate between a Patriot and a Loyalist progressed in two Boston newspapers. The Patriot was 39-year-old John Adams, a delegate to the Second Continental Congress and later the second president of the United States. The Loyalist (misidentified for decades) was 34-year-old Daniel Leonard, like Adams a Harvard-educated lawyer, who left Boston with the British army in 1776. In twenty-nine essays with escalating animosity and alarm, the men debated the authority of Parliament to tax and legislate for the American colonies. On the eve of war, they also debated the sincerity and legitimacy of their positions, and whether rebellion, in this time, was treason.



■ MASSACHUSETTENSIS ■

Daniel Leonard

The Massachusetts Gazette & The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser

—December 26, 1774—

To the Inhabitants of the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

My dear Countrymen,—To undertake to convince a person of his error is the indispensable duty, the certain though dangerous test of friendship. He that could see his friend persevering in a fatal error without reminding him of it and striving to reclaim him, through fear that he might thereby incur his displeasure, would little deserve the sacred name himself. . . . Such delicacy is not only false, but criminal. . . .

. . . No government, however perfect in theory, is administered in perfection; the frailty of man does not admit of it. A small mistake in point of policy, often furnishes a pretense to libel government and persuade the people that their rulers are tyrants and the whole government a system of oppression. Thus the seeds of sedition are usually sown, and the people are led to sacrifice real liberty to licentiousness, which gradually ripens into rebellion and civil war. And what is still more to be lamented, the generality of the people, who are thus made the dupes of artifice and the mere stilts of ambition, are sure to be losers in the end. . . .

. . . It is an universal truth that he that would excite a rebellion, whatever professions of philanthropy he may make, when he is insinuating and worming himself into the good graces of the people, is at heart as great a tyrant as ever wielded the iron rod of oppression.

—January 16, 1775—

. . . Having got thus far safe [colonial opposition to the 1773 Tea Act], it was only taking one step more—to extricate ourselves entirely from their fangs and become independent states—that our patriots most heroically

■ NOVANGLUS ■

John Adams

The Boston Gazette

—January 23, 1775—

To the Inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay.

My Friends,—A writer under the signature of *Massachusettensis* has addressed you in a series of papers on the great national subject of the present quarrel between the British administration and the Colonies. As I have not in my possession more than one of his essays, and that is in the *Gazette* of Dec. 26, I will take the liberty, in the spirit of candor and decency, to bespeak your attention upon the same subject. . . .

This ill-fated and unsuccessful though persevering writer still hopes to change your sentiments and conduct, by which it is supposed that he means to convince you that the system of colony administration which has been pursued for these ten or twelve years past is a wise, righteous, and humane plan; that Sir Francis Bernard and Mr. Hutchinson [governors], with their connections who have been the principal instruments of it, are your best friends, and that those gentlemen in this province and in all the other colonies, who have been in opposition to it are, from ignorance, error, or from worse and baser causes, your worst enemies.

—February 20, 1775—

We are told: “It is an universal truth that he that would excite a rebellion is at heart as great a tyrant as ever wielded the iron rod of oppression.” Be it so. We are not exciting a rebellion. Opposition, nay, open, avowed resistance by arms against usurpation and lawless violence is not rebellion by the law of God or the land. Resistance to lawful authority makes rebellion. . . . Do not beg the question, Mr. Massachusettensis, and then give yourself airs of triumph. . . .

¹ Portrait of Daniel Leonard, watercolor on ivory, by an unidentified artist, ca. 1770, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; reproduced by permission. Portrait of John Adams, pastel on paper, by Benjamin Blyth, ca. 1766, Massachusetts Historical Society; reproduced by permission.

² American militiamen captured colonial weapons in the British fort at Portsmouth harbor, New Hampshire; see p. 4: *Boston Post-Boy*, 19 Dec. 1774.

resolved upon, and lately denied that Parliament had a right to make any laws whatever, that should be binding upon the colonies. There is no possible medium between absolute independence and subjection to the authority of Parliament. He must be blind indeed that cannot see our dearest interest in the latter, notwithstanding many pant after the former. Misguided men! could they once overtake their wish, they would be convinced of the madness of the pursuit.

My dear countrymen, it is of the last importance that we settle this point clearly in our minds; it will serve as a sure test, certain criterion and invariable standard to distinguish the friends from the enemies of our country, patriotism from sedition, loyalty from rebellion. To deny the supreme authority of the state is a high misdemeanor, to say no worse of it; to oppose it by force is an overt act of treason, punishable by confiscation of estate, and most ignominious death.

—April 3, 1775—

. . . Novanglus has accused me of traducing [maligned/badmouthing] the people of this province. I deny the charge. Popular demagogues always call themselves the people, and when their own measures are censured, cry out, “the people, the people are abused and insulted.” . . . He suggests that I write from sordid motives. I despise the imputation. I have written my real sentiments not to serve a party (for, as he justly observes, I have sometimes quarreled with my friends) but to serve the public. Nor would I injure my country to inherit all the treasures that avarice and ambition sigh for. Fully convinced, that our calamities were chiefly created by the leading Whigs [Patriots], and that a persevering in the same measures that gave rise to our troubles would complete our ruin, I have written freely. . . .

Do you expect to conquer in war? War is no longer a simple but an intricate science, not to be learned from books or two or three campaigns, but from long experience. You need not be told that his majesty’s generals, Gage and Haldimand, are possessed of every talent requisite to great commanders, matured by long experience in many parts of the world, and stand high in military fame . . . Alas! My friends, you have nothing to oppose to this force but a militia unused to service, impatient of command, and destitute of resources. . . .

My dear countrymen, you have before you, at your election, peace or war, happiness or misery. May the God of our forefathers direct you in the way that leads to peace and happiness before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, before the evil days come, wherein you shall say we have no pleasure in them.

MASSACHUSETTENSIS

My design [plan] in pursuing this malicious slanderer, concealed as he is under so soft and oily an appearance, through all the doublings of his tedious course, is to vindicate this Colony from his base aspersions—that strangers now among us and the impartial public may see the wicked arts which are still employed against us.

—March 13, 1775—

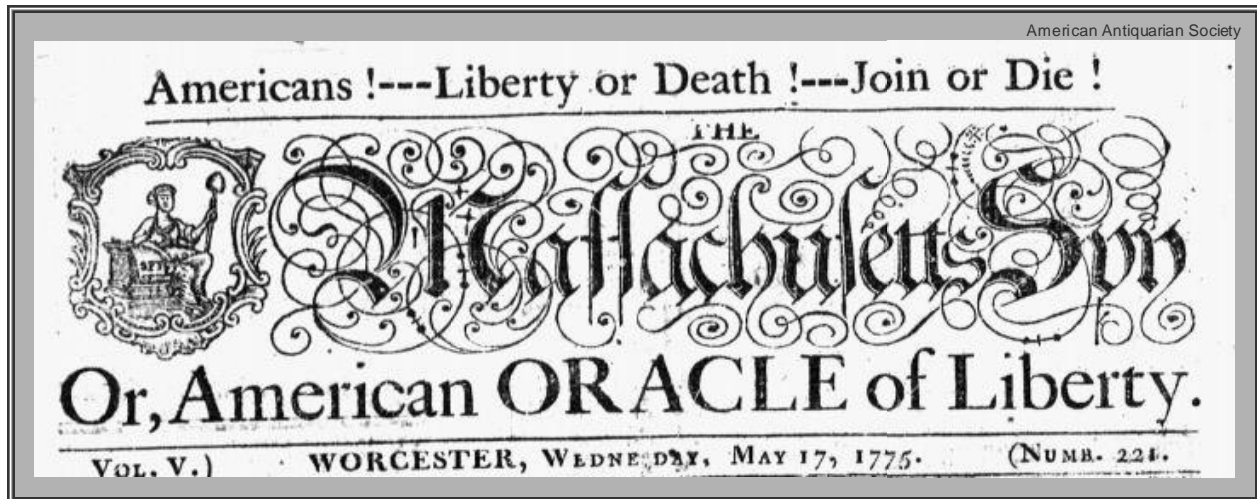
Our scribbler, more heroically still, is determined to show the world that he has courage superior to all regard to modesty, justice, or truth. Our patriots have never determined or desired to be independent states, if a voluntary cession of a right to regulate their trade can make them dependent even on Parliament; though they are clear in theory that, by the common law and the English constitution, Parliament has no authority over them. None of the patriots of this province, of the present age, have ever denied that Parliament has a right, from our voluntary cession, to make laws which shall bind the colonies, so far as their commerce extends [[i.e., not to raise revenue or control internal colonial policy].

“There is no possible medium between absolute independence and subjection to the authority of parliament.” If this is true, it may be depended upon, that all North America are as fully convinced of their independence, their absolute independence, as they are of their own existence; and as fully determined to defend it at all hazards, as Great Britain is to defend her independence against foreign nations. But it is not true. An absolute independence on parliament, in all internal concerns and cases of taxation, is very compatible with an absolute dependence on it, in all cases of external commerce. . . .

That there are any who pant after “independence,” (meaning by this word a new plan of government over all America, unconnected with the crown of England, or meaning by it an exemption from the power of Parliament to regulate trade) is as great a slander upon the province as ever was committed to writing. The patriots of this province desire nothing new; they wish only to keep their old privileges. They were for one hundred and fifty years allowed to tax themselves and govern their internal concerns as they thought best. Parliament governed their trade as they thought fit. This plan they wish may continue forever. But it is honestly confessed, rather than become subject to the absolute authority of Parliament in all cases of taxation and internal polity, they will be driven to throw off that of regulating trade.

NOVANGLUS

On April 19, 1775, two days after the publication of the last essay (by John Adams), the battles of Lexington and Concord were fought near Boston, marking for many the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Although Adams had sent several other essays to the *Boston Gazette*, they were never printed, perhaps lost.



FIRST MILITARY CONFRONTATIONS OF THE REVOLUTION as reported in Massachusetts newspapers, 1774-1775

- **The Boston Post-Boy, 19 December 1774.** In the first military confrontation of the Revolution (Dec. 14), about 400 volunteer militiamen in New Hampshire, warned by Paul Revere that British troops were marching from Boston to secure Fort William and Mary, captured the fort and secured the arms and gunpowder stored there. While shots were fired, no one was injured.

Extract of a Letter from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, dated December 16.

“We have been in Confusion here for two Days, on Account of an Express from Boston, informing that two [British] Regiments were coming to take Possession of our Fort. — By Beat of Drum 200 Men immediately assembled and went to the Castle [fort] in two Gundalows [river cargo boats], who on their Way were joined by 150 more, and demanded the surrender of the Fort, which Capt. Cochran refused, and fired three Guns, but no Lives were lost; upon which they immediately scaled the Walls, disarmed the Captain and his Men, took Possession of 97 Barrels of Powder, put it on board the Gundalows, brought it up to Town and went off with it to some Distance in the Country.

Yesterday the Town was full of Men from the Country who marched in, in Form, chose a Committee to wait on [for] the Governor, who assured them he knew of no such Design [plan] for sending Troops, Ships, &c. This Morning I hear there is a Thousand or Fifteen Hundred on their march to Town. The Governor and Council sat Yesterday on the affair and are now meeting again. — The men who came down are those of the best Property and Note in the Province [colony].”

- **Essex Gazette, 25 April 1775.** An early report of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, 19 April 1775.

Last Wednesday, the 19th of April, the Troops of his *Britannic* Majesty commenced Hostilities upon the People of the Province, attended with Circumstances of Cruelty not less brutal than what our venerable Ancestors received from the vilest Savages of the Wilderness. The Particulars relative to this interesting Event, by which we are involved in all the Horrors of a civil War, we have endeavored to collect as well as the present confused State of Affairs will admits.

On Tuesday Evening a Detachment from the Army, consisting, it is said, of 8 or 900 Men, commanded by Lieut. Col. Smith, embarked at the Bottom of the Common in Boston, on board a Number of Boats, and landed at Phips’s Farm, a little Way up Charles River, from whence they proceeded with Silence and Expedition on their Way to Concord, about 18 Miles from Boston. The People were soon alarmed and began to assemble in several Towns before Daylight in order to watch the Motion of the Troops. At Lexington, 6 Miles below Concord, a Company of Militia of about 100 men mustered near the Meeting House. The Troops came in Sight of them just before Sunrise, and



Illustration with broadside *A Poem Upon the Bloody Engagement that was fought on BUNKER'S-HILL in Charlestown, NEW-ENGLAND, on the 17th of JUNE, 1775 . . .*, Chelmsford, Massachusetts, 1775
 [The "A" in the illustration is from the title "A POEM."]

running within a few Rods of them, the Commanding Officer accosted the Militia in Words to this Effect: — “*Disperse you Rebels — Damn you, throw down your Arms and disperse.*” Upon which the Troops huzza’d and immediately one or two Officers discharged their Pistols, which were instantaneously followed by the Firing of 4 or 5 of the Soldiers, and then there seemed to be a general Discharge from the whole Body. Eight of our men were killed, and nine wounded.

In a few Minutes after this Action, the Enemy renewed their March for Concord, at which Place they destroyed several Carriages, Carriage Wheels, and about 20 Barrels of Flour, all belonging to the Province. Here about 150 Men going towards a Bridge, of which the Enemy were in Possession, the latter fired and killed 2 of our men, who then returned the Fire and obliged the Enemy to retreat back to Lexington, where they met Lord Percy with a large Reinforcement, with two pieces of Cannon. The Enemy, now having a Body of about 1800 men, made a Halt, picked up many of their Dead and took Care of their Wounded.

At Menotomy, a few of our Men attacked a Party of twelve of the Enemy (carrying Stores and Provisions to the Troops), killed one of them, wounded several, made the Rest Prisoners, and took Possession of all their Arms, Stores, Provisions, &c. without any Loss on our Side. — The Enemy, having halted one or two Hours at Lexington, found it necessary to make a second Retreat, carrying with them many of their Dead and Wounded, who they put into Chaises and on Horses that they found standing in the Road. They continued their Retreat from Lexington to Charlestown [near Boston] with great Precipitation, and, notwithstanding their Field Pieces [weapons], our People continued the Pursuit, firing at them till they got to Charlestown Neck (which they reached a little after Sunset) over which the Enemy passed, proceeded up Bunker’s Hill, and soon afterwards went into the Town, under the protection of the Somerset Man of War [warship] of 64 Guns.

In Lexington the Enemy set Fire to Deacon Joseph Loring’s House and Barn, Mrs. Mulliken’s House and Shop, and Mr. Joshua Bond’s House and Shop, which were all consumed. They also set Fire to several other Houses, but our People extinguished the Flames. They pillaged almost every House they passed by, breaking and destroying Doors, Windows, Glasses, &c and carrying off Clothing and other valuable Effects. It appeared to their Design [plan] to burn and destroy all before them, and nothing but our vigorous Pursuit prevented their infernal Purposes from being put in Execution. But the savage barbarity exercised upon the Bodies of our unfortunate Brethren who fell is

almost incredible. Not content with shooting down the unarmed, aged, and infirm, they disregarded the Cries of the Wounded, killing them without Mercy, and mangling their Bodies in the most shocking Manner.

We have the Pleasure to say that, notwithstanding the highest Provocations given by the Enemy, not one Instance of Cruelty that we have heard of was committed by our victorious Militia; but, listening to the merciful Dictates of the Christian Religion, they “breathed higher Sentiments of Humanity.”

The Consternation of the People of Charlestown, when our Enemies were entering the Town, is inexpressible. The Troops, however, behaved tolerably civil, and the People have since nearly all left the Town.

- ***The Massachusetts Spy; Or, American Oracle of Liberty, 17 May 1775.*** An early report of the Battle of Ticonderoga in upper New York, 10 May 1775, with news of other colonies' preparation for war.

W O R C E S T E R, M A Y 1 7.

Yesterday Col. James Easton of Pittsfield passed through this town on his way to the Hon[orable]. the Provincial Congress with the important intelligence of the reduction [defeat/takeover] of Ticonderoga to the American forces on the 10th instant [of this month]. A correspondent, whose veracity may be depended upon, has sent us the following account of this interesting affair, viz. [namely]:

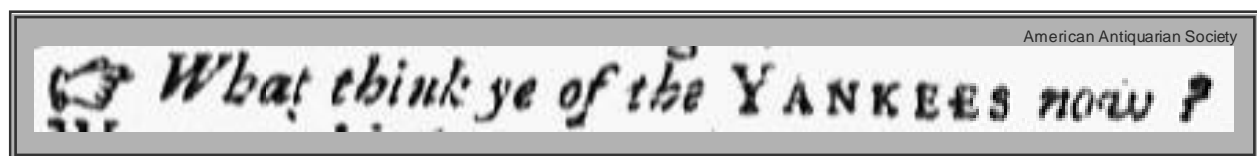
“Col. James Eason and Col. Ethan Allen, having raised 150 men for the purpose, agreeable to a plan formed in Connecticut, detached a party of about thirty men to go to Scheensborough and take into custody major Scheen and his party of regular soldiers, and with the remainder having crossed the Lake in boats in the night and landed about half a mile from said fortress, immediately marched with great silence to the gate of the fortress, and at break of day, May 10th, made the assault with great intrepidity. Our men, darting like lightning upon the guards, gave them but just time to snap two guns at our men before they took them prisoners. This was immediately followed by the reduction of the fort and its dependencies. About 40 of the King’s troops are taken prisoners (including one captain, one lieutenant and inferior officers) with a number of women and children belonging to the soldiery at this garrison. Major Scheen and the whole of his party are also taken. The prisoners are now under a guard on their way to Hartford [Connecticut], where it is probably they will arrive the latter end of this week. Those who took an account of the ordinance, warlike stores, &c. judged it amounted to no less than 3000 l. [pounds] in value. A party was immediately detached to take possession of Crown Point, where no great opposition was expected to be made. As the possession of this place affords us a key to all Canada, and may be of infinite importance to us in the future. It must rejoice the hearts of all lovers of their country to so noble an acquisition was made without the loss of one life and is certainly an encomium upon the wisdom and valor of the New Englanders, however some Tories [Loyalists] would fain insinuate that they will not fight, nor encounter danger.”

☞ *What think ye of the YANKEES now?*

We are told there are above 100 pieces of cannon, from 6 to 24 pounders, at Ticonderoga. . . .

The General Assembly of Rhode Island have voted to raise 1500 men. . . .

We hear that 4000 troops will be raised in Pennsylvania for the preservation of American liberties. The southern colonies as far as we have heard, are arming. The[y] greatly applaud our conduct in defeating the ministerial troops. The people of New York have removed 40 pieces of cannon to King’s Bridge in order to fortify that important pass.





POETRY & SONG ON THE EVE OF WAR —1775—

AMERICANS TO ARMS

[Anonymous], Sung to the Tune of BRITONS TO ARMS³

[broadside, Salem, Massachusetts, 1775]

AMERICA's Sons, yourselves prepare
For LIBERTY now calls for War.
Exert yourselves with Force and Might,
Show how AMERICANS can fight,
And only to maintain their Right — Farewell England.

Rouse, rouse, my Boys, 'tis FREEDOM that calls;
Mount, mount your Guns, prepare your Ball;
We'll fight, we'll conquer, or we'll die,
But we'll maintain our LIBERTY,
And hand it to Posterity — Farewell England.

Hark! from afar, how the Trumpet sounds,
See the bold Heroes in Blood and Wounds;
Drums a-beating, Colors flying,
Cannons roaring, brave Men dying,
Such are the bold AMERICANS — Farewell England.

AMERICA which rules over the Land,
Her valiant Sons join Hand in Hand;
United Sons of FREEDOM may
Drive all those Dogs of War away,
With Triumph crown AMERICA — Farewell England.

Why then should we be daunted at all,
Since we've engag'd in so noble a Call?
As fighting for our CHURCH⁴ and LAWS,
And dying in so just a CAUSE,
'Twill prove the fatal Overthrow — Of Old England.
*Quisquis Reipublicae sit infelix, felix esse non potest.*⁵
The CAUSE we fight for animates us high,
Namely RELIGION and dear LIBERTY.

³ Early American Imprints: text and digital image courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society with Readex/Newsbank, Doc. 42766. Verse punctuation modernized for clarity. For lyrics of "Britons to Arms," see www.rc.umd.edu/editions/warpoetry/1803/1803_2.html.

⁴ Referring to the Quebec Act that allowed French law and religion (Roman Catholicism) to be maintained in the Ohio River Valley, alarming Protestant Americans.

⁵ Cicero, *Philippics* II, 26: "... no man that is an enemy of the State can be happy." Walter C. A. Ker, trans., The Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1969.

POETRY & SONG ON THE EVE OF WAR, 1775

—AMERICAN LIBERTY—

Published anonymously by Philip Freneau, 1775, New York. EXCERPTS.

ONCE more Bellona⁶, forc'd upon the stage,
Inspires new fury, and awakes her rage,
From North to South her thund'ring trumpet spreads
Tumults, and war and death, and daring deeds.
What breast but kindles at the martial sound?
What heart but bleeds to feel its country's wound?
For thee, blest freedom, to protect thy sway,
We rush undaunted to the bloody fray;
For thee, each province arms its vig'rous host,
Content to die, e'er freedom shall be lost. . . .

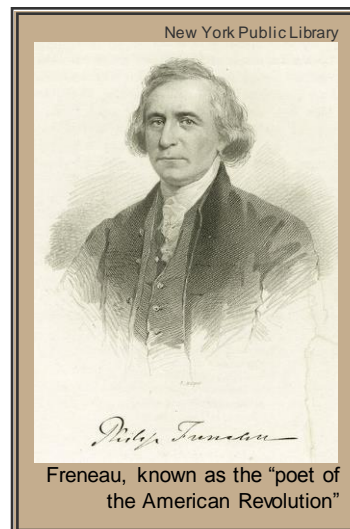
Ah, see with grief fair Massachusetts' plains,
The seat of war, and death's terrific scenes;
Where darling peace with smiling aspect stood,
Lo! the grim Soldier stalks in quest of blood:
What madness, heaven, has made Britannia frown?
Who plans our schemes to pull Columbia⁷ down?
See Boston groan beneath the strong blockade,
Her freedom vanish'd, and destroy'd her trade;
Injur'd, opprest, no tyrant could exceed
The cruel vengeance of so base a deed. . . .

Who fights to take our liberty away,
Dead-hearted fights and falls an easy prey;
The cause, the cause, most cruel to enslave,
Disheartens thousands, and unmans the brave:
Who could have thought that Britons bore a heart,
Or British troops to act so base a part?
Britons of old renown'd, can they descend
T'enslave their brethren in a foreign land?
What oath, what oath, inform us if you can,
Binds them to act below the worth of man?
Can they whom half the world admires, can they
Be advocates for vile despotic sway?
Shall they, to every shore and clime renown'd,
Enforce those acts that tyranny did found? . . .

See where from various distant climes unites
A generous council to protect our rights,
Fix'd on a base too steadfast to be mov'd,
Loving their country, by their country lov'd,
Great guardians of our freedom, we pursue
Each patriot measure as inspir'd by you,
Columbia, nor shall fame deny it owes
Past safety to the counsel you propose;
And if they do not keep Columbia free,
What will alas! become of Liberty?
Great souls grow bolder in their country's cause,
Detest enslavers, and despise their laws.

⁶ Roman goddess of war.

⁷ Columbia, America sometimes so called, from Columbus the first discoverer. [Note in original]



O Congress fam'd, accept this humble lay,
The little tribute that the muse can pay;
On you depends Columbia's future fate,
A free asylum or a wretched state.
Fall'n on disastrous times we push our plea,
Heard or not heard, and struggle to be free.
Born to contend, our lives we place at stake,
And grow immortal by the stand we make.

O you, who, far from liberty detain'd,
Wear out existence in some slavish land,
Fly thence from tyrants, and their flatt'ring throng,
And bring the fiery freeborn soul along.
Neptune for you shall smooth the hoary deep,
And awe the wild tumultuous waves to sleep;
Here vernal woods, and flow'ry meadows blow,
Luxuriant harvests in rich plenty grow,
Commerce extends as far as waves can roll,
And freedom, God-like freedom, crowns the whole. . . .

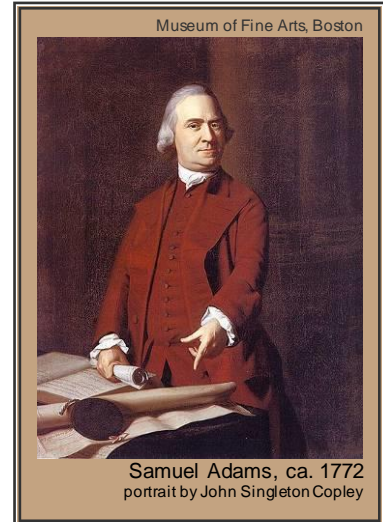
Happy some land, which all for freedom gave,
Happier the men whom their own virtues save;
Thrice happy we who long attacks have stood,
And swam to Liberty thro' seas of blood;
The time shall come when strangers rule no more,
Nor cruel mandates vex from Britain's shore:
When Commerce shall extend her short'ned wing,
And her free freights from every climate bring;
When mighty towns shall flourish free and great,
Vast their dominion, opulent their state;
When one vast cultivated region teems,
From ocean's edge to Mississippi's streams;
While each enjoys his vineyard's peaceful shade,
And even the meanest has no cause to dread;
Such is the life our foes with envy see,
Such is the godlike glory to be free.

FOUNDING FATHERS ON THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, 1775

Samuel Adams, John Adams, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin:
Delegates to the Second Continental Congress, Philadelphia, 1775

- **SAMUEL ADAMS**, delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Philadelphia, letters to his wife, Elizabeth Wells Adams, Boston. EXCERPTS.⁸

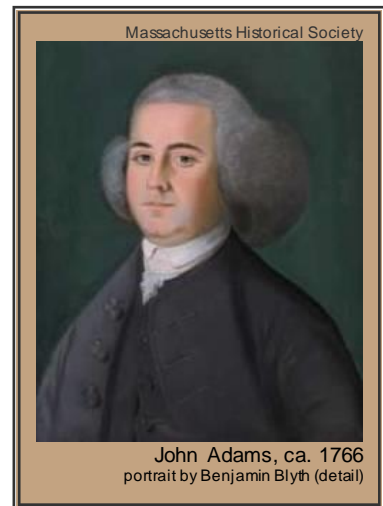
28 June 1775. Yesterday I receiv'd Letters from some of our Friends at the [Military] Camp informing me of the Engagement [battle] between the American Troops and the Rebel Army in Charlestown [near Boston]. I cannot but be greatly rejoiced at the tried Valor of our Countrymen, who by all Accounts behav'd with an Intrepidity becoming those who fought for their Liberties against the mercenary Soldiers of a Tyrant. It is painful to me to reflect upon the Terror I must suppose you were under on hearing the Noise of War so near you. Favor me, my dear, with an Account of your Apprehensions at that time, under your own hand. I pray God to cover the heads of our Countrymen in every day of Battle, and ever to protect you from Injury in these distracted Times.



20 October 1775. The Affairs of our Country are at this Moment in the most critical Situation. Every Wheel seems now to be in Motion. I am so fully satisfied in the Justice of our Cause that I can confidently as well as devoutly pray that the righteous Disposer of all things would succeed our Enterprises. If he suffers [allows] us to be defeated in any or all of them, I shall believe it to be for the most wise and gracious Purposes and shall heartily acquiece in the Divine Proposal. It is an unspeakable Consolation to an Actor upon the public Stage when, after the most careful Retrospect, he can satisfy himself that he has had in his View no private or selfish Considerations, but has ever been [guided] by the pure Motive of serving his Country and delivering it from the rapacious Hand of a Tyrant.

- **JOHN ADAMS**, delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Philadelphia, letters to his wife, Abigail Adams, Braintree (near Boston), Massachusetts. EXCERPTS.⁹

7 July 1775. Your Description of the Distresses of the worthy Inhabitants of Boston and the other Sea Port Towns is enough to melt a Heart of stone. Our Consolation must be this, my dear, that Cities may be rebuilt, and a People reduced to Poverty may acquire fresh Property: But a Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom can never be restored. Liberty once lost is lost forever. When the People once surrender their share in the Legislature, and their Right of defending the Limitations upon the Government, and of resisting every Encroachment upon them, they can never regain it.

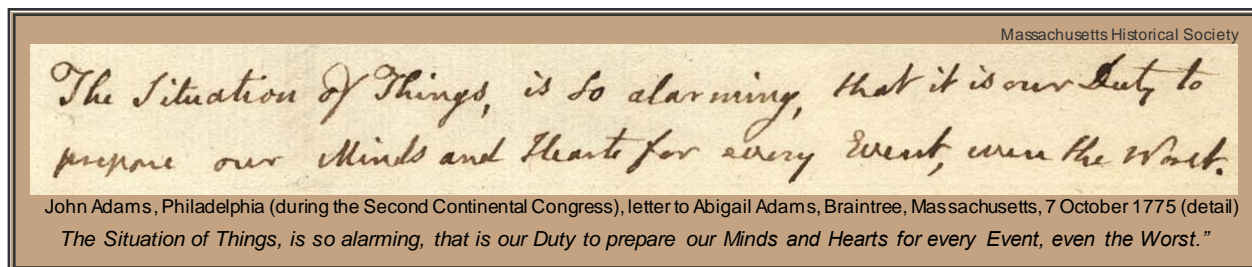


7 October 1775. The Situation of Things is so alarming that it is our Duty to prepare our Minds and Hearts for every Event, even the Worst. From my earliest Entrance into Life, I have been engaged in the public Cause of America: and from first to last I have had upon my Mind a strong Impression that Things would be wrought up to their present Crisis. I saw from the Beginning that the Controversy was of such a Nature that it never would be settled, and every day

⁸ The Writings of Samuel Adams, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing, vol. III: 1773-1777 (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1907).

⁹ The Papers of John Adams, Massachusetts Historical Society; permission pending.

convincing me more and more. This has been the source of all the Disquietude of my Life. It has lain down and rose up with me these twelve Years. The Thought that we might be driven to the sad Necessity of breaking our Connection with G. B., exclusive of the Carnage and Destruction which it was easy to see must attend the separation, always gave me a great deal of Grief. And even now, I would cheerfully retire from public life forever, renounce all Chance for Profits or Honors from the public, nay I would cheerfully contribute my little Property to obtain Peace and Liberty. — But all these must go and my Life too before I can surrender the Right of my Country to a free Constitution. I dare not consent to it. I should be the most miserable of Mortals ever after, whatever Honors or Emoluments might surround me.



- **GEORGE WASHINGTON**, delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Philadelphia, letter to his wife, Martha Washington, Mount Vernon, Virginia. EXCERPTS.¹⁰

18 June 1775. I am now set down to write to you on a subject which fills me with inexpressable concern — and this concern is greatly aggravated and Increased when I reflect on the uneasiness I know it will give you — It has been determined by Congress that the whole Army raised for the defense of the American Cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take upon me the Command of it. You may believe me my dear Patcy, when I assure you in the most solemn manner that, so far from seeking this appointment, I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with you and the Family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too far great for my Capacity and that I should enjoy more real happiness and felicity in one month with you, at home, than I have the most distant prospect of reaping abroad, if my stay was to be Seven times Seven years. But, as it has been a kind of destiny that has thrown me upon this Service, I shall hope that my undertaking of it [is] design'd to answer some good purpose — You might, and I suppose did perceive, from the Tenor of my letters that I was apprehensive I could not avoid this appointment, as I did not even pretend to intimate [suggest] when I should return — that was the case — it was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my Character to such censures as would have reflected dishonor upon myself and given pain to my friends — this I am sure could not and ought not to be pleasing to you, & must have lessen'd me considerably in my own esteem. I shall rely therefore, confidently, on that Providence which has heretofore preserv'd & been bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall — I shall feel no pain from the Toil or the danger of the Campaign — My unhappiness will flow from the uneasiness I know you will feel at being left alone — I therefore beg of you to summon your whole fortitude & Resolution and pass your time as agreeably as possible — nothing will give me so much sincere satisfaction as to hear this, and to hear it from your own Pen.



¹⁰ Courtesy of the University of Virginia Library, at gwpapers.virginia.edu/index.html.

- **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**, delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Philadelphia, letters to British friends in England.¹¹

5 July 1775. Letter to William Strahan, London. FULL TEXT.

You are a Member of Parliament, and one of that Majority which has doomed my Country to Destruction. You have begun to burn our Towns and murder our People. Look upon your Hands! They are stained with the Blood of your Relations! You and I were long Friends: You are now my Enemy, and I am, Yours,

B Franklin

7 July 1775. Letter to Jonathan Shipley, London (EXCERPTS).

I found at my arrival all America from one End of the 12 united Provinces to the other busily employed in learning the Use of Arms. The Attack upon the Country People near Boston by the Army had rous'd every Body and exasperated the whole Continent. The Tradesmen of this City were in the Field twice a day, at 5 in the Morning and Six in the Afternoon, disciplining [training] with the utmost Diligence, all being Volunteers. We have now three Battalions, a Troop of Light Horse, and a Company of Artillery, who have made surprising Progress. The same Spirit appears everywhere and the Unanimity is amazing. . . . You will have heard before this reaches you of the Defeat the Ministerial [British] Troops met with in their first *Sortie*; the several small Advantages we have since had of them, and the more considerable Affair of the 17th when after two severe Repulses they carry'd the unfinished Trenches of the Post we had just taken on a Hill near Charlestown. They suffered greatly however, and I believe are convinc'd by this time that they have Men to deal with, tho' unexperienced, and not yet well arm'd. In their way to this Action, without the least Necessity, they barbarously plundered and burnt a fine, undefended Town opposite to Boston called Charlestown, consisting of about 400 Houses, many of them elegantly built. Some sick, aged and decrepit poor Persons who could not be carried off in time perish'd in the Flames. In all our Wars, from our first settlement in America to the present time, we never received so much damage from the Indian *Savages* as in this one day from these. Perhaps Ministers¹² may think this a Means of disposing us to Reconciliation. I feel and see every where the Reverse. . . .

The Congress will send one more Petition to the King, which I suppose will be treated as the former was, and therefore will probably be the last; for tho' this may afford Britain one chance more of recovering our Affections and retaining the Connection, I think she has neither Temper nor Wisdom enough to seize the Golden Opportunity. . . .

. . . When I consider that all this Mischief is done my Country, by Englishmen and Protestant Christians, of a Nation among whom I have so many personal Friends, I am ashamed to feel any Consolation in a prospect of Revenge. I choose to draw it rather from a Confidence that we shall sooner or later obtain Reparation. I have proposed therefore to our People that they keep just Accounts and never resume the Commerce or the Union 'till Satisfaction is made. If it is refused for 20 Years, I think we shall then be able to take it with Interest.

12 Sept. 1775. Letter to David Hartley, London. EXCERPT.

With this [letter] I send you a number of Newspapers and Pamphlets by which you will see Things are become serious here. Your Nation must stop short and change its Measures, or she will lose the Colonies forever. The Burning of Towns, and firing from Men of War [warships] on defenseless Cities and Villages fill'd with Women and Children, the exciting the Indians to fall on our innocent Back Settlers and our Slaves to murder their Masters, are by no means Acts of a legitimate Government: they are of barbarous Tyranny and dissolve all Allegiance. The Insolence of your Captains of Men of War is intolerable. But we suppose they know whom they are to please.



¹¹ The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, American Philosophical Society & Yale University, Docs. 626808, 626813, 626678. Permission pending.
¹² I.e., British Prime Minister and other cabinet members; not referring to clergymen.

DECLARATIONS OF THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS ON THE EVE OF WAR, 1775

On July 5 and 6, 1775, one year before it would adopt the Declaration of Independence, the Second Continental Congress endorsed two documents to be sent to King George III — a last attempt at reconciliation known as the “Olive Branch Petition,” and an explanation of the colonies’ preparations for war. The Congress also issued a letter to the inhabitants of Great Britain, as the first congress had done the year before, and devised “rules and articles” for establishing a trained continental army.

- **“Olive Branch Petition,”** approved 5 July, sent 8 July, rejected by King George III 23 August 1775. EXCERPTS.

Most gracious Sovereign!

We, your Majesty’s faithful subjects of the Colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex, on Delaware [River], Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of these Colonies, who have deputed us to represent them in General Congress, entreat your Majesty’s gracious attention to this our humble petition. . . .

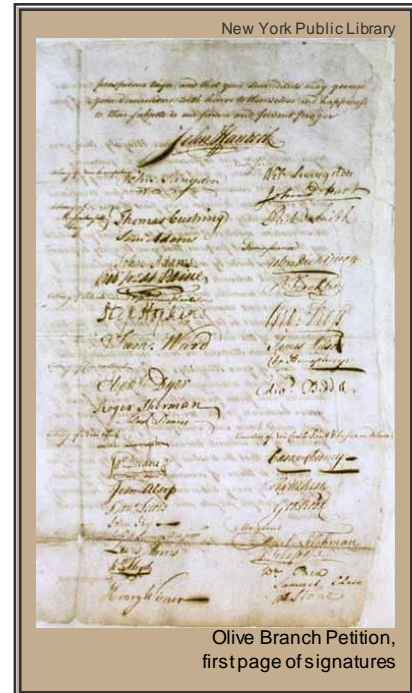
We shall decline the ungrateful task of describing the irksome variety of artifices practised by many of your Majesty’s Ministers, the delusive pretenses, fruitless terrors, and unavailing severities that have from time to time been dealt out by them in their attempts to execute this impolitic plan [to restrict the commerce and liberties of the colonies], or of tracing through a series of years past the progress of the unhappy differences between Great Britain and these Colonies that have flowed from this fatal source.

Your Majesty’s Ministers [cabinet officials], persevering in their measures, and proceeding to open hostilities for enforcing them, have compelled us to arm in our own defense, and have engaged us in a controversy so peculiarly abhorrent to the affections of your still faithful Colonists, that when we consider whom we must oppose in this contest and, if it continues, what may be the consequences, our own particular misfortunes are accounted by us only as parts of our distress.

Knowing to what violent resentments and incurable animosities civil discords are apt to exasperate and inflame the contending parties, we think ourselves required by indispensable obligations to Almighty God, to your Majesty, to our fellow subjects, and to ourselves, immediately to use all the means in our power, not incompatible with our safety, for stopping the further effusion of blood and for averting the impending calamities that threaten the British Empire. . . .

We therefore beseech your Majesty that your royal authority and influence may be graciously interposed to procure us relief from our afflicting fears and jealousies occasioned by the system before-mentioned, and to settle peace through every part of your dominions, with all humility submitting to your Majesty’s wise consideration whether it may not be expedient for facilitating those important purposes that your Majesty be pleased to direct some mode, by which the united applications of your faithful Colonists to the throne, in presence of their Common Councils, may be improved into a happy and permanent reconciliation; and that, in the mean time, measures may be taken for preventing the further destruction of the lives of your Majesty’s subjects, and that such statutes as more immediately distress any of your Majesty’s Colonies may be repealed. . . .

That your Majesty may enjoy a long and prosperous reign, and that your descendents may govern your dominions with honor to themselves and happiness to their subjects, is our sincere and fervent prayer.



Olive Branch Petition,
first page of signatures

■ **A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North America . . . Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms**, Second Continental Congress, approved 6 July 1775. EXCERPTS.

If it was possible for men who exercise their reason to believe that the Divine Author of our existence intended a part of the human race to hold an absolute property in, and an unbounded power over others, marked out by his infinite goodness and wisdom as the objects of a legal domination never rightfully resistible, however severe and oppressive, the Inhabitants of these Colonies might at least require from the Parliament of Great Britain some evidence that this dreadful authority over them has been granted to that body. But a reverence for our great Creator, principles of humanity, and the dictates of common sense must convince all those who reflect upon the subject that government was instituted to promote the welfare of mankind and ought to be administered for the attainment of that end. . . . The legislature of Great Britain, however, stimulated by an inordinate passion for a power not only unjustifiable, but which they know to be peculiarly reprobated by the very constitution of that kingdom . . . [have] attempted to effect their cruel and impolitic purpose of enslaving these Colonies by violence, and have thereby rendered it necessary for us to close with their last appeal from Reason to Arms. — Yet, however blinded that assembly may be by their intemperate rage for unlimited domination, so to slight justice and the opinion of mankind, we esteem ourselves bound by obligations of respect to the rest of the world to make known the justice of our cause. . . .

. . . [Since 1764 Parliament has] undertaken to give and grant our money without our consent, though we have ever exercised an exclusive right to dispose of our own property. Statutes have been passed

- for extending the jurisdiction of courts of Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty beyond their ancient limits
- for depriving us of the accustomed and inestimable privilege of trial by jury in cases affecting both life and property
- for suspending the legislature of one of the colonies, for interdicting all commerce to the capital of another, and for altering fundamentally the form of government established by charter and secured by acts of its own legislature solemnly confirmed by the crown
- for exempting the “murderers” of colonists from legal trial, and in effect, from punishment
- for erecting in a neighboring province, acquired by the joint arms of Great Britain and America, a despotism dangerous to our very existence,¹³ and
- for quartering soldiers upon the colonists in time of profound peace.¹⁴

It has also been resolved in Parliament that colonists charged with committing certain offenses shall be transported to England to be tried.

But why should we enumerate our injuries in detail? By one statute it is declared that Parliament can “of right make laws to bind us IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER.”¹⁵ What is to defend us against so enormous, so unlimited a power? Not a single man of those who assume it [the power] is chosen by us or is subject to our control or influence;¹⁶ but, on the contrary, they are all of them exempt from the operation of such laws; and an American revenue, if not diverted from the ostensible purposes for which it is raised, would actually lighten their own burdens in proportion as they increase ours. We saw the misery to which such despotism would reduce us.



¹³ Referring to the Quebec Act of 1774, by which Britain allowed French law and the official church of France (Roman Catholicism) to be maintained in former French Canada, including the Ohio River Valley where Americans (primarily Protestant) hoped to move and settle.

¹⁴ Formatting added.

¹⁵ Declaratory Act of 1765, passed by Parliament on the same day that the Stamp Act was repealed.

¹⁶ I.e., taxation without representation.

We for ten years incessantly and ineffectually besieged the Throne as supplicants. We reasoned, we remonstrated with Parliament in the most mild and decent language. But Administration,¹⁷ sensible that we should regard these oppressive measures as freemen ought to do, sent over fleets and armies to enforce them. The indignation of the Americans was roused, it is true, but it was the indignation of a virtuous, loyal, and affectionate people. A Congress of Delegates from the united colonies was assembled at Philadelphia on the fifth day of last September [1774]. We resolved again to offer an humble and dutiful petition to the King and also addressed our fellow subjects of Great Britain. We have pursued every temperate, every respectful measure. We have even proceeded to break off our commercial intercourse with our fellow subjects as the last peaceable admonition that our attachment to no nation upon earth should supplant our attachment to liberty — This, we flattered ourselves, was the ultimate step of the controversy: But subsequent events have shown how vain was this hope of finding moderation in our enemies. . . .

Hostilities thus commenced by the British troops¹⁸ have been since prosecuted by them without regard to faith or reputation — The inhabitants of Boston, being confined within that town by the General their Governor, and having in order to procure their dismissal entered into a treaty with him, it was stipulated that the said inhabitants, having deposited their arms with their own magistrates, should have liberty to depart, taking with them their other effects. They accordingly delivered up their arms, but in open violation of honor, in defiance of the obligation of treaties, which even savage nations esteem sacred, the Governor ordered the arms deposited as aforesaid, that they might be preserved for their owners, to be seized by a body of soldiers; detained the greatest part of the inhabitants in the town, and compelled the few who were permitted to retire to leave their most valuable effects behind.

By this perfidy [treachery] wives are separated from their husbands, children from their parents, the aged and the sick from their relations and friends, who wish to attend and comfort them; and those who have been used to live in plenty and even elegance are reduced to deplorable distress. . . .

. . . We are reduced to the alternative of choosing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers, or resistance by force. — The latter is our choice. — We have counted the cost of this contest and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery. — Honor, justice, and humanity forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors, and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them, if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them.

Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly attainable. — We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the Divine favour towards us, that his Providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operation, and possessed of the means of defending ourselves. — With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before GOD and the world, declare that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties; being with one mind resolved to die Free-men rather than to live Slaves. . . .

With an humble confidence in the mercies of the supreme and impartial Judge and Ruler of the universe, we most devoutly implore his divine goodness to conduct us happily through this great conflict, to dispose our adversaries to reconciliation on reasonable terms, and thereby to relieve the empire from the calamities of civil war.

By Order of CONGRESS,
JOHN HANCOCK, President.

¹⁷ I.e., government officials in the king's cabinet (ministry).

¹⁸ Battle of Lexington and Concord, 19 April 1775.

LOYALISTS' APPEALS ON THE EVE OF WAR, 1775

- **ISAAC HUNT**, *The Political Family: Or, A Discourse Pointing Out the Reciprocal Advantages Which Flow from an Uninterrupted Union between Great Britain and her American Colonies*, Philadelphia, 1775. EXCERPTS.

Great Britain has been a nurturing mother to her colonies. Her first embarkations to America and her first conquests there were attended with great expense without any immediate return of profit, and, at the same time, drained her of many people useful at home. Her floating castles [warships] have protected and daily do protect their trade. Royal licenses have been granted to collect money for the promotion of learning and virtue in the *colonies*, and the money was generously given by their brethren in *Great Britain*. . . And she hath lately, at a great expense of blood and millions of treasure saved them from the butchering knife of *savage*, and the unjust encroachments of ambitious enemies [French and Indian War].

On the other hand, the advantages which (as I mentioned before) she receives in the encouragement of her manufactures, the extension of her commerce, and the increase of power, by sea and land, from the trade of her industrious colonies, have already rendered her the Queen of nations; and in a short time *Great Britain* and her *American colonies*, if they continue *united*, must inevitably be the most powerful Empire in the world — the advantages of which are not only reciprocal to them but to all the Protestant and Christian states of Europe. Because the love of virtue and liberty, which is predominant and peculiar in Englishmen, will diffuse [spread] itself wherever it can have **I N F L U E N C E**.

- **THOMAS BRADBURY CHANDLER**, *What Think Ye of the Congress Now? Or, An Enquiry How Far the Americans are Bound to Abide by, and Execute the Decisions of, the Late [Continental] Congress*, New York, 1775. EXCERPTS.

What must be the consequence of a rebellious war with the Mother Country, any person of common sense, if he will take the liberty to exercise it, may easily foresee. Even a final victory would effectually ruin us, as it would necessarily introduce civil wars among ourselves and leave us open and exposed to the avarice and ambition of every maritime power in Europe or America. And till one part of this country shall have subdued the other and conquered a part of the world besides, this peaceful region must become and continue to be a theater of inconceivable misery and horror.

But that we should have any expectation of hope of being able to conquer or withstand the force of *Great Britain* is to me astonishing. I doubt not but the Americans are naturally as brave as any other people, and it is allowed [admitted] that they are not wanting in numbers. but they are without fortresses, without discipline [military training], without military stores [provisions/equipment], without money. These are deficiencies which it must be the work of an age to remove, and while they continue, it will be impossible to keep an army in the field.

- **JOSEPH GALLOWAY**, *A Candid Examination of the Mutual Claims of Great Britain and the Colonies, with a Plan of Accommodation on Constitutional Principles*, New York, 1775. EXCERPTS.

Great pains have been taken by the American demagogues to delude the unhappy people, whom they have doomed to be the dupes of their ambition, into a belief that no justice was to be obtained of



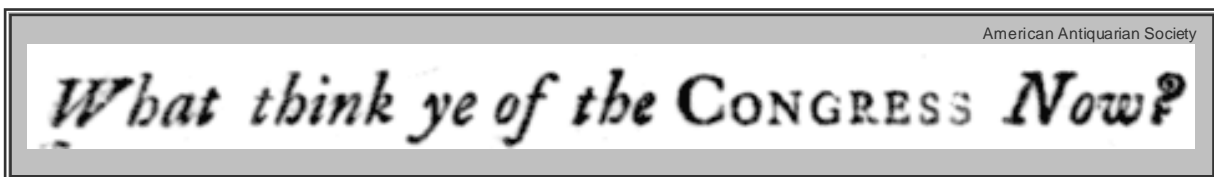
Title page illustration, Isaac Hunt, *The Political Family*, 1775

his Majesty and his houses of Parliament, and that they had refused to hear our most reasonable petitions. Hence we have seen the best of Sovereigns treated with the grossest abuse and insult, the affections of his people alienated, and many of his faithful subjects, desponding of relief, taking up arms against his authority. It is high time that this fatal delusion should be exposed, and the good people of America disabused. It is true that his Majesty and the two houses of Parliament have treated petitions from the colonies with neglect, but what were those petitions? Did they rest on a denial of the essential rights of Parliament, or did they ask for the rights of the subject in America? A retrospect of all the petitions ever presented to the throne on this subject will show that they conveyed to the royal ear nothing but the language of independence. They disowned the power of the supreme legislature, to which as subjects they owe obedience, and denied a capacity in the colonies to be represented — and upon this ground they insisted on a repeal of the laws. Here they ended. — *No prayer [appeal] nor the least intimation of a desire to be united with Britain upon a just restoration of their rights!* . . . Should a child take umbrage at the conduct of a parent, tell him that he was not his father, nor would he consider himself or act as his child *on any terms* — ought the parent to listen to such undutiful language or could he be justly censured for treating it with neglect, or even with contempt? . . .

What then is to be done? Is it too late to recover from our madness and to pursue the dictates of reason and duty? By no means. But it is high time we had changed our measures and retreated from the dangers with which we are threatened. Let us, like men who love order and government, boldly oppose the illegal edicts of the [continental] congress before it is too late — pull down the licentious tyranny they have established and dissolve their inferior committees — their instruments to trample on the sacred laws of your country and your invaluable right. This done, and peace and order restored within your several provinces, apply to your assemblies, who are your constitutional guardians and can alone procure a redress of your grievances. Entreat them in a respectful and dutiful manner to petition his Majesty and his two houses of Parliament — [Galloway presents the wording of such a petition]. . . .

. . . Do you mean to forfeit, by your rash and imprudent conduct, your right to the protection of the British state, and cut yourselves and your posterity off forever from all the privileges of Englishmen? To relinquish your trade up the Mediterranean, in the British seas, and all the British ports? and suffer [allow] the produce of your soil and the effects of your labor and industry to perish on your hands for want of a market to dispose of them? Do you mean to desert all your present blessings, & retreat from superior force into a wilderness inhabited by wild beasts and savages, destitute of the necessaries of life and incapable of obtaining them? Or do you mean to submit to the deplorable condition of a conquered people, subject to the oppression and tyranny of a military government, with British fleets directing that pittance of trade which the conqueror may allow you to enjoy, and with British forces in all your capital cities commanding your allegiance to the British state?

. . . Are you *still* resolved to surrender up your reason to the miserable sophistry and jargon of designing men, and to hazard all these direful misfortunes, rather than be united with your brethren and fellow subjects in Britain? If such be your dreadful resolutions, I, who have all that I hold dear and valuable among you, must content myself with sharing along with you the calamitous consequences of your frenzy and the miserable fate of an American — with this only consolation, that I have honestly discharged my duty in warning you of your dangers, and endeavored to pilot you into the haven of security and happiness.



—SERMONS ON THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, 1775—

"As the primary literary vehicle of the times, the sermon forms a dialectic with the people's voice and prepares more Americans for rebellion than do books and pamphlets. . . . The sermon is the bellwether of rebellion; it records the Revolution in the piety of response to daily trouble."

Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment: 1750-1820* (1994), 62-63.

■ **GOVERNMENT CORRUPTED BY VICE, AND RECOVERED BY RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Rev. Samuel Langdon (Congregational), president of Harvard; preached before the Provincial Congress, Watertown, Massachusetts, 31 May 1775. EXCERPT.

Isaiah 1:26. *And I will restore thy Judges as at the first, and thy Counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called the City of Righteousness, the faithful City.*

We have lived to see the time when British Liberty is just ready to expire — when that constitution of government which has so long been the glory and strength of the English nation is deeply undermined and ready to tumble into ruins — when America is threatened with cruel oppression, and the arm of power is stretched out against New England, and especially against this Colony, to compel us to submit to the arbitrary acts of legislators who are not our representatives and who will not themselves bear the least part of the burdens which, without mercy, they are laying upon us.

■ **A SELF-DEFENSIVE WAR LAWFUL.** Rev. John Carmichael (Presbyterian), preached before "Captain Ross's Company of Militia," Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 4 June 1775. EXCERPTS.

Luke 3:14. *And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? and he said unto them, Do violence to no man, and neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.*

. . . where our blessed Lord enjoins us, when smote on the one cheek, to turn the other also, he does not mean to forbid us to use lawful and proper means of self-preservation. But the meaning must be as the phrase is proverbial, that we should at no time discover a revengeful or unforgiving disposition, but should be ready to put up with a good deal of ill-usage before we would create disturbance — yea that we should do anything consistent with our own safety. Again, where our Lord enjoins us to love our enemies — he can't possibly mean that we should love them better than ourselves — that we should put it in the enemy's power to kill us when we had it in our power to save our own life by killing the enemy. . . . The meaning therefore must be that we do not cherish a spirit of hatred towards the enemies, and would be willing to be reconciled again — and would be desirous [if] the enemy would be convinced of his evil sentiment against us, that we might be again on friendly terms — that we can be sincere in our prayer to God to bring such a desirable event to pass.

■ **DEFENSIVE WAR IN A JUST CAUSE SINLESS.** Rev. David Jones (Baptist, later a chaplain in the Continental army), preached on a day of "continental fast," Great Valley Baptist Church, Tredyffrin, Pennsylvania, 20 July 1775. EXCERPTS.

Nehemiah 4:14. *And I looked 'and rose up, and said unto the nobles and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, be not ye afraid of them: Remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses.*

. . . There is another objection which good people make against war of any kind, viz. [namely] "That war is not agreeable to the disposition of souls newly converted to the knowledge of CHRIST: Then we long for the salvation of souls and have a tender regard for all men. Surely martial engagements [wars] do not suit a meek and loving disciple of JESUS." I confess, no objection to me is of equal importance to this. It is a solemn consideration. — Alas! alas! that ever there was occasion [cause] of even a defensive war, but occasion there has been and occasion there now is. The reason why a defensive war seems so awful to good people is they esteem it to be some kind of murder, but this is a very great mistake, for it is no more murder than a legal process against a criminal. The end is the same, the mode is different. In some cases it is the only mode left to obtain justice. . . .

We have no choice left to us

We have no choice left to us but to submit to absolute slavery and despotism or, as free men, to stand in our own defense and endeavor a noble resistance. Matters are at last brought to this deplorable extremity.

- **COURAGE IN A GOOD CAUSE, OR, THE LAWFUL AND COURAGEOUS USE OF THE SWORD.** Rev. Robert Cooper (Presbyterian), preached “to a large audience, in which were . . . several Companies of Col. Montgomery’s Battalion,” near Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, 31 August 1775. EXCERPTS.

Deuteronomy 20:1. When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them; for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

As different conduct comes to be duty at different times, so it is now the duty of all who are able to be in readiness for going out to battle, and therefore to be making every necessary preparation for that purpose. It is now as proper to be diligent in learning the business of war as at ordinary times to learn the common businesses of life. And for persons to say they are so hurried with ordinary affairs that they have no time to spare that way, is as if a man should say, though his house was on fire, he had no time to put it out. All capable of going to battle should endeavor to be furnished with the weapons of war. If the exigency of the case required it, we should now beat our plowshares into swords and our pruning hooks into spears. . . .

. . . You see, the business is not only lawful, but necessary; I may add, honorable. — Even if you die in the conflict, it will be in a good cause. . . If, then, you would escape deep guilt before God and lasting contempt among men, forward you must go, wheresoever the drum shall beat and the trumpet sound for battle. You have, in a word, no alternative, but either to venture your lives bravely or attempt to save them ignominiously, to run the hazard of dying like heroes, or be certain of living like cowards.

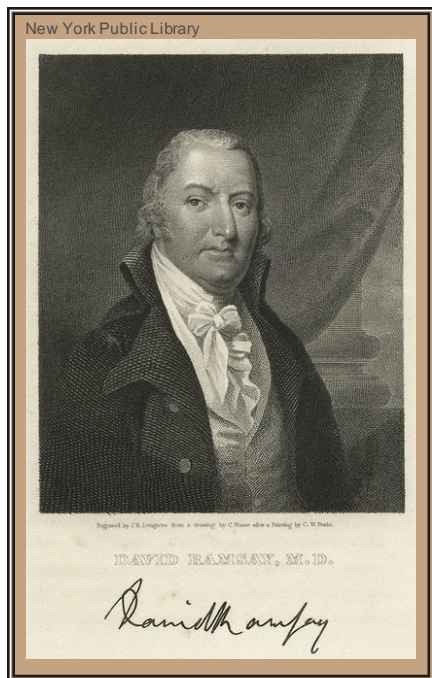
- **THE LAW OF LIBERTY: A SERMON ON AMERICAN AFFAIRS.** Rev. John J. Zubly (Presbyterian), preached at the opening of the Provincial Congress of Georgia, Savannah, September 1775. EXCERPTS.

James 2:12. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the Law of Liberty.

The Christian religion, while it commands due respect and obedience to superiors, nowhere requires a blind and unlimited obedience on the part of the subjects, nor does it vest any absolute and arbitrary power in the rulers. It is an institution for the benefit, and not for the distress of mankind. It preacheth not only “glory to GOD on high,” but also “peace on earth, and good will among men.”

The Gospel gives no higher authority to magistrates than to be “the ministers of GOD for the good of the subject.” Rom[ans] xiii. From when it must surely follow that their power is to edify and not to destroy. When they abuse their authority to distress and destroy their subjects, they deserve not to be thought ministers of GOD for good; nor is it to be supposed, when they act so contrary to the nature of their office, that they act agreeable to the will of GOD or in conformity to the doctrine of the Gospel. . . .

Never let us lose out of sight that our interest lies in a perpetual connection with our mother country. Notwithstanding the present unwise and harsh measures, there are thousands in Great Britain that think with us and wish well to the American cause and make it their own. Let us convince our enemies that the struggles of America have not their rise in a desire of independence, but from a warm regard to our common constitution, that we esteem the name of Britons as being the same with freemen. Let every step we take afford proof how greatly we esteem our mother country and that, to the wish of a perpetual connection, we prefer this only consideration, that we may be virtuous and free.



AN AMERICAN DESCRIBES the “FIRM CEMENT of an EXTENSIVE UNION”

after Lexington & Concord, 1775

■ **DAVID RAMSAY**, *The History of the American Revolution*, 1789.

A South Carolina physician, Ramsey served as a surgeon in the Revolutionary Army. After the war, he served in the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation (1782-83, 1785-86), and wrote his Revolution history in the late 1780s, as the new nation was crafting its final Constitution.

As arms were to decide the controversy, it was fortunate for the Americans that the first blood was drawn in New England. The inhabitants of that country are so connected with each other by descent, manners, religion, politics, and a general equality, that the killing of a single individual interested the whole and made them consider it as a common cause. The blood of those who were killed at Lexington and Concord proved the firm cement of an extensive union. . . .

The Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, which was in session at the time of the Lexington battle, dispatched an account of it to Great Britain, accompanied with many depositions, to prove that the British troops were the aggressors. They also made an address to the inhabitants of Great Britain in which, after complaining of their sufferings, they say, “these have not yet detached us from our royal sovereign. We profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects, and though hardly dealt with, as we have been, are still ready with our lives and fortunes to defend his person, crown, and dignity. Nevertheless, to the persecution and tyranny of his evil Ministry [cabinet officials], we will not tamely submit. Appealing to Heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free.” From the commencement of hostilities, the dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies took a new direction.

Intelligence that the British troops had marched out of Boston into the country on some hostile purpose, being forwarded by expresses from one committee to another, great bodies of the militia, not only from Massachusetts but the adjacent Colonies, grasped their arms and marched to oppose them. The Colonies were in such a state of irritability that the least shock in any part was, by a powerful and sympathetic affection, instantaneously felt throughout the whole. The Americans who fell were revered by their countrymen as martyrs who had died in the cause of liberty. Resentment against the British burned more strongly than ever. Martial rage took possession of the breasts of thousands. Combinations were formed and associations subscribed, binding the inhabitants to one another by the sacred ties of honor, religion, and love of country, to do whatever their public bodies directed for the preservation of their liberties. . . .

. . . The Lexington battle not only furnished the Americans with a justifying apology for raising an army, but inspired them with ideas of their own prowess. Amidst the most animated declarations of sacrificing fortune and risking life itself for the security of American rights, a secret sigh would frequently escape from the breasts of her most determined friends for fear that they could not stand before the bravery and discipline of British troops. . . . The success that attended their first military enterprise in some degree banished these suggestions. Perhaps in no subsequent battle did the Americans appear to greater advantage than in their first essay at Lexington. It is almost without parallel in military history for the yeomanry of the country to come forward in a single disjointed manner, without order, and for the most part without officers, and by an irregular fire to put to flight troops equal in discipline to any in the world. In opposition to the bold assertions, of some and the desponding fears of others, experience proved that Americans might effectually resist British troops. The dissident grew bold in their country’s cause and indulged in cheerful hopes that Heaven would finally crown their labors with success. _____