

Endowed By Our Creator ("A Hard Nut To Crack")

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"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" — from the preface of The Declaration Of Independence.

This noble statement is the bedrock of human rights. It is the spiritual and moral foundation on which The United States Constitution was built and the unyielding truth that in time corrected the Constitution's original shortcomings. It prevailed in spite of the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.

This statement is not merely an ideal; it is truth, real truth. It is not obsolete but as relevant to our essential and exceptional humanity and personhood now as it was the day it was adopted. So it will be in the future. It stirs the hostility of those who deny it. It rises to every challenge. It firmly opposes all who would overrule its principles in their quest for power. It is absolute, rigid, because the objective truth it embodies is immutable for all time and in all societal changes.

In his "Speech On The Kansas-Nebraska Act," Abraham Lincoln quoted a Mr. Pettit who called the Declaration Of Independence "a self-evident lie." Lincoln stated that if that had been asserted in Independence Hall seventy-eight years earlier, "the very door-keeper would have throttled the man and thrust him into the street." (Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at Peoria, Illinois," October 16, 1854).

In his "Speech On The Dred Scott Decision," Lincoln said, "The assertion that 'all men are created equal' was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain; and it was placed in the Declaration, not for that, but for future use. Its authors meant it to be, thank God, it is now proving itself, a stumbling block to those who in after times might seek to turn a free people back into the hateful paths of despotism. They knew the proneness of prosperity to breed tyrants, and they meant when such should

reappear in this fair land and commence their vocation they should find left for them at least one hard nut to crack." ("Speech At Springfield, Illinois," June 26, 1857).

The Regressiveness Of Progressivism.

Well over a hundred years ago it began to be asserted that the Constitution as written is too rigid, that it is a "living document" that needs to be "interpreted" to meet changing times. This political philosophy was promoted by ambitious men who wanted the national government to be the supreme authority and who identified the President as the one person above all who should employ its power. This has been our overall direction ever since. It is called "Progressivism." The Declaration Of Independence is a constant and unyielding obstacle to this philosophy. Its preface is the "one hard nut to crack."

Woodrow Wilson knew it. He said that "if you want to understand the real Declaration Of Independence, do not repeat the preface." Insidious words. He contrasted the rights of the "group" over against the rights of the "individual." By using the quantitative numerical term "individual," he avoided the qualitative intrinsic-value word "person."

In his speech, "The Inspiration Of The Declaration," President Calvin Coolidge strongly rejected progressivism and reaffirmed the principles of the Declaration. In his speech, "The Inspiration Of The Declaration," given in July, 1926, on the 150th anniversary of the Declaration, he affirmed the influence of earnest preaching in the formation of our founding principles. He quoted Thomas Jefferson as acknowledging that he had secured his "best ideas of democracy" in church. Coolidge said, "No one can examine the record and escape the conclusion that in the great outline of its principles the Declaration was the result of the religious teachings of the preceding period," citing as examples the philosophy of Jonathan Edwards and the preaching of George Whitefield. Coolidge quoted Samuel Adams words: "The people seem to recognize this resolution as though it were a decree promulgated from heaven."

Coolidge declared, "In its main features, the Declaration of Independence is a great spiritual document. It is a declaration not of material but of spiritual conceptions. Equality, liberty, popular sovereignty, the rights of man—these are not elements which we can see and touch. They are ideals. They have their source and their roots in the religious convictions. Unless the faith of the American people in these religious convictions is to endure, the principles of our Declaration will perish. We cannot continue to enjoy the result if we neglect and abandon the cause."

He continued: "If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final. No advance, no progress can be made beyond these propositions. If anyone wishes to deny their truth or their soundness, the only direction in which he can proceed historically is not forward, but backward toward the time when there was no equality, no rights of the individual, no rule of the people. Those who wish to proceed in that direction can not lay claim to progress. They are reactionary. Their ideas are not more modern, but more ancient, than those of the Revolutionary fathers."

He concluded by saying: "[The Declaration] is the product of the spiritual insight of the people. We live in an age of science and of abounding accumulation of material things. These did not create our Declaration. Our Declaration created them. The things of the spirit come first. Unless we cling to that, all our material prosperity, overwhelming though it may appear, will turn to a barren scepter in our grasp. If we are to maintain the great heritage which has been bequeathed to us, we must be like-minded as the fathers who created it. We must not sink into a pagan materialism. We must cultivate the reverence which they had for the things that are holy. We must follow the spiritual and moral leadership which they showed. We must keep replenished, that they may glow with a more compelling flame, the altar fires before which they worshipped." ("The Inspiration Of The Declaration," July, 1926, on the 150th anniversary of the Declaration Of Independence).

Progressivism was given a renewed impetus during the New Deal. It became institutionalized during subsequent administrations, especially the Great Society. Currently, progressivism is "on steroids." It is threatening the fundamental and inviolable right of the people to live according to the dictates of their own conscience.

The Transcendent Rights Of Conscience.

On this subject James Madison wrote most clearly and decisively. In his essay, "Memorial And Remonstrance Against Religious Assesments," James Madison emphasized that freedom in the exercise of one's conscience is an inalienable right toward men and an inalienable duty toward the Creator. He stated, "This duty is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society." He continued, "We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion no man's right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance."

In his essay, "On Property," Madison wrote, "Where an excess of power prevails property of no sort is duly respected. No man is safe in his opinions, his person, his faculties, or his possessions." He continued, "Conscience is the most sacred of all property." "Property" includes "our opinions and the free communication of them." "He has property of peculiar value in his religious opinions, and in the free communication of them."

A person's conscience is to be held inviolable before God and man. Government and its laws must not set foot in its sanctuary. An invisible sign says to government: "Off limits—no trespassing!"

Government must not trample on the consciences of the people. This is an unshakable principle. Establishing laws and penalties that pressure people to violate their conscience is tyranny. Even more so is punishing people for their moral integrity in remaining true to their conscience. Worst of all, coercing people to violate the convictions of their conscience is nothing less than *the rape of their souls!*

Governments at all levels have an obligation of the highest magnitude to protect the transcendent right of the conscience. It follows logically that no one who denies the existence of the Creator can believe that human beings are endowed by the Creator with inalienable rights. Furthermore, no one who denies the Creator is qualified to protect those divinely endowed rights with inner conviction. Such a person cannot properly value what he or she is assigned and pledged to protect. Accordingly, no one who denies the existence and moral authority of the Creator is qualified to hold a position of trust where laws affecting inalienable human rights and values are passed, administered, and judged. *Therefore, in a society that highly values our Creator-endowed rights, it is not logical to elect to such positions people who do not have a firm belief in God.*

People who deny the Creator are forced by their own "logic" to regard the human conscience as only a value-neutral psychological state and its convictions as merely the result of conditioning. Under a government administered by such people, the conscience would then be subordinate to the laws of "Civil Society," and government would punish people who could not in good conscience obey those laws.

This is the direction we are currently headed. Business owners whose conscience will not allow them to participate in same-sex events are maligned, prosecuted as criminals and severely punished. Those whose conscience will not allow them to pay for the killing of unborn babies face crushing fines. Honest citizens are being unjustly denied employment, promotion, and even removed from their positions of employment and their careers and livelihood destroyed, merely for expressing their views regarding same-sex behavior and relationships.

If America does not change course, we will suffer the greatest and most fundamental paradigm shift in our nation's history. It will result in nothing less than the loss of our most precious rights. The rights that all who went before us skillfully established and fought and died for will be but a memory. Many people will not even miss them because they are unaware and/or senseless of their priceless value.

So then, are we created in the image of God, divinely endowed with certain inalienable rights? Or are we merely highly evolved animals to be domesticated and controlled by government, with only revocable rights "conferred" at birth? We cannot be both. It is time to choose.

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2).

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).