

APPEAL FOR JUSTICE

Captain William Bray

to **William Lenthall** (1591–1662), Speaker of the House of Commons (1640–1655, 1659–1660)

Windsor Castle, 20 June 1649

From my cruel, arbitrary, and causeless prison and endurance (by that everlasting (to be) accursed principle by which Abel, Naboth, and the Lord Jesus, and many in other days were crucified and massacred) in Windsor Castle, twentieth day of June, in the year of declared freedom and a called commonwealth.

I did long since make my appeal in Parliament, as the fundamental loyal birthright of the people, for righteousness and justice, and might have expected that (after such glorious and unparalleled declarations, covenants, imprecations, engagements, and actions) I should have had a legal, righteous, Christian, parliamentary, and impartial hearing between the General and me, according to the ancient and just constitution of authority, in its first institution in scripture (Deuteronomy 1:16–17) and according to the many obligations that lie upon you from the commands thereof (Deuteronomy 16:19–20).

Is not judgment wrested hitherunto when, instead of a hearing, I have a prison? And an illegal one too, contrary to the undoubted, infallible, and fundamental right of the people and of government, “You shall not wrest judgment; you shall not respect persons. That which is altogether just shall you follow.” (II Chronicles 19:6–7). The contrary is abhorred, and judgment denounced against it (Isaiah 1:23–24; Jeremiah 5:28–29, 22:16–18; Amos 5:12, 6:12–14; Micah 3:9–11; Job 20:6–19).

“Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds, yet he shall perish forever, like his own dung; they which have seen him shall say, ‘Where is he?’ because he has oppressed.” (Acts 10:34; James 2:9).

You have cut off the late King for arbitrarily and forcibly violating the laws and liberties of the people, and you have solemnly sworn and covenanted to fight for and maintain the laws and liberties of the people, and wished the wrath and vengeance of Heaven and earth to fall upon you if you did not maintain the laws and liberties, as I have declared in my third appeal for Commonwealth justice, which remains dead in your hands (as I hear), and he that delivered it unto you (viz., Cornet Cheesman) was imprisoned by Lieutenant-General Cromwell.

By arbitrariness, lawlessness, power, force, strength, or the severe sword (for it will amount to no other as to men), the Lord Jesus, the precious Son of the Most High, and head of saints, was crucified, butchered, and massacred in the liberties, freedom, and rights of his humanity, as appears by the whole scriptures of his life, the confessions of his judge, and his sufferings. God, the people, law, and conscience are to be accounted unto for the loss of any person or persons unjustly, for the Lord and a just law tenders innocent blood, and the liberties of his people.

Christ, the glorious Son of God, perfectly declared the laws of nature and justice. You profess yourselves Christians, and yet in this you live beneath the common principles of nature, and in the path of former tyrants, whose blood, as water, you have spilt upon the ground. And if you walk contrary to the law of nature, you justify in it the crucifying, butchering, and massacring of the Lord Jesus, etc., and so fill up more and more the measure of bloody abominations.

I have not only been stifled in the rights of nature, the rights of nature according to the creation of God, and been dealt with contrary unto the scriptures, and been committed unto an unlawful prison, and to the jurisdiction of him that has dealt cruelly, barbarously, un-naturally, un-Christianlike, and tyrannically with me, to my insupportable damage, loss, and prejudice (as to human considerations), but the warrant by which I am committed is contrary unto law; generals being no crimes in law. (Second part of Inst., folios 52, 53, 315, 511, 615, and 616;

first part of Declaration of Parliament, pages 38, 77, and 845; and the votes upon the impeachment of the eleven members; and the petition of right, 3 Carolus Rex; and the act that abolishes the Star Chamber).

And I am also committed (by the words of the warrant) “during pleasure;” whereas, if the warrant had been legal, it should have been “till delivered by due course of law,” righteousness, or justice; and after I have expended myself and wasted my glorious days and time for the commonweal, in expectation of a glorious issue of the blood that has been shed here. I have been barbarously kept in prison without any human consideration all this while for my subsistency, far beyond the dealings of the late King.

Sir, I have only this, as my last unto you or your House (seeing I have been so much neglected by you in the cause of justice, and consequently of the people, so that neither love to justice nor importunity has moved you, from me nor from others, neither for me nor for others) that you would move the House that I may have freedom from my illegal and oppressive imprisonment and bonds; and have reparations for the same, according to declared principles of the Almighty God, nature, Scripture, the splendid declarations of my adversary, etc., acknowledged reason, and the fundamental justice, law, and constitution of the nation; and also that I may have the undoubted freedom of a commoner, a Christian, and member of the people to follow my appeal in freedom, temperance, and judgment (which is certainly to come, at which Felix trembled), and to have a lawful, impartial, and public hearing according to the nature of law and righteousness, and the being and honor of authority.

And if neither will be heard by your House, I desire you to acquaint them the nature of justice, and the aforementioned principles, do require a just respect from them to me for my subsistency in prison (which the King himself granted to his prisoners, and so was more just and merciful, as to human consideration), I having not had any just allowance from them since my barbarous and arbitrary imprisonment, knowing I have been cruelly and arbitrarily dealt with by the General, to my great damage, as my third appeal expresses. Which cruelty and injustice, considering my almost seven years’ service in the wars for the cause of the Kingdom, is one of the manifold occasions and engagements to an adamant heart, much more to a true patriot.

And therefore now I will (the Lord willing) shut up my mouth if I cannot have justice by this last address, and will surrender up my body, spirit, and cause to the high and mighty God, Judge, and Father, before whom all things are naked and bare, and appeal to the next free representative of Parliament, in whom I hope there will be faithfulness, holiness, wisdom, and justice, law, reason, and Christianity.

And however my enemies may deal with my body, whether by murder or otherwise (I being under the unlawful jurisdiction of my adversaries, who has dealt cruelly and unjustly with me), yet my cause shall live in the presence of the Lord, and the generations present and to come, and shall be brought forth in the eternal judgment, where my adversary shall not appear in his gallant equipage, and where his large houses and lands of the Commonwealth, or being General of an army (which should be the people’s) shall be found too light, and where he shall have no Parliament to terrify from doing justice. And if they do murder me, I shall go before, and they will follow after. And, moreover, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, my blood may as sensibly rise (as living blood) in the hearts, if not faces, of your House, who have unjustly and unnaturally committed me to the jurisdiction of my adversary, who, it is probable thirsts after my blood, as well as to rob me and deprive me of my liberties and rights.

But I trust the Lord will make me willingly to resign up my blood, as well as my liberties, to satisfy his pleasure, as well as the cruelty and inhumanity of justice enemies, for, in a due and serious consideration, it is the Lord’s and the people’s.

Sir, I hope you will excuse me that I speak what I do, and consider that the Lord has given me an opportunity to hold forth his excellency and sovereignty against one that is called Excellency; and nature has given me an occasion, as to my country, and myself in it; and also that the tyranny and cruelty I am under is of no small

force upon my spirit. So leaving you and your House to the judgment of the great day of the Lord, and the Lord's faithful people in the land, I take my last farewell.

Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II:141–148.