

Daniel Leonard's letter of January 9, 1775 (abridged)

The security of the people from internal . . . violence, and from foreign invasion, is the end and design of government. The simple forms of government are monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, that is, where the authority of the state is vested in *one*, a *few*, or the *many* . . . A government, formed upon these three principles in due proportion, is the best calculated to answer the ends of government, and to endure. Such a government is the British constitution, consisting of King, Lords and Commons . . . It is allowed, both by Englishmen and foreigners, to be the most perfect system that the wisdom of ages has produced. The distributions of power are so just, and the proportions so exact, as at once to support and controul each other. An Englishman glories in being subject to and protected by such a government. The colonies are a part of the British empire. The best writers upon the law of nations tell us, that when a nation takes possession of a distant country, and settles there, that country, though separated from the . . . mother-country, naturally becomes a part of the state, equal with its ancient possessions. Two supreme or independent authorities cannot exist in the same state. . . . If then we are a part of the British empire, we must be subject to the supreme power of the state, which is vested in the estates of parliament. . . .

This doctrine is not new; but the denial of it is. It is beyond a doubt that it was the sense both of the parent country and our ancestors, that they were to remain subject to parliament . . . It is not less our interest, than our duty, to continue subject to the authority of parliament. . . . The principal argument against the authority is this; the Americans are entitled to all the privileges of an Englishman. . . . Thus, the supposition of our being independent states, or exempt from the authority of parliament, destroys the very idea of our having a British constitution. . . . it deprives us of the bill of rights, and all the benefits resulting from the revolution, of English laws, and of the British constitution.

Our patriots have been so intent upon building up American rights, that they have overlooked the rights of Great-Britain, and our own interest. Instead of proving, that we were entitled to privileges which our fathers knew our situation would not admit us to enjoy, they have been arguing away our most essential rights. If there be any grievance, it does not consist in our being subject to the authority of parliament, but in our not having an actual representation in it. Were it possible for the colonies to have an equal representation in parliament, and were refused it upon proper application, I confess, I should think it a grievance: But . . . the colonies are distant from Great-Britain a thousand transmarine leagues. If that be the case, the right or privilege that we complain of being deprived of, is not withheld by Britain; but the first principles of government, and the immutable laws of nature, render it impossible for us to enjoy it. . . . Allegiance and protection are reciprocal. It is our highest interest to continue a part of the British empire; and equally our duty to remain subject to the authority of parliament. . . . In this case, the major must rule the minor. . . .