

I HAVE SWORN UPON THE ALTAR OF [ALMIGHTY] GOD
ETERNAL HOSTILITY AGAINST EVERY FORM OF TYRANNY
OVER THE MIND OF MAN.

[Jefferson' Creed]

. . . Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested His
supreme will that free it shall remain, by making it altogether
insusceptible of restraint;

. . . all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments, or
burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of
hypocrisy and meanness. . .

. . . the impious presumption of legislature and ruler, civil as well as
ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired
men, have assumed dominion over the faiths of others,
setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true
and infallible, and as such endeavoring to impose them on others,
hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest
part of the world and through all time. . .

. . . our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions,
any more than our opinions in physics or geometry;
and therefore the proscribing any citizen as unworthy the public
confidence . . . unless he profess or renounce this or that religious
opinion, is depriving him injudiciously of those privileges and
advantages to which . . . he has a natural right;
it tends also to corrupt the principles of that very religion it is meant
to encourage, by bribing with a monopoly of worldly . . . emoluments
those who will externally profess and conform to it;
indeed, these are criminals who do not withstand such temptation;
yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way;

. . . the opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor
under its jurisdiction;

. . . to restrain the profession . . . of principles on supposition of their
ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all
religious liberty

. . . it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government for
its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts
against peace and good order;

therefore,

We, the General Assembly of Virginia, do enact:
that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious
worship, place, or ministry whatsoever,
nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body
or goods, or shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious
opinions or beliefs;
but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to
maintain their opinions in matters of religion,
and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their
civil capacities.

. . . we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby
asserted are of the natural rights of mankind . . .

. . . the truth is great and will prevail if left to herself;
she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error,
and has nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human
interposition deprived of her natural weapons, free argument and
debate;
errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to
contradict them.

[from the *Statute of Virginia for religious freedom*, 1779/86]

What country can preserve its Liberties, if its rulers are not warned from time to time, that this people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.

The tree of Liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.

[From a letter, London, 1787, in reference to Shay's Rebellion]

Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.

[His personal motto]

We hold these Truths to be self-evident,
that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights,
[and] **that** among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.
That, to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men,
deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.
That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government . . . in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

. . . Governments long established should not be changed for light or transient causes;

. . . mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

But . . . under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty,

to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions,
do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare

That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be *Free and Independent States*;

[. . . and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them]

. . . and **that** as Free and Independent States they have full Power

to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce,
and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.

And for the support of this Declaration,
with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence,
we mutually pledge to each other
our Lives
our Fortunes
and our sacred Honor.

[from the *Declaration of Independence*, 1776]

Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author of the Declaration of American Independence
of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom
and Father of the University of Virginia.

[His self-penned epitaph]

. . . that host of worthies, who joined with us on that day, in the bold and doubtful election we were to make for our country . . .

. . . the choice we made . . . between submission or the sword . . .

. may it be to the world . . . the signal . . . to burst the chains . . . and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.

That form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion.

These are grounds of hope for others.

All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man.

. . . the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.

[... *all men are created equal.*]

For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.

[From his letter, June 24, 1826, declining an invitation to the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, due to his failing health. He died July 4, 1826]