

1777

{A }calm address to the inhabitants of England

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/536>

"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."

BOSTON UNIVERSITY



1 1719 02633 2686

A

CALM ADDRESS

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF ENGLAND.



BY JOHN WESLEY.



LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. FRY AND CO. IN QUEEN-
STREET, UPPER-MOORFIELDS.

M,DCC.LXXVII.



A

CALM ADDRESS

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF ENGLAND, &c.

Friends and Countrymen,

1. **A** BOUT a year and an half ago, being exceedingly pained at what I saw or heard continually, I wrote a little tract intitled, "A calm Address to our American Colonies." But the ports being just then shut up by the Americans, I could not send it abroad, as I designed. However, it was not lost: within a few months, fifty, or perhaps an hundred thousand copies, in newspapers and otherwise, were dispersed throughout

A 2

Great-Britain

Great-Britain and Ireland. The effect exceeded my most sanguine hopes. The eyes of many people were opened: they saw things in a quite different light. They perceived, and that with the utmost clearness, how they had been hood-winked before. They found, they had been led unawares, into all the wilds of Political Enthusiasm, as far distant from truth and common sense, as from the real love of their country.

2. I am encouraged hereby to address myself once more, not indeed to my Countrymen afar off, but to you who remain in your native land, who are inhabitants of *Old England*. I have no private views in doing this. I attend no great man's table. I have nothing to ask, either of the king, or any of his ministers. You may easily believe this: for if I had sought wealth or preferment half a century ago, I should hardly think it worth while to seek it now, when I have one foot in the grave. But I have a view to contribute all that in me lies, to the public welfare and tranquillity. A flame was studiously kindled some time since, which threatened to involve the whole nation. By the blessing of God it is greatly checked: it does not spread, or blaze as formerly. But it is not quite put out. I wish to quench the remains of that evil fire.

3. My view is, as far as is possible to lessen, if not remove the misunderstandings under which many

many honest, well-meaning men are labouring to this day: misunderstandings, which have caused much animosity, nay, much bitterness and rancour in their minds, against those who equally strive to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. I would fain have all these duly sensible of the blessings which they enjoy; that they may be thankful to the Giver of every blessing, and may love one another as He has loved us.

4. Surely every man of candour and humanity must wish well to such an attempt: in the prosecution of which, I will first endeavour to set down, in as plain and artless a manner as I can, according to the best light I have, the real state of those affairs which have occasioned these misunderstandings, and then add two or three short reflections, which I conceive naturally deducible therefrom.

5. And first, I will set down, in as plain and artless a manner as I can, according to the best light I have, the real state of those affairs, which have occasioned these misunderstandings. ——— I have perhaps had some means of information, which many others have not had. Over and above those accounts which have been published, I have had abundance of letters from persons in *America*, on whose judgment, veracity, and impartiality I could safely depend: especially from the provinces of *New-York*, *Virginia*, *Maryland*, and *Pennsylvania*. I have

I have likewise had the opportunity of conversing freely and largely, with many that came from those provinces, and of comparing together the accounts of those who were attached to one or the other party. And I shall endeavour to deliver the plain facts, without speculations concerning them.

6. In the year 1737, my Brother took ship, in order to return from *Georgia* to *England*. But a violent storm drove him up to *New-England*; and he was for some time detained at *Boston*. Even then he was surprized, to hear the most serious people, and men of consequence, almost continually crying out, "We must be *independent*: we shall never be well, till we *shake off the English yoke*." This founded exceeding strange to him; as he could not form any imagination, that they could be happier under any government, than the mild one which they then enjoyed.

A gentleman who spent some time at *Boston*, in the year 1739, informed me, that he had frequently heard the very same conversation there: although at that time the people only spake what they had long and eagerly desired. But, it seems, without any formed design, or having concerted any measures upon the head.

7. Almost from their settlement in the country, but more especially from this time, the people of this, as well as the other provinces, multiplied exceedingly.

ingly. This was the natural effect of the unparalleled lenity of the government they were under, and the perfect liberty they enjoyed, civil as well as religious. Through the same causes, from the smallness of their taxes, and the large bounties continually received from their mother-country, (which also protected them from all their enemies) their wealth increased as fast as their numbers. And together with their number and their wealth, the spirit of Independence increased also. At the same time, it could not be, but their shipping would likewise increase in the same proportion with their trade, which was now extended not only through *America*, and not only through *Great-Britain* and *Ireland*, but also (notwithstanding the Act of Navigation) through almost every part of *Europe*.

8. Much more wealth was accumulated in the numerous sea-port towns, by defrauding his Majesty of his customs. This was continually done, not only by stealth, but frequently with an high hand. Whole ship-loads of uncustomed goods were imported, particularly at *Boston*, and that at noon-day. And it is notorious, that one of the greatest dealers in this kind, was the celebrated Mr. *Hancock*. It is true, this now and then met with some check from his Majesty's officers. But it was so little, it scarce deserves the naming. However, little as it was, they bore it not without huge indignation, and

and strong marks of resentment. And whenever a matter of this kind came before an *American* Jury, (which could not but frequently be the case) it was easy to foresee the event. The officer was sure to have his labour for his pains; for they were too good patriots to condemn their countryman! By this means the Customs of *North-America*, which ought to have brought in so considerable a sum as would have gone far toward defraying the expence of the Government, were reduced to a very small pittance.

9. In consideration of this, the *English* Government a few years ago, thought it equitable to lay a small duty upon the Stamps in *America*, in order, if not to bear themselves harmless, yet to lessen their burden. Immediately a cry arose, as if all *America* was just going to be swallowed up. It was echoed across the *Atlantic* Ocean, from *America* to *England*. The Patriots (so they stiled themselves) in *England*, eagerly joined the cry, and spared no labour and no expence, to propagate it throughout the nation. Do you suppose they did this, out of stark love and kindness to the poor, ruined *Americans*? No such matter. They understood the case too well: they knew, they cried before they were hurt. But they laid hold on this, as a fair occasion to throw an aspersion on those that were in power, being very willing, and supposing themselves very worthy to supply

supply their place. However the Ministry, finding the clamour increasing, and the storm spreading on both sides the ocean, were persuaded to give way to the torrent. They did so; and the Stamp Act was repealed.

10. The *American* Leaders now apprehending that they had a sufficient number of fast friends in *England*, began to entertain higher designs: the *New-England* men in particular. They had no longer any thing to fear from *Canada*, which the *English* had conquered for them. And they had nothing to fear from *England*, when they judged their Allies were growing stronger and stronger. They therefore paved the way for the execution of their favourite scheme, first, by diligently cultivating the republican notions, which they had received from their forefathers: and then by speaking and writing in the most contemptuous and reproachful manner of the *English* Government.

11. Soon after, it being thought reasonable, that every part of the *British* Empire should furnish its share of the General Expence, the *English* Parliament laid a small duty on the Tea imported into *America*. Again a violent outcry arose, and was studiously propagated through all the Provinces. It was no less diligently spread throughout *England*. And as they judged the time was now come, to advance a little further, the leading men both at home

homè and abroad, began more and more confidently to assert, "that the *English* had no right to tax "the *American Colonies*." The assertors of this new position in *England*, strongly exhorted those in *America*, to withstand what they were pleased to call, this *illegal, unconstitutional oppression*. Thus encouraged, the *Bostonians*, under the auspices of Mr. *Hancock* (whose interest was particularly at stake,) scorning to do any thing secretly, paraded the town at noon-day, with colours flying, and bravely threw the *English Tea* into the sea. This was the first plain overt act of Rebellion, not of a few, but of the town of *Boston*. Reparation of the wrong was demanded; but it was not obtained. Till it should be obtained, the Parliament ordered *Boston Harbour* to be shut up.

12. But things were not yet ripe for an open rupture. Therefore the *Americans* still gave the Government good words. They professed their Loyalty, their great regard for the King, and their desire of obeying all his legal commands. But all this time they were using all possible art and diligence, to blacken first the ministry : after a time the Parliament too ; and then the King himself. Of this I had a clear and particular account, from a Friend in *Pennsylvania*, who then observed a storm rising in the North, and moving on toward the Southern Colonies. And it moved on apace. A new

new Supreme Power called a *Congress* appeared. It openly assumed the reins of Government ; exercised all the rights of Sovereignty, burst all the bands, and totally disclaimed the authority both of King and Parliament.

13. But still the Americans talked of Allegiance, and said, They desired nothing but the Liberty of *Englandmen*. Many in *England* cordially believed them : I myself for one. And many more (though they saw deeper, perhaps were in the secret) affected to believe them, defended them with all their might, and pleaded their cause, in public and private, as honest, upright men, who only withstood oppression, and desired nothing but what was their legal right.

14. While we were warmly debating these things in *England*, the *Americans* believing matters were now in a proper forwardness, wholly threw off the mask, openly took up arms, seized upon his Majesty's stores and ships, and avowed themselves to be Sovereign States, independent on *Britain*, or any other. And herein they were still vehemently encouraged by their numerous friends in *England*. Some of these (and they were persons of no mean account) wrote them letters, (which were carefully sent by the Congress, through all the Provinces) nearly in these words, "Make no concessions : give up nothing. Stand your ground. Be resolute, and you may

may depend upon it, in less than a year and an half, there will be such commotions in *England*, that the Government will be glad to be reconciled to you, upon your own terms."

15. One might have imagined for some time, that this was a true prophecy. Many warm men at home, laboured to embarrass the Government in all its measures. They spoke all manner of evil of the Ministry. They made the keenest reflections on the Parliament. And when they had whetted themselves and one another, they spared not the King himself. Mean while they were so wonderfully tender of the *Americans*, that they would not in any wise term them *Rebels*, though they were in open arms against their lawful Sovereign. And all this time whatsoever was undertaken against them, went on heavily. The King's Troops were either detained in the harbours, or stopped in their passage by contrary winds. Some of the transports, and abundance of other ships fell into the hands of the *Americans*. Their Privateers swarmed on every side, both in the *American* and *European* seas. They were plentifully furnished with Provisions from the resources they had within themselves. And with all forts of arms and ammunition by our good Allies, the *Dutch* and *French*. In the mean while, the few *English* troops, that were in *America*, were closely shut up in *Boston*, by a numerous Army, holding

holding them in on every side, and gaping to swallow them up. And these within the town were in want of all things, while those without abounded with all things. This they gloried in, as a manifest proof, that God was on their side. As they now were confident of success, the talk of *Liberty* was over. *Independency* was the word: This was avowed, without any disguise, or reserve. And, indeed, *Liberty* was come to an end: it had no longer any being in the Confederate Colonies. If any one dared to speak a little in favour of the King, or in disavour of the Congress, he was soon taught to know his Lords and Masters, whose little finger was heavier than the loins of Kings.

16. At length the King published a Proclamation, for a General Fast in *England*, that we might "humble ourselves before God, and implore his Blessing and Assistance." Some of the patrons of independence mocked at this, and endeavoured to turn it into ridicule. A company of them met at an inn in *Bristol* on the Fast Day, and had a plentiful entertainment. Others stormed and raved at this hypocrisy, as they were pleased to term it. However, there is all reason to believe, that God was well pleased with it. We now openly acknowledged Him, and He openly acknowledged us. From this very time, the tide turned. The King's forces (which many said was impossible) made good their

landing
 at *Staten Island* July 3. It was few
 months before the fact.

17th December was the Fast day.

A Very Reply 22-29 [14] near 3 months before the Start

landing at the place proposed, and that without any loss at all. They took possession of *Long-Island*, and with next to no opposition. They took the Island and City of *New-York*, with all its boasted fortifications. They drove the Rebels out of their almost inaccessible posts, though defended by strong intrenchments. They took *Fort-Washington* and *Fort-Lee*, which an handful of men might have defended against a numerous army. At all these places they took warlike stores in abundance, beside some thousands of prisoners. They took possession of *Rhode-Island*, and every where drove the Rebels before them, like a flock of sheep.

17. Where are now the two or three hundred thousand men, that we were told would pour down upon us? But what if they did? What would a million do, if they ran away, as soon as the *English* appeared? Whatever they do, they will not fight. I believe they cannot; for the hand of God is upon them. But they can rob, and plunder, and destroy, and turn a well-peopled and fruitful land into a wilderness. They can burn houses, and drive men, women, and children into the wild woods in the depths of winter. Yea, they can burn whole towns, without any regard for the sick and aged, that necessarily perished in the flame. But did not God regard them? Did not their dying cries enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth?

18. Such

18. Such is the present state of affairs in *America*. Let us now take a view of the whole. Twelve Provinces, upon various pretences, (all which have been confuted over and over,) have declared themselves Independent States, openly renounced their Allegiance to their lawful Sovereign, taken up arms against him, and prosecuted the war in an unheard of manner. At first, Prosperity seemed to attend them in all their undertakings. But since we fought help from God, there has been a manifest blast upon them. Their armies are scattered; their forts and strong-holds lost; their Provinces taken one after another. Meantime are they humbled? No; they roar like a wild bull in a net. They tear up the ground with fierceness and rage: repentance is hid from their eyes. They revenge themselves—upon women and children. They burn—all behind them! O *American* Virtue! Are these the men, who are proposed as a pattern to all *Europe*?

19. Brethren! Countrymen! What are the reflections, that now naturally arise in your breasts? Do not you immediately observe, That after this huge outcry for Liberty, which has echoed through all *America*, there is not the very shadow of Liberty left in the Confederate Provinces. There is no *Liberty of the Press*. A man may more safely print against the Church in *Italy* or *Spain*, than

publish a title against the Congress, in *New-England or Pennsylvania*. — There is no *Religious Liberty*: what minister is permitted to follow his own Conscience in the execution of his office? *To put man in mind to be subject to principalities and powers? To fear God, and honour the king? Who is suffered (whatever his Conscience may dictate) to pray for the King, and all that are in authority? —* There is no *Civil Liberty*: no man has any security either for his goods, or for his person, but is daily liable to have his goods spoiled or taken away, without either Law or form of Law, and to suffer the most cruel outrage as to his person, such as many would account worse than death. And there is no legal method wherein he can obtain redress for whatever loss or outrage he has sustained.

20. Do not you observe wherever these bawlers for Liberty govern, there is the vilest *Slavery*? No man there can say that “his goods are his own.” They are absolutely at the disposal of the mob or the Congress. No man can say that “his tongue is his own.” If he say a word for the King, what will follow? No man can say, “that his body is his own.” He may be imprisoned whenever our Lords the Congress please. They are as absolute as the Emperor of *Morocco*. Their will is the sole law. No man can say, “his life is his own.” Those who have the disposal of his substance, who have the disposal of his liberty,

liberty, have the disposal of his life also. And of this they have given recent proofs. It is true, they do not themselves cut throats. They do not foil their own fingers; but their friends the mob are always ready. Thus is *real Liberty* in all its branches given up, for that poor shadow, *Independency!* A phantom which does not in fact exist in any civilized nation under heaven. It never did, and never will, being wholly inconsistent with the very idea of Government. And to what a condition are these poor Colonies brought, by quitting the substance for the shadow? Do you ask, (says a Gentleman who writes from *Philadelphia*) what is the present state of these Provinces? You may see it upon *Ezekiel's* roll. Such is the condition of this country: *It is written within and without, lamentation, and mourning, and woe.*

21. And do not you observe, on the other hand, the perfect liberty which we enjoy? Not indeed derived from our forefathers, as some writers idly talk. No: our forefathers never enjoyed it, either before or after *William* the Conqueror, and least of all in the time of the long Parliament, or under *Oliver Cromwell*. They had then little more liberty, Civil or Religious, than is now enjoyed in the Confederate Provinces. Never talk of the Liberty of our Forefathers: *English Liberty* commenced at the *Revolution*. And how entire is it at this day? Every man

man says what he will, writes what he will, prints what he will. Every man worships God, (if he worships him at all) as he is persuaded in his own mind. Every man enjoys his own property, nor can the King himself take a shilling of it, but according to law. Every man enjoys the freedom of his person, unless the law of the Land authorize his confinement. Above all, every man's life is secured, as well from the King, as from his fellow-subjects. So that it is impossible to conceive a fuller Liberty than we enjoy, both as to Religion, Life, Body, and Goods.

22. Do not you see then the abundant cause we have to be thankful to God, who having *made the whole nation of men, determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation*, in that he hath cast our lot in a fair ground, under the mildest government upon earth? Are not we of all men without sense, if instead of thankfulness, we give way to murmuring and discontent, and finding fault with we know not what? In all reason, we should be perpetually praising God, for this as well as for a thousand other benefits, and endeavouring to make him a suitable return, by devoting our lives to his service.

23. And as long as we *fear God*, shall we not *honour the King*, looking upon him with a love mixed with reverence? Should we not remember him

him before God in prayer, that his throne may be established in righteousness? That he and all which are in authority under him, may duly administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and the maintenance of true religion and virtue? And is it not our part, carefully to abstain from *speaking evil of the Ruler of our people*? And to study to *lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty*?

Hitherto I have addressed myself to my Country-men in general. But I would add a word to you in particular, who bear a Religious Character: whether you are members of the established Church, or Dissenters of any denomination.

One might reasonably expect, that *all* of you would be cheerfully *subject to the higher powers*. Seeing you are agreed, *there is no power*, whether supreme or subordinate, *but of God*. Nay, one would expect that you would be continually *reminding* all you had any intercourse with, that they *must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake*. How is it then, that any of you espouse the cause of those that are in open rebellion against their lawful Sovereign? That if you do not plead expressly for them, you at least extenuate their crime; perhaps even scruple to call them *Rebels*, and speak of them with tenderness, rather than resentment.

ment. How is it that any of you who fear God, are not afraid to speak evil of dignities? To speak evil of the ruler of your people, as well as of those that are put in authority under him? Do you believe, that Michael the archangel durst not bring a railing accusation against Satan? And dare you bring or retail an hundred railing accusations against your lawful governors? — Now at least, humble yourselves before God, and act more suitably to your Character. Whenever you are far from countenancing, repress the base clamours of the vulgar: remembering those awful words, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, (rather, be ever so religious,) and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.*

Are not you who dissent from the established Church, in whatever kind or degree, particularly concerned to observe this, *for wrath*, as well as *for conscience sake*? Do you imagine there are no High Churchmen left? Did they all die with Dr. Sacheverell? Alas! how little do you know of mankind? Were the present restraint taken off, you would see them swarming on every side, and gnashing upon you with their teeth. There would hardly need a nod from that sacred person, whom you revere, or at least lightly esteem. Were he to stand neuter, in what a condition would you be, within one twelve months? If other Bonners and Gardiners did

did not arise, other Lauds and Sheldons would, who would either rule over you with a rod of iron, or drive you out of the land. Know the blessings you enjoy! Let Common Sense restrain you, if neither Religion, nor Gratitude can. "Beware of the wrath of a patient man." Dare not again to open your lips against your Sovereign! lest he fall upon you? No; but lest he cease to defend you. Then farewell to the Liberty you now enjoy.

Permit me to add a few more words to you, a small part of whom dissent from, but the far greater part remain in the Church, you who are vulgarly called *Methodists*. Do any of you blaspheme God or the King? None of you, I trust, who are in connexion with me. I would no more continue in fellowship with those, who continued in such a practice, than with whomongers, or sabbath-breakers, or thieves, or drunkards, or common-swearers. But there are not a few, who go under that name, though they have no connexion with us: yea, though they cordially hate us, as *dreadful heretics*, for believing, That *God willeth all men to be saved*: who hate the King and all his Ministers, only less than they do—an Arminian: and who speak all manner of evil of them in private, if not in public too. — But suffer me to ask, Is this well done? Is it *Gratitude*? Is it *Prudence*? In the name of wonder, what could his Majesty have done for you, which he has not

not done ? What would you have ? Can you tell ? What can you desire more than you have already ? Have you not full liberty of conscience in every respect, without any shadow of restraint ? In what other nation under the sun, is such *Religious Liberty* to be found ? Have you not full liberty, with regard to your life, to your person, and to your goods ? In what other country upon earth, is such *Civil Liberty* to be found ? If you are not thankful to God and the King for these blessings, you are utterly unworthy of them. — Is it *Prudence*, to speak in so bitter and contemptuous a manner, of such Governors as God has given you ? What if by the bitterness of your spirit, the acrimony of your language, and the inflammatory libels which you spread abroad, you could carry your point, unhinge the present Government, and set up another in its stead ? What would you gain thereby ? Would another Government allow you more liberty than you now enjoy ? Could they give you a more unbounded liberty of conscience ? It is impossible ! Would they give you a larger measure of Civil Liberty ? They could not, if they would. And certainly they would not give you the liberty of railing at your governors, and stirring up your fellow-subjects against them. If you did this, you would not only lose your goods, but probably your life also. On the other hand, what if the present Government should

continue,

continue, in spite of all your disloyal practices ? Have you any assurance, have you any reason to believe, that our Governors will always be so patient ? Nay, undoubtedly when things of greater moment are settled, they will find a time for you. Your present behaviour will then be remembered ; perhaps not altogether to your advantage : it is not the ignorance, but the wisdom of your Governors, which occasions their present silence. And if you go on thus, be assured sooner or later, you will meet with your reward. There is no need that the King should *do* any thing : he needs only, *not to refrain* : that is enough : there are those on every side, who are now ready to swallow you up. You will then wish, you had been wise in time, when your wisdom comes too late : when the King of Kings *laughs at your calamity, and mocks while your fear cometh.*