

**A LETTER TO DOCTOR TUCKER
ON HIS PROPOSAL OF A
SEPARATION BETWEEN GREAT
BRITAIN AND HER AMERICAN
COLONIES**

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A Letter to Doctor Tucker on His Proposal of a Separation Between Great Britain and her American colonies by Josiah Tucker

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JOSIAH TUCKER

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A
L E T T E R
TO
DOCTOR TUCKER
ON HIS
PROPOSAL of a SEPARATION
BETWEEN
G R E A T B R I T A I N
AND HER
AMERICAN COLONIES.

L O N D O N,
Printed for T. BUCKET, Corner of the Adelphi, Strand.
MDCCLXXIV.

A

L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

THOUGH, with the old gentleman you mention, I am not *wholly occupied in the concerns of trade*, nor quite a stranger to the *rise and fall of empires*, yet with him, I must own myself unable to comprehend the expediency of intirely separating from our North American colonies, and declaring them to be *a free and independent people, over whom we lay no claim*; with him, sir, I start at the proposal as at a spectre; and with his, *my mind is too narrow* to comprehend the rectitude of the measure; and yet, perhaps, we may not be justly chargeable

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with all the narrowness of mind that you would impute to us ; for though we do not presume to hold the vantage-ground of the politician, yet are we not so bewildered with the considerations of profit and loss, in the low province of the mere trader, as quite to lose sight of the causes that may conduce to the grandeur, stability, and safety of the British empire.

The old gentleman your friend, it seems, has furnished you “ with some remarkable anecdotes concerning the smuggling trade that the Americans carried on with the French and Spaniards during the heat of the last war, even to the supplying them with ships and military stores for the destroying the trade and shipping of the mother country, and this in defiance of Mr. Secretary Pitt’s circular letter to the governors of the provinces, forbidding such a traiterous correspondence, and infamous traffic.” He has likewise informed you “ from his own experience, that we gave a better price for their iron, hemp, flax-seed, skins,

skins, furs, lumber, and most other articles, than they could find in any other part of Europe; and that these colonists took nothing scarcely from us in return but what it was their interest to buy, even supposing them as independent of Great Britain as the states of Holland, or any other people."

All this may be very true, for ought I know; but all this exhibits the object in a view so much under its real magnitude, that whether it is admitted, or whether it is denied, no proper conclusions can be drawn.

This project of a separation is held up, I suppose, as a threat to the Americans; it would go, as it seems, to the hurt of their peltry trade; it would likewise go to the making them the most wretched and miserable people that ever were on the face of the globe.

The words that Tacitus puts into the mouth of Petilius Cerealis, are so applicable to the present state of Great Britain and her American colonies, that I must beg leave to cite them; *pulsis Romanis,*

says the historian, *nihil aliud quam bella omnium inter se gentium video* ; and if you are at all acquainted with the history of the time that intervened between the dissolution of the Roman empire, and till the states of Europe became in some degree settled ; (if, indeed, they are yet settled, and if the prediction of Cerealis is not verifying at this hour) if you are at all acquainted with the great misery brought on mankind, by that event ; certainly you would be exceedingly cautious how you gave occasion for this tragical scene to be played over again in America ; for most certain I am, that the same consequences would follow the measure you recommend among a people differing in interest, climate, religion, and manners ; the country every where overspread too by a barbarous inhabitant who has not yet forgot the use of the scalping-knife.

There is the less occasion to consider the detriment that this separation would be of to the Americans, since I suppose we are pretty well agreed here : you
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think the scheme would be detrimental to their trade ; I think so too, and that it would be dangerous to them as a people.

The question seems now to require, that we should consider the injury that Britain may receive from this separation ; and here I will beg leave to consider the subject in a somewhat different light ; I would wish rather to consider the advantages that may accrue to Britain, and, indeed, to every part of her empire, from an union supported by a proper constitution. And this way of considering the question amounts to pretty much the same thing ; as whoever deprives us of an advantage we have a right to expect, does us a real injury.

It is requisite here, to consider the constitution on which this union is founded ; and as it is impossible, at least with me, to consider the various claims of the respective colonies, resulting from their different charters, I must take the liberty to consider it as one constitution, common to them all ; and indeed if Britain
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is still to possess these colonies, and your pen is not fated to destroy the British empire in America, I believe it will be found necessary to have them formed under one constitution.

And here I must beg leave to hope that what I shall say, may not be taken to proceed from the vain conceit of propounding a plan : the question before us requires this step to be taken, since before we can properly judge of the proposed separation, we should know what it is that we are to separate from; or are united with.

But it is time to examine the mutual advantages that may, by a proper constitution, accrue to Britain and the several constituent parts of the British empire; I say the constituent parts of the British empire, because I do not much fancy the name of colony, as I believe it generally implies such a subjection to the power, and such a subserviency to the interest of the ruling state, as Britain never has, or I believe desires to exact; the idea I would wish to raise, is an idea of perfect equal-