

## WHAT WE REMOVE WHEN WE REMOVE THOMAS JEFFERSON ...from American Liberalism

Readings (\* indicates required, no \* indicates recommended)

### \*I. Opening of *The Declaration of Independence*

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, 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, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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.--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 to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

### \*II. "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" (18 June 1779) + an excerpt from his autobiography

*Well aware that the opinions and belief of men depend not on their own will, but follow involuntarily the evidence proposed to their minds; that*<sup>1</sup> *Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested his supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint;*<sup>2</sup> *that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments, or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion,*<sup>3</sup> *who being lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do, but to extend it by its influence on reason alone;*<sup>4</sup> *that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith 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: That to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors,*<sup>4</sup> *is sinful and tyrannical; that even the forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness; and is withdrawing from the ministry those temporary*<sup>5</sup> *rewards, which proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct, are an additional incitement to earnest and unremitting labours for the instruction of mankind; that our civil rights have no dependance on our religious opinions, any more than*<sup>6</sup> *our opinions in physics or geometry; that therefore the proscribing any citizen as unworthy the public confidence by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to offices of trust and emolument, unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those*

privileges and advantages to which, in common with his fellow citizens, he has a natural right; that it tends also<sup>7</sup> to corrupt the principles of that *very*<sup>8</sup> religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing, with a monopoly of worldly honours and emoluments, those who will externally profess and conform to it; that though indeed these are criminal who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way; *that the opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction*;<sup>9</sup> that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency is a dangerous falacy, which at once destroys all religious liberty, because he being of course judge of that tendency will make his opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own; that 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; and finally, that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate; errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them.

*We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact*<sup>10</sup> 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, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief; 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.

And though we well know that this Assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding Assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act<sup>11</sup> irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right.

[from *Autobiography*] “The bill for establishing religious freedom, the principles of which had, to a certain degree, been enacted before, I had drawn in all the latitude of reason & right. it still met with opposition; but, with some mutilations in the preamble, it was finally past; and a singular proposition proved that it’s protection of opinion was meant to be universal. where the preamble declares that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed, by inserting the words ‘Jesus Christ’ so that it should read ‘a departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion’ the insertion was rejected by a great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan [Muslim], the Hindoo [Hindu] and infidel of every denomination.”

\*III. from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (full online text of *Notes* [here](#))

a. Excerpt from Quervy XVII, “Religion”

The error seems not sufficiently eradicated, that the operations of the mind, as well as the acts of the body, are subject to the coercion of the laws. But our rulers can have authority over such natural rights only as we have submitted to them. The rights of conscience we never submitted, we could not submit. We are answerable for them to our God. The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods,

or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg. If it be said, his testimony in a court of justice cannot be relied on, reject it then, and be the stigma on him. Constraint may make him worse by making him a hypocrite, but it will never make him a truer man. It may fix him obstinately in his errors, but will not cure them. Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error. Give a loose to them, they will support the true religion, by bringing every false one to their tribunal, to the test of their investigation. They are the natural enemies of error, and of error only. Had not the Roman government permitted free inquiry, Christianity could never have been introduced. Had not free inquiry been indulged, at the æra of the reformation, the corruptions of Christianity could not have been purged away. If it be restrained now, the present corruptions will be protected, and new ones encouraged.

b. Query XVIII, “Manners”

THE particular customs and manners that may happen to be received in that state?

It is difficult to determine on the standard by which the manners of a nation may be tried, whether catholic, or particular. It is more difficult for a native to bring to that standard the manners of his own nation, familiarized to him by habit. There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient.

The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the amor patriæ of the other. For if a slave can have a country in this world, it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labour for another: in which he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavours to the evanishment of the human race, or entail his own miserable condition on the endless generations proceeding from him. With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are even seen to labour. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.—But it is impossible to be temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be contented to hope they will force their way into every one's mind. I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the

present revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.

c. Query XIX, “Manufactures”

THE present state of manufactures, commerce, interior and exterior trade?

We never had an interior trade of any importance. Our exterior commerce has suffered very much from the beginning of the present contest. During this time we have manufactured within our families the most necessary articles of cloathing. Those of cotton will bear some comparison with the same kinds of manufacture in Europe; but those of wool, flax and hemp are very coarse, unsightly, and unpleasant: and such is our attachment to agriculture, and such our preference for foreign manufactures, that be it wise or unwise, our people will certainly return as soon as they can, to the raising raw materials, and exchanging them for finer manufactures than they are able to execute themselves.

The political œconomists of Europe have established it as a principle that every state should endeavour to manufacture for itself: and this principle, like many others, we transfer to America, without calculating the difference of circumstance which should often produce a difference of result. In Europe the lands are either cultivated, or locked up against the cultivator. Manufacture must therefore be resorted to of necessity not of choice, to support the surplus of their people. But we have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husbandman. It is best then that all our citizens should be employed in its improvement, or that one half should be called off from that to exercise manufactures and handicraft arts for the other? Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on the casualties and caprice of customers. Dependance begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition. This, the natural progress and consequence of the arts, has sometimes perhaps been retarded by accidental circumstances: but, generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unfound to its healthy parts, and is a good-enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption. While we have land to labour then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff. Carpenters, masons, smiths, are wanting in husbandry: but, for the general operations of manufacture, let our work-shops remain in Europe. It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles. The loss by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government. The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution.

\*IV.

IV. Jefferson Letters (\* next to each individual letter indicates required, no \* indicates recommended)

\*a. Letter to Edward Carrington (16 January 1787) on the press, public information, democracy, & inequality (excerpt, [full text here](#))

The tumults in America [Shays's Rebellion in Massachusetts], I expected would have produced in Europe an unfavorable opinion of our political state. But it has not. On the contrary, the small effect of those tumults seems to have given more confidence in the firmness of our governments. The interposition of the people themselves on the side of government has had a great effect on the opinion here. I am persuaded myself that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. They may be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves. The people are the only censors of their governors: and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. The way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them full information of their affairs thro' the channel of the public papers, and to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people. The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them. I am convinced that those societies (as the Indians) which live without government enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under European governments. Among the former, public opinion is in the place of law, and restrains morals as powerfully as laws ever did any where. Among the latter, under pretence of governing they have divided their nations into two classes, wolves and sheep. I do not exaggerate. This is a true picture of Europe. Cherish therefore the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them. If once they become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress, and Assemblies, judges and governors shall all become wolves. It seems to be the law of our general nature, in spite of individual exceptions; and experience declares that man is the only animal which devours his own kind, for I can apply no milder term to the governments of Europe, and to the general prey of the rich on the poor.

b. Letter to William S. Smith (13 Nov 1787) on rebellion

DEAR SIR

I am now to acknowledge the receipt of your favors of October the 4th. 8th. and 26th. In the last you apologize for your letters of introduction to Americans coming here. It is so far from needing apology on your part, that it calls for thanks on mine. I endeavor to shew civilities to all the Americans who come here, and who will give me opportunities of doing it: and it is a matter of comfort to know from a good quarter what they are, and how far I may go in my attentions to them.—Can you send me Woodmason's bills for the two copying presses for the M. de la Fayette, and the M. de Chastellux? The latter makes one article in a considerable account, of old standing, and which I cannot present for want of this article.—I do not know whether it is to yourself or Mr. Adams I am to give my thanks for the [copy of the new constitution](#). I beg leave through you to place them where due. It will be yet [three weeks](#) before I shall receive them from America. There are very good articles in it: and very bad. I do not know which preponderate. What we have lately read in the history of Holland, in the chapter on the Stadtholder, would have sufficed to set me against a Chief magistrate eligible for a long duration, if I had ever been disposed towards one: and what we have always read of the elections of

Polish kings should have forever excluded the idea of one continuable for life. Wonderful is the effect of impudent and persevering lying. The British ministry have so long hired their gazetteers to repeat and model into every form lies about our being in anarchy, that the world has at length believed them, the English nation has believed them, the ministers themselves have come to believe them, and what is more wonderful, we have believed them ourselves. Yet where does this anarchy exist? Where did it ever exist, except in the single instance of Massachusets? And can history produce an instance of a rebellion so honourably conducted? I say nothing of it's motives. They were founded in ignorance, not wickedness. God forbid we should ever be 20. years without such a rebellion. The people can not be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions it is a lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. We have had 13. states independant 11. years. There has been one rebellion. That comes to one rebellion in a century and a half for each state. What country before ever existed a century and half without a rebellion? And what country can preserve it's liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is it's natural manure. Our Convention has been too much impressed by the insurrection of Massachusets: and in the spur of the moment they are setting up a kite to keep the hen yard in order. I hope in god this article will be rectified before the new constitution is accepted.—You ask me if any thing transpires here on the subject of S. America? Not a word. I know that there are combustible materials there, and that they wait the torch only. But this country probably will join the extinguishers.—The want of facts worth communicating to you has occasioned me to give a little loose to dissertation. We must be contented to amuse, when we cannot inform. Present my respects to Mrs. Smith, and be assured of the sincere esteem of Dear Sir Your friend & servant,

TH: JEFFERSON

c. Letter to William Short (3 January 1793) on the French Revolution

DEAR SIR

My last private letter to you was of Oct. 16. since which I have recieved your<sup>1</sup> No. 103. 107. 108. 109. 110. 112. 113. and 114. and yesterday your private one of [Sep. 15.](#) came to hand. The tone of your<sup>2</sup> letters had for some time given me pain,<sup>3</sup> on account of the extreme warmth with which they censured the proceedings of the Jacobins of France. I considered that sect as the same with the Republican patriots, and the Feuillants as the Monarchical patriots, well known in the early part of the revolution, and but little distant in their views, both having in object the establishment of a free constitution, and differing only on the question whether their chief Executive should be hereditary or not. The Jacobins (as since called) yeilded to the Feuillants and tried the experiment of retaining their hereditary Executive. The experiment failed completely, and would have brought on the reestablishment of despotism had it been pursued.<sup>4</sup> The Jacobins saw this, and that the expunging that officer was of absolute necessity, and the Nation was with them in opinion, for however they might have been formerly for the constitution framed by the first assembly, they were come over from their hope in it, and were now generally Jacobins. In the struggle which was necessary, many guilty persons fell without the forms of trial, and with them some innocent. These I deplore as much as any body, and shall deplore some of them to the day of my death. But I deplore them as I should have done had they fallen in battle. It was necessary to use the arm of the people, a machine not quite so blind as balls and

bombs, but blind to a certain degree. A few of their cordial friends met at their hands<sup>5</sup> the fate of enemies. But time and truth will rescue and embalm their memories, while their posterity will be enjoying that very liberty for which they would never have hesitated to offer up their lives. The liberty of the whole earth was depending on the issue of the contest, and was ever such a prize won with so little innocent blood? My own affections have been deeply wounded by some of the martyrs to this cause, but rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated. Were there but an Adam and an Eve left in every country, and left free, it would be better than as it now is. I have expressed to you my sentiments, because they are really those of 99 in an hundred of our citizens. The universal feasts, and rejoicings which have lately been had on account of the successes of the French shewed the genuine effusions of their hearts. You have been wounded by the sufferings of your friends, and have by this circumstance been hurried into a temper of mind which would be extremely disrelished if known to your countrymen. The reserve of *the Prest. of the U.S.*<sup>6</sup> had never permitted me to discover the light in which he viewed it, and as I was more anxious that you should satisfy him than me, I had still avoided explanations with you on the subject. But your 113. induced him to break silence and to notice the extreme acrimony of your expressions. He added that he had been informed the sentiments you expressed *in your conversations*<sup>7</sup> were equally offensive to our allies, and that you should consider yourself as the representative of your country and that what you say<sup>8</sup> might be imputed to your constituents. He desired me therefore to write to you on this subject. He added that he considered *France as the sheet anchor of this country and its friendship as a first object*. There are in the U.S. some characters of opposite principles; some of them are high in office, others possessing great wealth, and all of them hostile to France and fondly looking to England as the staff of their hope. These I named to you on a [former occasion](#). Their prospects have certainly not brightened. Excepting them, this country is entirely republican, friends to the constitution, anxious to preserve it and to have it administered according to it's own republican principles. The little party above mentioned<sup>9</sup> have espoused it only as a stepping stone to monarchy, and have endeavored to approximate it to that in it's administration, in order to render it's final transition more easy. The successes of republicanism in France have given the coup de grace to their prospects, and I hope to their projects.—I have developed to you faithfully the sentiments of your country, that you may govern yourself accordingly. I know your republicanism to be pure, and that it is no decay of that which has embittered you against it's votaries in France, but too great a sensibility at the partial evil by which it's object has been accomplished there. I have written to you in the stile to which I have been always accustomed with you, and which perhaps it is time I should lay aside. But while old men feel sensibly enough their own advance in years, they do not sufficiently recollect it in those whom they have seen young. In writing too the last private letter which will probably be written under present circumstances, in contemplating that your correspondence will shortly be turned over to I know not whom, but certainly to some one not in the habit of considering your interests with the same fostering anxieties I do, I have presented things without reserve, satisfied you will ascribe what I have said to it's true motive, use it for your own best interest, and in that fulfill completely what I had in view.

With respect to the subject of your letter of Sep. 15. you will be sensible that many considerations would prevent my undertaking the reformation of a system of which I am so soon to take leave. It is but common decency to leave to my successor the moulding of his own business.—Not knowing how otherwise to convey this letter to you with certainty, I shall appeal to the friendship and honour of the Spanish commissioners here, to give it the protection of their cover, as a letter of private nature altogether. We have no remarkable event here lately, but the death of [Dr. Lee](#): nor have I any thing new to communicate to you of your friends or affairs. I am with unalterable affection & wishes for your prosperity, my dear Sir, your sincere friend and servant.

P.S. Jan. 15. Your Nos. 116. 117. and Private of Nov. 2 are received.—Congress have before them a [statement of the payments to France](#).<sup>10</sup> It appears none were made from *Dec. till Aug. nine*. This long previous suspension and *payment* the day before the *tenth August* begot suspicions on Gov. Morris. Hamilton cleared him and leaves it *on you by denying that Morris* had any thing to do with it, and *he clear[s]*<sup>11</sup> *himself by saying that you had no order[s]*<sup>12</sup> *from hence either for the suspension or payment*. *Contrive to convey to me the truth of this* and I will have it so used for your justification as to clear you with all and injure you with *none*.<sup>13</sup>

d. Letter to James Madison (24 March 1793) on alternatives to force

TH: JEFFERSON TO J. MADISON

The idea seems to gain credit that the naval powers combining against France will prohibit supplies even of provisions to that country. Should this be formally notified I should suppose Congress would be called, because it is a justifiable cause of war, and as the Executive cannot decide the question of war on the affirmative side, neither ought it to do so on the negative side, by preventing the competent body from deliberating on the question. But I should hope that war would not be their choice. I think it will furnish us a happy opportunity of setting another precious example to the world, by shewing that nations may be brought to do justice by appeals to their interests as well as by appeals to arms. I should hope that Congress instead of a denunciation of war, would instantly exclude from our ports all the manufactures, produce, vessels and subjects of the nations committing this aggression, during the continuance of the aggression and till full satisfaction made for it. This would work well in many ways, safely in all, and introduce between nations another umpire than arms. It would relieve us too from the risks and the horrors of cutting throats. The death of the king of France has not produced as open condemnations from the Monocrats as I expected. I dined the other day in a company where the subject was discussed. I will name the company in the order in which they manifested their partialities, beginning with the warmest Jacobinism and proceeding by shades to the most heartfelt aristocracy. Smith (N.Y.) Coxe. Stewart. T. Shippen. Bingham. Peters. Breck. Meredith. Wolcott. It is certain that the ladies of this city, of the first circle are all open-mouthed against the murderers of a sovereign, and they generally speak those sentiments which the more cautious husband smothers.—I believe it is pretty certain that Smith (S.C.) and miss A. are not to come together. Ternant has at length openly hoisted the flag of monarchy by going into deep mourning for his prince. I suspect he thinks a cessation of his visits to me a necessary accompaniment to this pious duty. A connection between him and Hamilton seems to be springing up. On observing that Duer was secretary to the old board of treasury, I suspect him to have been the person who suggested to Hamilton the letter of mine to that board which he so tortured in his [Catullus](#). Dunlap has refused to print [the peice which we had heard of before your departure](#), and it has been several days in Bache's hands, without any notice of it.—The President will leave this about the 27th. inst. and return about the 20th. of April. Adieu.

\*e. Letter to Joseph Priestley (21 March 1801)

DEAR SIR

I learnt some time ago that you were in Philadelphia, but that it was only for a fortnight, & supposed you were gone. it was not till yesterday I recieved information that you were still there, [had been very ill](#) but were on the recovery. I sincerely rejoice that you are so. yours is one of the few lives precious to mankind, & for the continuance of which every thinking man is solicitous. bigots may be an exception. what an effort, my dear Sir, of bigotry in Politics & Religion have we gone through. the



barbarians really flattered themselves they should even be able to bring back the times of Vandalism, when ignorance put every thing into the hands of power & priestcraft. all advances in science were proscribed as innovations. they pretended to praise & encourage education, but it was to be vain the education of our ancestors. we were to look backwards not forwards for improvement, the President himself declaring in [one of his answers to addresses](#) that we were never to expect to go beyond them in real science. this was the real ground of all the attacks on you: those who live by mystery & charlatanerie, fearing you would render them useless by simplifying the Christian philosophy, the most sublime & benevolent, but most perverted system that ever shone on man, endeavored to crush your well earned, & well deserved fame. but it was the Lilliputians upon Gulliver. our countrymen have recovered from the alarm into which art & industry had thrown them, science & honesty are replaced on their high ground, and you, my dear Sir, as their great apostle, are on it's pinnacle.<sup>1</sup> it is with heartfelt satisfaction that, in the first moment of my public action, I can hail you with welcome to our land, tender to you the homage of it's respect & esteem, cover you under the protection of those laws which were made for the wise & the good like you, and disclaim the legitimacy of that libel on legislation which under the form of a law was for sometime placed among them.<sup>2</sup> as the storm is now subsiding & the horizon becoming serene, it is pleasant to consider the phaenomenon with attention. we can no longer say there is nothing new under the sun. for this whole chapter in the history of man is new. the great extent of our republic is new. it's sparse habitation is new. the mighty wave of public opinion which has rolled over it is new. but the most pleasing novelty is it's so quickly subsiding, over such an extent of surface, to it's true level again. the order & good sense displayed in this recovery from delusion, and in the momentous crisis which lately arose, really bespeak a strength of character in our nation which augurs well for the duration of our republic, & I am much better satisfied now of it's stability, than I was before it was tried. I have been above all things solaced by the prospect which opened on us in the event of a non election of a president; in which case the federal government would have been in the situation of a clock or watch run down. there was no idea of force, nor of any occasion for it. a Convention, invited by the republican members of Congress with the virtual President & Vice President, would have been on the ground in 8. weeks, would have repaired the constitution where it was defective & wound it up again. this peaceable & legitimate resource, to which we are in the habit of implicit obedience, superseding all appeal to force, and being always within our reach, shews a precious principle of self-preservation in our composition, till a change of circumstances shall take place, which is not within prospect at any definite period.—but I have got into a long disquisition on politics when I only meant to express my sympathy in the state of your health, and to tender you all the affections of public & private hospitality. I should be very happy indeed to see you here. I leave this about the 30th. inst. to return about the 25th. of April. if you do not leave Philadelphia before that, a little excursion hither would help your health. I should be much gratified with the possession of a guest I so much esteem, and should claim a right to lodge you should you make such an excursion. accept the homage of my high consideration & respect, & assurances of affectionate attachment.

TH: JEFFERSON

\*f. Reply to the Danbury Baptist Association (1 January 1802)

GENTLEMEN

The affectionate sentiments of esteem and approbation which you are so good as to express towards me, on behalf of the Danbury Baptist association, give me the highest satisfaction. my duties

dictate a faithful & zealous pursuit of the interests of my constituents, & in proportion as they are persuaded of my fidelity to those duties, the discharge of them becomes more and more pleasing.

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the [legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions](#), I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that *their* legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection & blessing of the common father and creator of man, and tender you for yourselves & your religious association, assurances of my high respect & esteem.

TH: JEFFERSON

\*g. Last Letter to Roger C. Weightman (24 June 1826)

Respected Sir

The kind invitation I receive from you on the part of the citizens of the city of Washington, to be present with them at their celebration of the 50th. anniversary of American independance; as one of the surviving signers of an instrument pregnant with our own, and the fate of the world, is most flattering to myself, and heightened by the honorable accompaniment proposed for the comfort of such a journey. it adds sensibly to the sufferings of sickness, to be deprived by it of a personal participation in the rejoicings of that day. but acquiescence is a duty, under circumstances not placed among those we are permitted to controul. I should, indeed, with peculiar delight, have met and exchanged there congratulations personally with the small band, the remnant of that host of worthies, who joined with us on that day, in the bold and doubtful election we were to make for our country, between submission or the sword; and to have enjoyed with them the consolatory fact, that our fellow citizens, after half a century of experience and prosperity, continue to approve the choice we made. may it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the Signal of arousing men to burst the chains, under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings & security of self-government. that form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. all eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. the general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view. the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of god. these are grounds of hope for others. for ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.

I will ask permission here to express the pleasure with which I should have met my ancient neighbors of the City of Washington and of it's vicinities, with whom I passed so many years of a pleasing social intercourse; an intercourse which so much relieved the anxieties of the public cares, and left impressions so deeply engraved in my affections, as never to be forgotten. with my regret that ill health

forbids me the gratification of an acceptance, be pleased to receive for yourself, and those for whom you write, the assurance of my highest respect and friendly attachments.

Th. Jefferson

\*V. Lyrics to "Jefferson and Liberty" (from *The Green Mountain Songster*)

The gloomy night before us lies,  
The reign of terror now is o'er;  
Its gags, inquisitors and spies,  
Its hordes of harpies are no more  
    Rejoice, Columbia's sons, rejoice  
    To tyrants never bend the knee  
    But join with heart, and soul and voice  
For Jefferson and Liberty.

O'er vast Columbia's varied clime  
Her cities, forests, shores and dales;  
In riding majesty, sublime,  
Immortal liberty prevails,  
    Rejoice etc.

Hail! long expected glorious day  
Illustrious memorable morn:  
That freedom's fabric from decay  
Secures - for millions yet unborn.  
    Rejoice etc.

His country's glory, hope and stay,  
In virtues and in talents tried;  
Now rises to assume the sway,  
O'er freedom's temple to preside.  
    Rejoice etc.

Within its hallow'd walls immense  
No hireling band shall e'er arise;  
Array'd in tyranny's defence,  
To hear an injur'd people's cries.  
    Rejoice etc.

No lordling here with gorging jaws.  
Shall wring from industry its food;  
No fiery bigot's holy laws,  
Lay waste our fields and streets in blood.  
    Rejoice etc.

Here strangers from a thousand shores  
Compell'd by tyranny to roam;  
Shall find, amidst abundant stores,  
A nobler and a happier home.  
    Rejoice etc.

Here art shall lift her laurel'd head  
Wealth industry and peace divine;  
And where dark forests lately spread

Rich fields and lofty cities shine.

Rejoice etc.

From Europe's wants and woes remote  
A dreary waste of waves between;  
Here plenty cheers the humble cot,  
And smiles on every village green.

Rejoice etc.

Here, free as air's expanded space,  
To every soul and sect shall be;  
That sacred privilege of our race,  
The worship of the Deity.

Rejoice etc.

These gifts, great Liberty, are thine,  
Ten thousand more we owe to thee;  
Immortal may their mem'ries shine,  
Who fought and died for Liberty.

Rejoice etc.

What heart but hails a scene so bright  
What soul but inspiration draws;  
Who would not guard so dear a right  
Or die in such a glorious cause.

Rejoice etc.

Let foes to freedom dread the name,  
But should they touch the sacred tree  
Twice fifty thousand swords would flame,  
For Jefferson and Liberty.

Rejoice etc.

From Georgia up to Lake Champlain  
From seas to Mississippi's shore;  
Ye sons of freedom loud proclaim,  
The Reign of Terror is no more.

Rejoice-Columbia's sons, rejoice!

To tyrants never bend the knee;  
But join with heart, and soul and voice  
For JEFFERSON and LIBERTY.

\*VI. First Inaugural Address (4 March 1801)

Friends & Fellow Citizens,

Called upon to undertake the duties of the first Executive office of our country, I avail myself of the presence of that portion of my fellow citizens which is here assembled to express my grateful thanks for the favor with which they have been pleased to look towards me, to declare a sincere consciousness that the task is above my talents, and that I approach it with those anxious and awful presentiments which the greatness of the charge, and the weakness of my powers so justly inspire. A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye; when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see

the honour, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation & humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking. Utterly indeed should I despair, did not the presence of many, whom I here see, remind me, that, in the other high authorities provided by our constitution, I shall find resources of wisdom, of virtue, and of zeal, on which to rely under all difficulties. To you, then, gentlemen, who are charged with the sovereign functions of legislation, and to those associated with you, I look with encouragement for that guidance and support which may enable us to steer with safety the vessel in which we are all embarked, amidst the conflicting elements of a troubled world.

During the contest of opinion through which we have past, the animation of discussions and of exertions has sometimes worn an aspect which might impose on strangers unused to think freely, and to speak and to write what they think; but this being now decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the constitution all will of course arrange themselves under the will of the law, and unite in common efforts for the common good. All too will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression. Let us then, fellow citizens, unite with one heart and one mind, let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty, and even life itself, are but dreary things. And let us reflect that having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance, as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions. During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonising spasms of infuriated man, seeking through blood and slaughter his long lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitation of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore; that this should be more felt and feared by some and less by others; and should divide opinions as to measures of safety; but every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all republicans: we are all federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union, or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated, where reason is left free to combat it. I know indeed that some honest men fear that a republican government cannot be strong; that this government is not strong enough. But would the honest patriot, in the full tide of successful experiment, abandon a government which has so far kept us free and firm, on the theoretic and visionary fear, that this government, the world's best hope, may, by possibility, want energy to preserve itself? I trust not. I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest government on earth. I believe it the only one, where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern.—Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he then be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels, in the form of kings, to govern him? Let history answer this question.

Let us then, with courage and confidence, pursue our own federal and republican principles; our attachment to union and representative government. Kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe; too high minded to endure the degradations of the others, possessing a chosen country, with room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation, entertaining a due sense of our equal right to the use of our own faculties, to the acquisitions of our own industry, to honor and confidence from our fellow citizens, resulting not from birth, but from our actions and their sense of them, enlightened by a benign religion, professed indeed and practised in various forms, yet all of them inculcating honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude and the love of man, acknowledging and adoring an overruling providence, which by all its

dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here, and his greater happiness hereafter; with all these blessings, what more is necessary to make us a happy and a prosperous people? Still one thing more, fellow citizens, a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government; and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.

About to enter, fellow citizens, on the exercise of duties which comprehend every thing dear and valuable to you, it is proper you should understand what I deem the essential principles of our government, and consequently those which ought to shape its administration. I will compress them within the narrowest compass they will bear, stating the general principle, but not all its limitations.—Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political:—peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none:—the support of the state governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns, and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies:—the preservation of the General government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home, and safety abroad: a jealous care of the right of election by the people, a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided:—absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of republics, from which is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of the despotism:—a well disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace, and for the first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them:—the supremacy of the civil over the military authority:—economy in the public expence, that labor may be lightly burthened:—the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith:—encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid:—the diffusion of information, and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason:—freedom of religion; freedom of the press; and freedom of person, under the protection of the Habeas Corpus:—and trial by juries impartially selected. These principles form the bright constellation, which has gone before us and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages, and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment:—they should be the creed of our political faith; the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps, and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty and safety.

I repair then, fellow citizens, to the post you have assigned me. With experience enough in subordinate offices to have seen the difficulties of this the greatest of all, I have learnt to expect that it will rarely fall to the lot of imperfect man to retire from this station with the reputation, and the favor, which bring him into it. Without pretensions to that high confidence you reposed in our first and greatest revolutionary character, whose pre-eminent services had entitled him to the first place in his country's love, and destined for him the fairest page in the volume of faithful history, I ask so much confidence only as may give firmness and effect to the legal administration of your affairs. I shall often go wrong through defect of judgment. When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground. I ask your indulgence for my own errors, which will never be intentional; and your support against the errors of others, who may condemn what they would not if seen in all its parts. The approbation implied by your suffrage, is a great consolation to me for the past; and my future solicitude will be, to retain the good opinion of those who have bestowed it in advance, to conciliate that of others by doing them all the good in my power, and to be instrumental to the happiness and freedom of all.

Relying then on the patronage of your good will, I advance with obedience to the work, ready to retire from it whenever you become sensible how much better choices it is in your power to make. And may that infinite power, which rules the destinies of the universe, lead our councils to what is best, and give them a favorable issue for your peace and prosperity.

VII. Presentation of the “Mammoth Cheese” (1 January 1802),

a. [Editorial Introduction](#)

b. From the Committee of Cheshire (30 December 1801)

SIR

Notwithstanding we live remote from the seat of our national government, & in an extreme part of our own state, yet we humbly claim the right of judging for ourselves.

Our attachment to the National Constitution is indissoluble. We consider it as a discription of those powers which the people have delegated to their Magistrates, to be exercised for definite purposes; and not as a charter of favors granted by a Sovereign to his subjects.

Among its beautiful features,—The right of free suffrage, to correct all abuses—The prohibition of religious tests, to prevent all hierarchy—and the means of amendment which it contains within itself, to remove defects as fast as they are discovered, appear the most prominent.

Such being the sentiments which we entertain, our joy must have been exquisite on your appointment to the first office in the nation.

The trust is great. The task is arduous. But we believe the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, who raises up men to achieve great events, has raised up a *Jefferson* at this critical day, to defend *Republicanism*, and to baffle the arts of *Aristocracy*.

We wish to prove the love we bear to our President not by words alone, but in *deed and in truth*. With this Address we send you a Chees by the hands of Messrs. John Leland and Darius Brown, as a token of the esteem which we bear to our chief Magistrate, and of the sense we entertain<sup>1</sup> of the singular blessings that have been derived from the numerous services you have rendered to mankind in general, and more especially to this favored nation over which you preside. It is not the last stone of the Bastile; nor is it an article of great pecuniary worth; but as a freewill-offering, we hope it will be favorably received.

The Chees was produced by the personal labor of *Freeborn Farmers*, with the voluntary and cheerful aid of their wives and daughters, without the assistance of a single slave. It was originally intended for an elective President of a free people, and with a principal view of casting a mite into the even scale of *Federal Democracy*. We hope it will safely arrive at it's destined place, and that it's quality will prove to be such as may not disappoint the wishes of those who made it.

To that infinite Being who governs the Universe we ardently pray, that your life and health may long be preserved—that your usefulness may be still continued—that your Administration may

be no less pleasant to yourself than it is grateful to us and to the nation at large, and that the blessing of generations yet unborn may come upon you.

In behalf of ourselves and our fellow citizens of Cheshire, we render you the tribute of profound respect.

N.B. The chees above mentioned was made July 20. 1801, and on the 20th of August it weighed 1235**lb**.

c. To the Committee of Cheshire (1 January 1802)

GENTLEMEN

I concur with you in the sentiments expressed in your kind address on behalf of the inhabitants of the town of Cheshire, that the constitution of the United States is a Charter of authorities and duties, not a Charter of rights to it's officers; and that among it's most precious provisions are the right of suffrage, the prohibition of religious tests, and it's means of peaceable amendment. nothing ensures the duration of this fair fabric of government so effectually as the due sense entertained, by the body of our citizens, of the value of these principles, & their care to preserve them.

I recieve, with particular pleasure, the testimony of good will with which your citizens have been pleased to charge you.<sup>1</sup> it presents an extraordinary proof of the skill with which those domestic arts, which contribute so much to our daily comfort, are practised by them, and particularly by that portion of them most interesting to the affections, the cares & the happiness of man.

To myself, this mark of esteem from freeborn farmers, employed personally in the useful labors of life, is peculiarly grateful. having no wish but to preserve to them the fruits of their labour, their sense of this truth will be my highest reward.

I pray you, gentlemen, to make my thanks for their favor acceptable to them, & to be assured yourselves of my high respect and esteem.

TH: JEFFERSON

\*VIII. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at the Dedication of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C." (13 April 1943), [read speech here](#)



