

## BOSTON COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE

Document known as

### The "BOSTON PAMPHLET"

- A. *The Rights of the Colonists*
- B. *Violations of Those Rights*
- C. *A Letter of Correspondence*

**1772**  
EXCERPTS

Alarmed by Britain's decision to remove the colonial assembly's right to pay the governor's and judges' salaries—thus removing any power it might wield over royal officials—a group of Boston citizens led by Samuel Adams, James Otis, and Joseph Warren formed a citizens' committee to oppose the action. The committee compiled a three-part document soon known as the "Boston Pamphlet" and distributed it throughout the colony. The document (1) asserted the colonists' rights as men under natural law, as Christians under God's law in the New Testament, and as British subjects under the British constitution; (2) listed twelve violations of those rights by Britain; and (3) invited response from other Massachusetts towns. Soon over one hundred new town "committees of correspondence" had been formed in Massachusetts.

The Committee, appointed by the Town the second Instant [of the month] "to state the Rights of the Colonists and of this Province in particular, as Men, as Christians, and as Subjects; to communicate and publish the same to the several Towns in this province and to the World, as the Sense of this Town, with the Infringements and Violations thereof that have been, or from Time to Time may be made. Also requesting of each Town a free Communication of their sentiments on this Subject — beg leave to report.

*First, A State of the Rights of the Colonists and of this Province in particular.*

*Secondly, A List of the Infringements and Violations of those Rights.*

*Thirdly, A Letter of Correspondence with the Other Towns.*

### \_\_[The Rights of the Colonists]\_\_

#### I. *Natural Rights of the Colonists as Men.*

Among the natural Rights of the Colonists are these: First, a Right to *Life*; secondly, to *Liberty*; thirdly, to *Property*; together with the Right to support and defend them in the best Manner they can. Those are evident Branches of, rather than Deductions from, the Duty of Self-Preservation, commonly called the first Law of Nature.

All Men have a Right to remain in a State of Nature as long as they please: And in case of intolerable Oppression, civil or religious, to leave the Society they belong to and enter into another.

When Men enter into Society, it is by voluntary Consent, and they have a Right to demand and insist upon the performance of such Conditions and previous Limitations as form an equitable *original Compact*.

Every natural Right not expressly given up or, from the nature of a Social Compact, necessarily ceded, remains.

All positive and civil Laws should conform, as far as possible, to the Law of natural Reason and Equity.

As neither Reason requires nor Religion permits the contrary, every Man living in or out of a State of civil Society has a Right peaceably and quietly to worship GOD according to the Dictates of his Conscience.

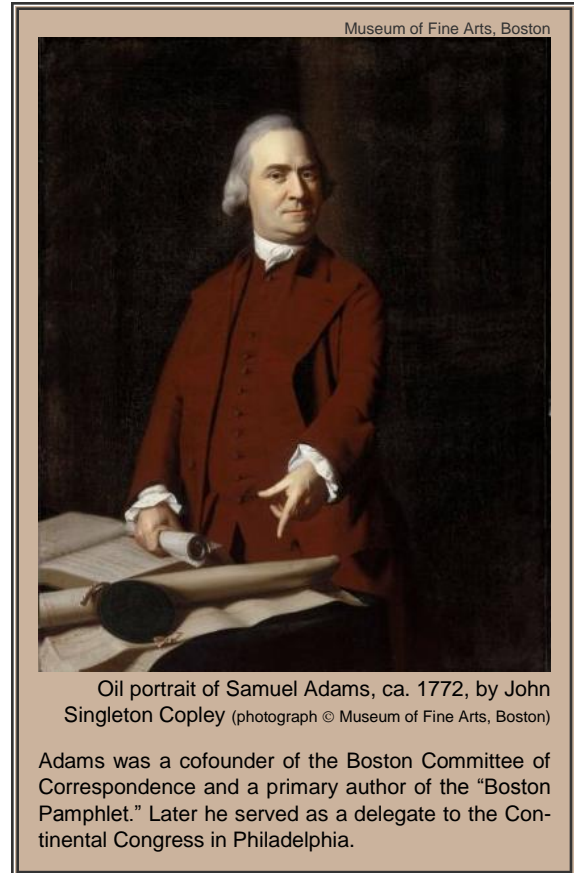
“*Just and true Liberty, equal and impartial Liberty*”<sup>1</sup> in Matters spiritual and temporal is a Thing that all Men are clearly entitled to by the eternal and immutable laws of GOD and Nature, as well as by the Law of Nations, & all well-grounded municipal Laws, which must have their Foundation in the former.

In Regard to Religion, mutual Toleration in the different Professions [denominations] thereof is what all good and candid Minds in all Ages have ever practiced, and, both by Precept and Example, inculcated on Mankind. And it is now generally agreed among Christians that this Spirit of Toleration, in the fullest Extent consistent with the Being of Civil Society, “is the chief characteristic Mark of the true Church.”<sup>\*</sup> Insomuch that Mr. Locke has asserted and proved, beyond the Possibility of Contradiction on any solid Ground, that such Toleration ought to be extended to all whose Doctrines are not subversive of Society. The only Sects which he thinks ought to be, and which by all wise Laws are excluded from such Toleration, are those who teach Doctrines subversive of the civil Government under which they live. The Roman Catholics, or Papists, are excluded by Reason of such Doctrines as these, “that Princes excommunicated may be deposed, and those that they call *Heretics* may be destroyed without Mercy”; besides their recognizing the Pope in so absolute a Manner, in Subversion of Government, by introducing as far as possible into the States under whose Protection they enjoy Life, Liberty and Property, that Solecism [error in language] in Politics, *Imperium in imperio*,<sup>†</sup> leading directly to the worst Anarchy and Confusion, civil Discord, War and Bloodshed.

The natural Liberty of Man, by entering into Society, is abridg'd or restrain'd so far only as is necessary for the great End of Society, the best Good of the Whole. . . .

“The *natural* Liberty of Man is to be free from any superior Power on Earth and not to be under the Will or legislative Authority of Man, but only to have the Law of Nature for his Rule.”<sup>\*\*</sup>

In the State of Nature, Men may, as the *Patriarchs* did, employ hired Servants for the Defense of their Lives, Liberties and Property, and they should pay them reasonable Wages. *Government* was instituted for the purposes of common Defense, and those who hold the Reins of Government have an equitable natural Right to an honorable Support from the same Principle “that “the Laborer is worthy of his Hire”; but then the same Community which they serve ought to be the Assessors of their Pay. Governors have no Right to seek and take what they please; by this, instead of being content with the



<sup>1</sup> *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1689, by John Locke (1632-1704), English philosopher whose Enlightenment theories, especially his concept of the social contract, are reflected in the ideology and rhetoric of the American revolution. [Numbered footnotes added by NHC]

<sup>\*</sup> See Locke's Letters on Toleration [1689, 1690, 1692].

<sup>†</sup> A Government within a Government.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Locke on Government. [*Two Treatises of Government*, 1690].

Station assigned them, that of honorable Servants of the Society, they would soon become Absolute *Masters, Despots, and Tyrants*. Hence, as a private Man has a Right to say what Wages he will give in his private Affairs, so has a Community to determine what *they* will give and grant of their Substance for the Administration of public Affairs.<sup>2</sup> And in both cases, more are ready generally to offer their Service at the proposed and stipulated Price than are able and willing to perform their Duty.

In short, it is the greatest Absurdity to suppose it in the Power of one or any Number of Men, at the entering into Society, to renounce their essential natural Rights or the Means of preserving those Rights, when the grand End of civil Government, from the very Nature of its Institution, is for the Support, Protection and Defense of those very Rights: The principal of which, as is before observed, are *Life, Liberty, and Property*. If Men through Fear, Fraud, or Mistake should *in Terms* renounce or give up any essential natural Right, the eternal Law of Reason and the grand End of Society would absolutely vacate such Renunciation: the Right to Freedom being *the Gift* of GOD ALMIGHTY, it is not in the Power of Man to alienate this Gift and voluntarily become a Slave.

## II. *The Rights of the Colonists as Christians.*

These may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the Institutes of the great Lawgiver and Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the *New Testament*.

By the Act of the British Parliament commonly called the Toleration Act, every Subject in England [every English citizen] except Papists [Roman Catholics], &c., was restored to and re-established in his natural Right to worship GOD according to the Dictates of his own Conscience. And by the Charter of this Province it is granted, ordain'd and establish'd (that is, declared as an original Right) that there shall be Liberty of Conscience allow'd in the Worship of GOD to all Christians, except Papists. . . .

## III. *The Rights of the Colonists as Subjects [of England].*

A Commonwealth or State is a Body politic or civil Society of Men united together to promote their mutual Safety and Prosperity by Means of their Union.\*

The *absolute Rights* of Englishmen and all Freemen in or out of civil Society are principally *personal Security, personal Liberty, and private Property*.

All Persons born in the British American Colonies are, by the Laws of GOD and Nature and by the common Law of England, *exclusive of all Charters from the Crown*, well entitled, and by Acts of the British Parliament are declared to be entitled to all the natural, essential, inherent and inseparable Rights, Liberties and Privileges of Subjects born in Great Britain or within the Realm. Among those Rights are the following, which no Man or Body of Men, consistently with their own Rights as Men and Citizens, or Members of Society, can for themselves give up or take away from others.

*First*, "The first fundamental positive Law of all Commonwealths or States is the establishing the Legislative Power: As the first fundamental *natural* Law also, which is to govern even the Legislative Power itself, is the Preservation of the Society."<sup>†</sup>

*Secondly*, The Legislative has no Right to absolute arbitrary Power over the Lives and Fortunes of the People: Nor can Mortals assume a Prerogative not only too high for Men but for Angels, and therefore reserv'd for the Exercise of the *Deity* alone. . . .

***The absolute Rights of Englishmen and all Freemen in or out of civil Society are principally personal Security, personal Liberty, and private Property.***

<sup>2</sup> Referring to the issue that spurred the creation of the Boston Committee: that the salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor, and judges would be paid directly by Britain and not by the colonial assembly, thus eliminating the assembly's "power of the purse."

\* See Locke and Vattel. [Swiss philosopher Emerich de Vattel (1714-1767), *The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law Applied to the Conduct and to the Affairs of Nations and of Sovereigns*, 1758]

<sup>†</sup> Locke on Government. *Salus Populi Suprema Lex esto*. ["The welfare of the people shall be the supreme law."]

*Thirdly*, The Supreme Power cannot justly take from any Man any Part of his Property without his Consent in Person or by his Representative.

These are some of the first Principles of natural Law and Justice, and the great Barriers of all Free States and of the British Constitution in particular. It is utterly irreconcilable to these Principles, and to many other fundamental Maxims of the common Law, common Sense, and Reason, that a British House of Commons should have a Right, at Pleasure, to give and grant the Property of the Colonists. That these Colonists are well entitled to all the essential Rights, Liberties and Privileges of Men and Freemen born in Britain is manifest, not only from the Colony Charters in general, but Acts of the British Parliament. . . .

Now what Liberty can there be where Property is taken away without Consent? Can it be said with any Color of Truth and Justice that this Continent of three Thousand Miles in Length, and of a Breadth as yet unexplored, in which, however, it is supposed there are five Millions of People, has the least Voice, Vote, or Influence in the Decisions of the British Parliament? Have they, all together, any more Right or Power to return a single Member to that House of Commons who have not inadvertently but deliberately assumed a Power to dispose of their Lives,\* Liberties and Properties, than to choose an Emperor of China! . . . The Colonists have been branded with the odious Names of Traitors and Rebels, only for complaining of their Grievances. How long such Treatment will or ought to be borne is submitted.

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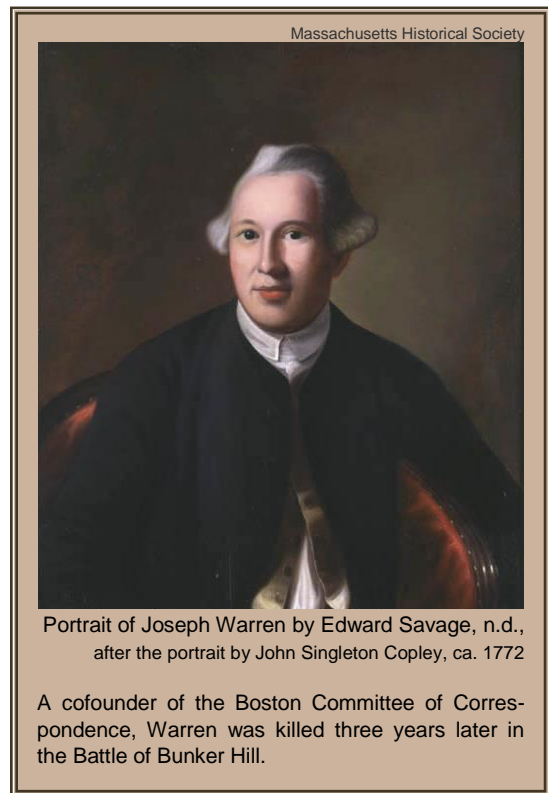
### \_\_A List of Infringements & Violations of Rights\_\_

**W**e cannot help thinking that an Enumeration of some of the most open Infringements of our Rights will, by every candid Person, be judged sufficient to justify whatever Measures have been already taken, or may be thought proper to be taken, in order to obtain a Redress of the Grievances under which we labor. Among many others, we humbly conceive that the following will not fail to excite the Attention of all who consider themselves interested in the Happiness and Freedom of Mankind in general, and of this Continent and Province in particular.

**1st.** The British Parliament have assumed the Power of Legislation for the Colonists in all Cases whatsoever without obtaining the Consent of the Inhabitants, which is ever essentially necessary to the right Establishment of such a Legislative.

**2dly.** They have exerted that assumed Power in raising a Revenue in the Colonies without their Consent, thereby depriving them of that Right which every Man has to keep his own Earnings in his own Hands until he shall, in Person or by his Representative, think fit to part with the Whole or any Portion of it. . . .

**3dly.** A Number of new Officers, unknown in the Charter of this Province, have been appointed to superintend this Revenue, whereas by our Charter the Great and General Court or Assembly of this Province has the sole Right of appointing all Civil Officers,



Portrait of Joseph Warren by Edward Savage, n.d., after the portrait by John Singleton Copley, ca. 1772

A cofounder of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, Warren was killed three years later in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

\* See the Act of the last Session relating to the King's Dock [illegible].

excepting only such Officers, the election and constitution of whom is, in said Charter, expressly excepted; among whom these Officers are not included.

**4thly.** These Officers are, by their Commission, invested with Powers altogether unconstitutional and entirely destructive to that Security which we have a right to enjoy, and to the last degree dangerous not only to our property but to our lives: . . . his Majesty gives and grants unto his said Commissioners . . . full Power and Authority . . . to enter and go on board any Ship, Boat, or other Vessel . . . and also in the daytime to go into any House, Shop, Cellar, or any other Place where any Goods, Wares or Merchandizes lie concealed, or are *suspected* to lie concealed, whereof the customs and other duties have not been or shall not be duly paid . . . .

Thus our Houses and even our Bed-Chambers are exposed to be ransacked, our Boxes, Trunks and Chests broke open, ravaged and plundered by Wretches, whom no prudent Man would venture to employ even as menial Servants, whenever they are pleased to say they *suspect* there are in the House, Wares, &c. for which the Duties have not been paid. Flagrant instances of the wanton exercise of this Power have frequently happened in this and other seaport Towns. By this we are cut off from that domestic security which renders the Lives of the most unhappy in some measure agreeable. These Officers may under color of Law and the cloak of a general warrant break through the sacred Rights of the *Domicil* [private household], ransack Men's Houses, destroy their Securities, carry off their Property, and with little Danger to themselves commit the most horrid Murders. . . .

**5thly.** Fleets and Armies have been introduced to support these unconstitutional Officers in collecting and managing this unconstitutional Revenue, and Troops have been quartered in this Metropolis for that purpose. Introducing and quartering Standing Armies in a free Country in times of Peace without the consent of the People, either by themselves or by their Representatives, is and always has been deemed a violation of their Rights as Freemen, . . .

**6thly.** The Revenue arising from this Tax . . . has been in part applied to the most destructive purposes. It is absolutely necessary in a mixt Government like that of this Province that a due proportion or balance of Power should be established among the several Branches of the Legislative. . . .

In particular it has always been held that the dependence of the Governor of this Province upon the General Assembly for his support [i.e., salary] was necessary for the preservation of this *Equilibrium*; nevertheless his Majesty has been pleased to apply Fifteen Hundred Pounds Sterling annually out of the American Revenue for the support of the Governor of this Province independent of the Assembly, . . .

And we look upon it highly probable, from the best intelligence we have been able to obtain, that not only our Governor and Lieutenant Governor, but the Judges of the Superior Court of Judicature, as also the King's Attorney and Solicitor General are to receive their Support from this grievous tribute. This will, if accomplish'd, complete our Slavery. For if Taxes are to be raised from us by the Parliament of Great Britain without our consent, and the Men on whose opinions and decisions our Properties, Liberties, and Lives in a great measure depend, receive their Support from the Revenues arising from these Taxes, we cannot, when we think on the depravity of mankind, avoid looking with horror on the danger to which we are exposed! . . .

**7thly.** We find ourselves greatly oppressed by Instructions sent to our Governor from the Court of Great Britain whereby the first branch of our legislature is made merely a ministerial Engine. And the Province has already felt such effects from these instructions as we think justly entitle us to say that they

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threaten an entire destruction of our Liberties and must soon, if not check'd, render every branch of our government a useless burden upon the people. We shall point out some of the alarming effects of these Instructions which have already taken place.

In consequence of instructions, the Governor has called and adjourned our General Assemblies to a place highly inconvenient to the Members . . .

In consequence of Instructions, the Assembly has been prorogued [postponed; suspended] from time to time when the important concerns of the Province required their meeting.

In obedience to instructions, the General Assembly was Anno [in the year of] 1768 dissolved by Governor Bernard because they would not consent to *rescind* the Resolution of a *former* House and thereby sacrifice the Rights of their Constituents. . . .

**8thly.** The extending the power of the Courts of Vice-Admiralty<sup>3</sup> to so enormous a degree as deprives the people in the colonies in a great measure of their inestimable right to trials *by Juries*, which has ever been justly considered as the grand Bulwark and Security of English property. . . .

. . . We may be harassed and dragged from one part of the Continent to the other (which some of our Brethren here and in the country towns already have been) and finally be deprived of our whole property by the arbitrary determination of one biased, capricious Judge of the Admiralty.

**9thly.** The restraining us from erecting Slitting-Mills<sup>4</sup> for manufacturing our Iron, the natural produce of this Country, is an Infringement of that Right with which God and Nature have invested us to make use of our skill and industry in procuring the necessaries and conveniences of Life. And we look upon the Restraint laid upon the Manufacture and Transportation of Hats to be altogether unreasonable and grievous. Although by the Charter all Havens, Rivers, Ports, Waters, &c. are expressly granted the Inhabitants of the Province and their Successors, to their only proper use and behoof [benefit] forever, yet the British Parliament passed an act whereby they restrain us from carrying our Wool, the produce of our own Farms, even over a ferry, whereby the Inhabitants have often been put to the expense of carrying a

## Infringements & Violations

1  
BRITAIN is passing laws for the colonies without their consent.

2  
BRITAIN is imposing taxes on the colonies without their consent.

3  
BRITAIN is appointing officials to supervise colonial taxation despite the colonies' authority to do so.

4  
BRITAIN has authorized revenue officials to search colonists' homes, ships, etc., for goods on which they suspect duties (taxes) have not been paid.

5  
BRITAIN has sent military troops in peacetime to support the revenue officials in their unconstitutional duties.

6  
BRITAIN has upset the governmental balance of power by usurping the legislature's authority to pay the salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor, and judges.

7  
BRITAIN has further diminished the legislature's authority by postponing and re-sitting sessions, and in 1768 by dissolving the legislature—all threatening "an entire destruction of our liberties."

8  
BRITAIN has deprived the colonists of their right to trial by jury by prosecuting cases involving colonists' property in the vice-admiralty courts, where decisions are rendered solely by the judge.

9  
BRITAIN has placed unreasonable limits on the colonies' manufacturing and transporting of goods, thus infringing on their right to "make use of our skill and industry."

10  
BRITAIN has ordered that colonists accused of arson or other damage to the British navy and naval supplies may be taken to Britain for trial.

11  
BRITAIN threatens the colonists' freedom of religion by proposing to send an Anglican bishop to Boston to administer the colonial Church of England.

12  
BRITAIN has violated colonists' property rights by granting to others land developed by settlers in the past, and by redefining colonial boundaries, thus forcing landowners at great inconvenience to recertify their holdings.

<sup>3</sup> In vice-admiralty courts, decisions were made by the judge without a jury. Colonists, accustomed to jury trials, resented Britain's increasing use of vice-admiralty courts in the 1760s and '70s to prosecute a wider range of offenses, usually related to taxation and navigation acts. [NHC note]

<sup>4</sup> Slitting mill: a mill in which iron bars are slit into narrow strips. [NHC note]

Bag of Wool near an hundred miles by land, when passing over a River or Water of one quarter of a mile, of which the province are the absolute proprietors, would have prevented all that trouble.

**10thly.** The Act passed in the last Session of the British Parliament entitled *An Act for the better preserving his Majesty's Dock-Yards, Magazines, Ships, Ammunition and Stores*, is, as we apprehend, a violent Infringement of our Rights. By this Act any one of us may be taken from his Family and carried to any part of Great Britain, there to be tried whenever it shall be pretended that he has been concerned in burning or otherwise destroying any Boat or Vessel, or any Materials for building &c. any naval or victualling Store, &c. belonging to his Majesty. . . Thus we are not only deprived of our grand Right to *Trial by our Peers in the Vicinity*, but any Person suspected, or pretended to be suspected, may be hurried to Great Britain to take his Trial in any County the King or his Successors shall please to direct; where, innocent or guilty, he is in great danger of being condemned, and, whether condemned or acquitted, he will probably be ruined by the Expense attending the Trial, and his long Absence from his Family and Business . . . .

**11thly.** As our Ancestors came over to this Country that they might not only enjoy their civil but their religious Rights . . . we cannot see without concern the various attempts, which have been made and are now making, to establish an American Episcopate. Our Episcopal brethren of the Colonies do enjoy, and rightfully ought ever to enjoy, the free exercise of their Religion, but as an American Episcopate is by no means essential to that free exercise of their Religion, we cannot help fearing that they who are so warmly contending for such an Establishment have views altogether inconsistent with the universal and peaceful enjoyment of our Christian privileges: . . .

**12thly.** Another Grievance under which we labor is the frequent Alteration of the Bounds of the Colonies by Decisions before the King and Council . . . This not only subjects Men to live under a Constitution to which they have not consented, which in itself is a great Grievance, but moreover under Color that the *Right of Soil* is affected by such Declarations. Some Governors, or Ministers, or both in Conjunction, have pretended to Grant . . . many Thousands of Acres of vacant and appropriated Lands near a Century past and rendered valuable by the Labors of the present Cultivators and their Ancestors. There are very notable Instances of Settlers who, having first purchased the Soil of the Natives, have at considerable Expense obtained Confirmations of Title from this Province; and on being transfer'd to the Jurisdiction of the Province of *New-Hampshire* have been put to the Trouble and Cost of a new Grant or Confirmation from thence; and after all this there has been a third Declaration of the Royal Will that they shou'd thenceforth be considered as pertaining to the Province of *New-York*. The Troubles, Expenses and Dangers which Hundreds have been put to on such Occasions cannot here be recited; but so much may be said, that they have been most cruelly harassed and even threatened with a military Force to dragoon them into a compliance with the most unreasonable demands.

**they have been most cruelly harassed and even threatened with a military Force to dragoon them into a compliance with the most unreasonable demands.**

## \_\_A Letter of Correspondence to the Other Towns\_\_

BOSTON, *November 20, 1772.*

GENTLEMEN,

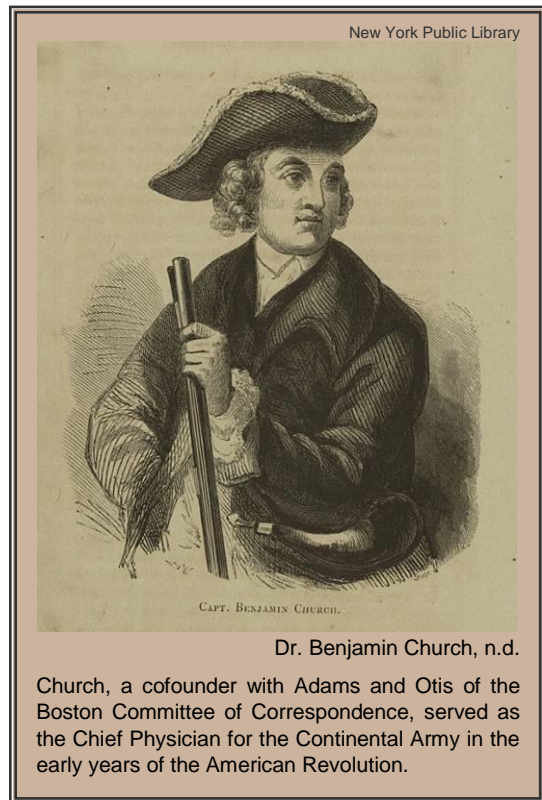
**W**e, the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of *Boston* in Town-Meeting duly Assembled, according to Law, apprehending there is abundant Reason to be alarmed that the Plan of *Despotism*, which the Enemies of our invaluable Rights have concerted, is rapidly hastening to a completion, can no longer conceal our impatience under a constant, unremitted, uniform Aim to enslave us, or confide in an Administration which threatens us with certain and inevitable destruction. But, when in Addition to the repeated inroads made upon the Rights and Liberties of the Colonists, and of those in this Province in particular, we reflect on the late extraordinary Measure in affixing Stipends, or Salaries from the Crown

to the Offices of the Judges of the Superior Court of Judicature, making them not only entirely independent of the People, whose Lives and Fortunes are so much in their Power, but absolutely dependent on the Crown (which may hereafter be worn by a *Tyrant*) both for their Appointment and Support, we cannot but be extremely alarm'd at the mischievous Tendency of this Innovation, which in our Opinion is directly contrary to the Spirit of the British Constitution, pregnant with innumerable Evils, & hath a direct Tendency to deprive us of everything valuable as Men, as Christians, and as Subjects entitled by the Royal Charter to all the Rights, Liberties and Privileges of native Britons.

**What can  
preserve the  
Liberties of the  
Subject, when the  
Barriers of the  
Constitution are  
taken away?**

Such being the critical State of this Province, we think it our Duty on this truly distressing Occasion to ask you, What can withstand the Attacks of mere Power? What can preserve the Liberties of the Subject, when the Barriers of the Constitution are taken away? The Town of *Boston*, consulting on the Matter abovementioned, thought proper to make Application to the Governor by a Committee; requesting his Excellency to communicate such Intelligence as he might have received relative to the Report of the Judges having their support independent of the Grants of this Province, a Copy of which you have herewith in Paper No. 1.\* To which we received as Answer the Paper No. 2.† The Town on further deliberation thought it advisable to refer the Matter to the Great and General Assembly; and accordingly in a second Address, as No. 3.‡ they requested his Excellency that the General Court might convene at the Time to which they then stood prorogued; to which the Town received the Reply as in No. 4.§ in which we are acquainted with his intentions further to prorogue the General Assembly, which has since taken place.

Thus, Gentlemen, it is evident his Excellency declines giving the least Satisfaction as to the Matter in Request. The Affair being of public Concernment, the Town of *Boston* thought it necessary to consult with their Brethren throughout the Province, and for this purpose appointed a Committee to communicate with our fellow Sufferers respecting [concerning] this recent Instance of Oppression, as well as the many other Violations of our Rights under which we have groaned for several Years past . . . Great Pains has been taken to persuade the British Administration to think that the good People of this Province in general are quiet and undisturbed at the late Measures; and that any Uneasiness that appears arises from a few factious designing and disaffected Men. This renders it the more necessary that the sense of the People should be explicitly declared. — A free Communication of your Sentiments to this Town of our common Danger is earnestly solicited and will be gratefully received. If you concur with us in Opinion that our Rights are properly stated, and that the several Acts of Parliament, and Measures of Administration pointed out by us are subversive of these Rights, you will doubtless think it of the utmost Importance that we stand firm as one Man to recover and support them; and to take such Measures by directing our Representatives, or otherwise, as your Wisdom and Fortitude shall dictate, to rescue from impending Ruin our happy and glorious Constitution. But if it should be the general Voice of this Province that the



\* See Appendix No. 1 [The Message of the Town of Boston to the Governor] See p. 9 for summaries of the four appendices.

† See Appendix No. 2 [The Governor's Answer to the foregoing Message]

‡ See Appendix No. 3 [The Petition of the Town to the Governor]

§ See Appendix No. 4 [The Governor's Answer to the foregoing Petition]



Rights as we have stated them do not belong to us, or that the several Measures of Administration in the British Court are no Violations of these Rights, or that if they are thus violated or infringed, they are not worth contending for or resolutely maintaining; — should this be the general Voice of the Province, we must be resigned to our wretched Fate, but shall forever lament the Extinction of that generous Ardor for Civil and Religious Liberty which in the Face of every Danger, and even Death itself, induced our Fathers to forsake the Bosom of their Native Country and begin a Settlement on bare Creation. — But we trust this cannot be the Case: We are sure your Wisdom, your Regard to Yourselves and the rising Generation, cannot suffer [allow] you to doze or set supinely indifferent on the brink of Destruction, while the Iron Hand of Oppression is daily tearing the choicest Fruit from the fair Tree of Liberty, planted by our worthy Predecessors at the Expense of their Treasure, and abundantly water'd with their Blood. — It is an observation of an eminent Patriot that a People long inured to Hardships lose by Degrees the very notions of Liberty; they look upon themselves as Creatures *at Mercy*, and that all Impositions laid on by Superior Hands are legal and obligatory. — But thank Heaven this is not yet verified in *America!* We have yet some Share of public Virtue remaining: We are not afraid of Poverty, but disdain Slavery. — The Fate of Nations is so precarious and Revolutions in States so often take Place at an unexpected Moment when the Hand of Power, by Fraud or Flattery, has secured every Avenue of Retreat, and the Minds of the Subject debased to its Purpose, that it becomes every Well-Wisher to his Country, while it has any Remains of Freedom, to keep an Eagle Eye upon every Innovation and Stretch of Power, in those that have the Rule over us. A recent Instance of this we have in the late Revolutions in *Sweden*, by which the Prince, once subject to the Laws of the State, has been able of a sudden to declare himself an absolute Monarch The Swedes were once a free, martial and valiant people: Their Minds are now so debased that they even rejoice at being subject to the Caprice and arbitrary Power of a Tyrant, and kiss their Chains. It makes us shudder to think the late Measures of Administration may be productive of the like Catastrophe; which Heaven forbid! — Let us consider, Brethren, we are struggling for our best Birth Rights and Inheritance, which, being infringed, renders all our Blessings precarious in their Enjoyments, and consequently trifling in their Value. Let us disappoint the Men who are raising themselves on the Ruin of this Country. Let us convince every Invader of our Freedom that we will be as free as the Constitution our Fathers recognized will Justify.

**the Iron Hand of  
Oppression is  
daily tearing the  
choicest Fruit  
from the fair  
Tree of Liberty**

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- Appendix 1 The MESSAGE of the Town of *BOSTON* to the Governor [Thomas Hutchinson]\_\_\_\_  
Requests the governor to “inform them” of any instructions he may have received concerning the British decision to remove the colonial assembly’s power to pay the salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor, and judges and, instead, to pay the salaries directly, thus eliminating power of the colonial assembly over royal officials.
- Appendix 2 The GOVERNOR’s ANSWER to the foregoing MESSAGE\_\_\_\_30 October 1772  
Replies that it would not be proper for him to divulge any information he might have on the matter.
- Appendix 3 The PETITION of the TOWN to the GOVERNOR\_\_\_\_30 October 1772  
Asserts that the citizens are “still greatly alarmed” at the proposal which defies “the plain and obvious Sense of the Charter of this Province” and which “fills their minds with Dread and Horror.” Asks the governor to permit the legislature to meet to consider the proposal.
- Appendix 4 The GOVERNOR’s ANSWER to the foregoing PETITION\_\_\_\_2 November 1772  
Refuses to allow the legislature to meet, stating that the “Reasons which you have advanced have not altered my Opinion.” Insists that acceding to the committee’ request would encourage residents of other towns to meet “to debate and transact other Matters which the Law that authorizes Towns to assemble does not make the Business of a Town-Meeting.”