

American Minute with Bill Federer

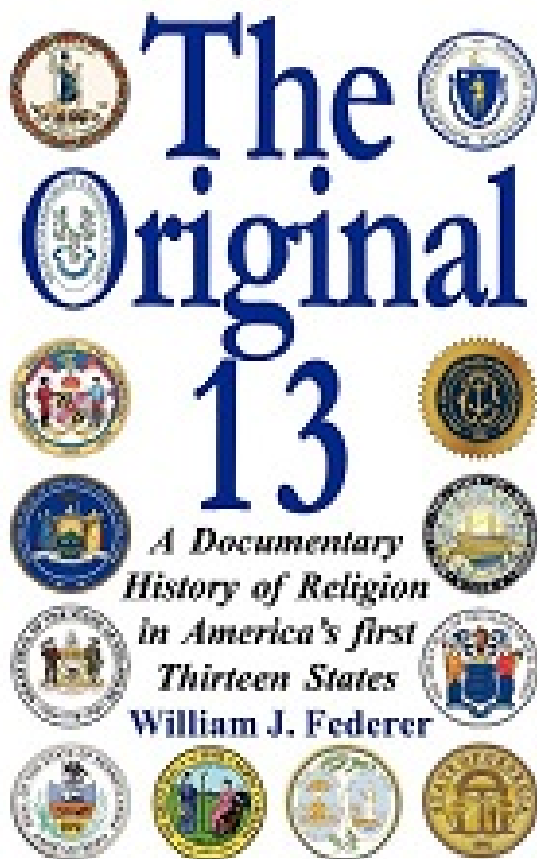
First Things First: Religious Freedom! Who influenced Jefferson's views on the Wall of Separation of Church & State

On JANUARY 1, 1802, the people of Cheshire, Massachusetts, delivered a giant block of cheese weighing 1,235 lbs to President Thomas

Jefferson, being presented by the famous Baptist preacher, John Leland.

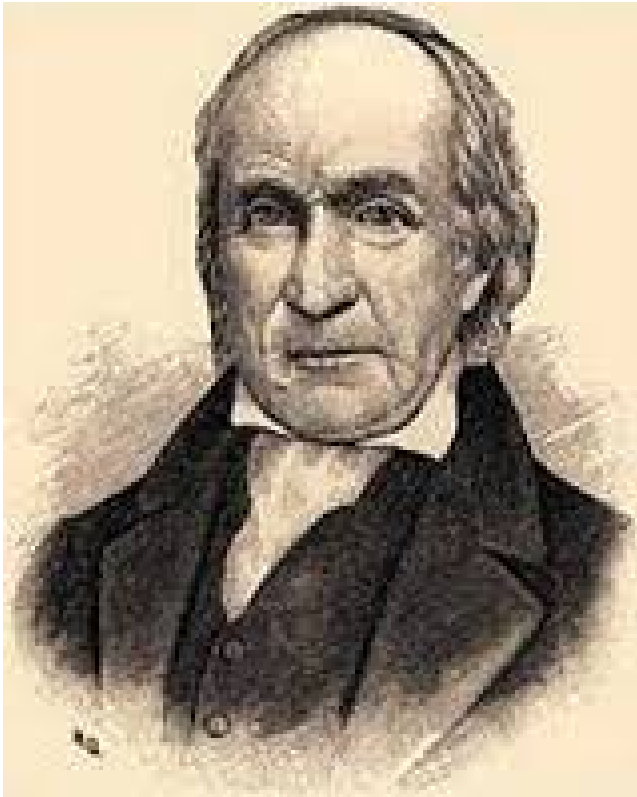


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[THE ORIGINAL 13 - A Documentary History of Religion in America's First Thirteen States](#)

On the block of cheese, they put **Jefferson's motto**, which was also on his personal seal: **"Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God."**



After delivering the cheese, **John Leland** was then invited to preach to the President and Congress in the U.S. Capitol.

The subject of his talk was **"separation of church and state."**

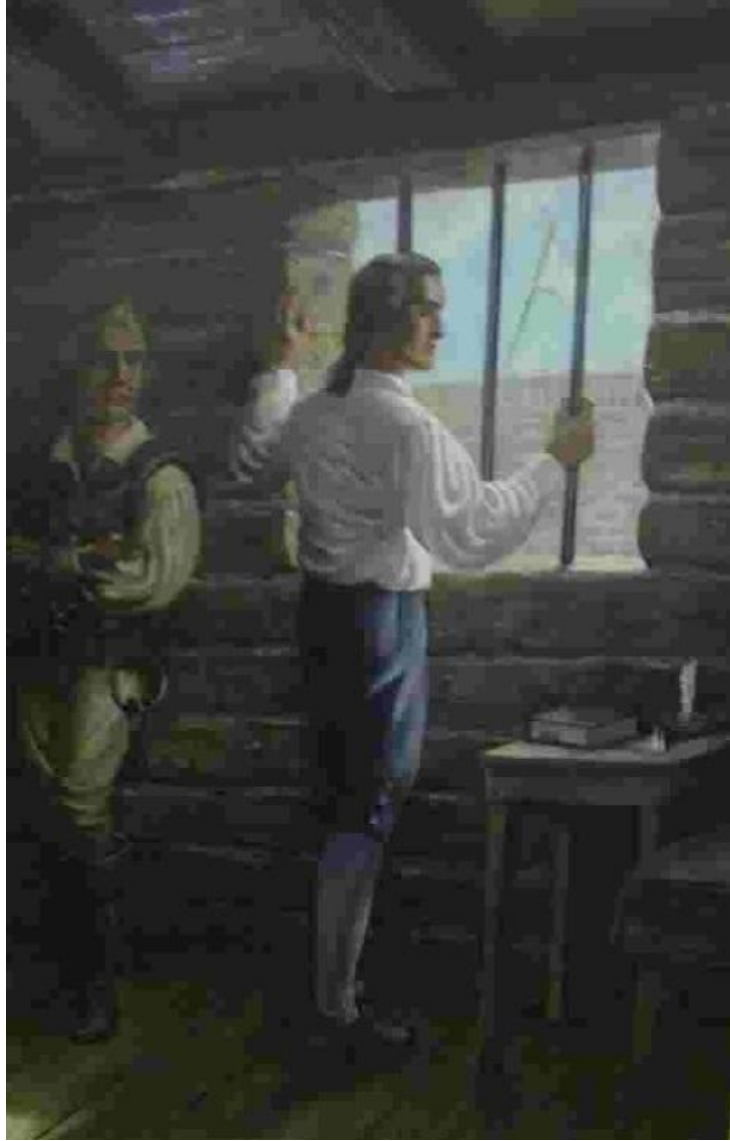
Baptists had been particularly persecuted in **colonial Virginia**, as Francis L. Hawks wrote in *Ecclesiastical History* (1836):

"No dissenters in Virginia experienced for a time harsher treatment than the Baptists ...

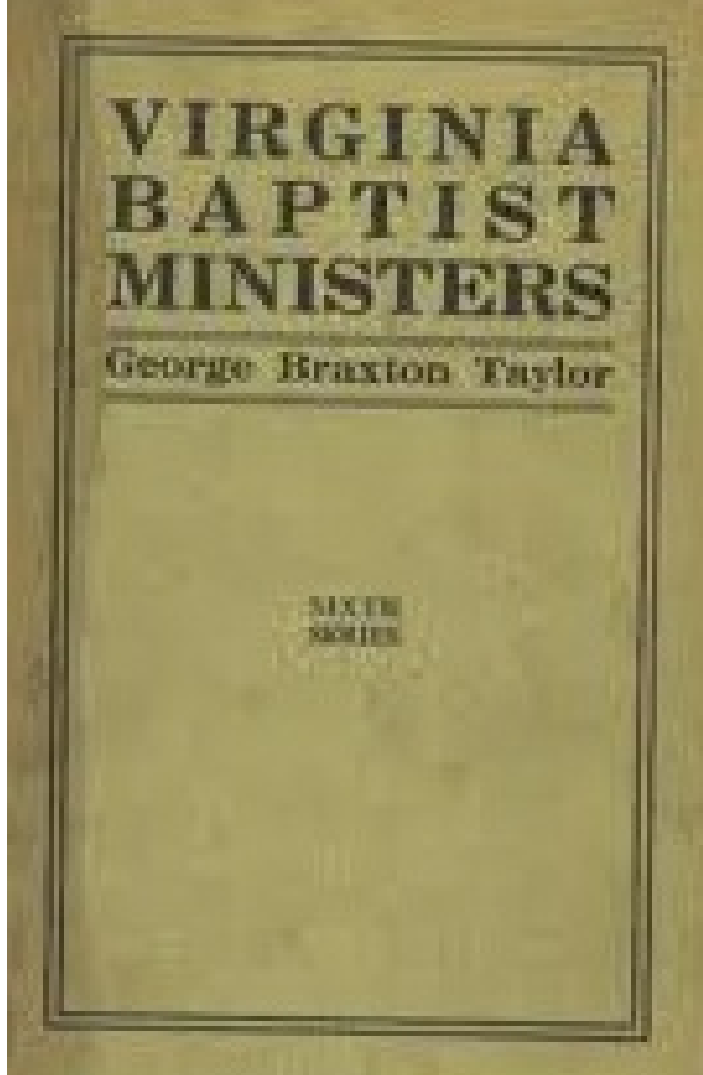


... They were beaten and imprisoned ...

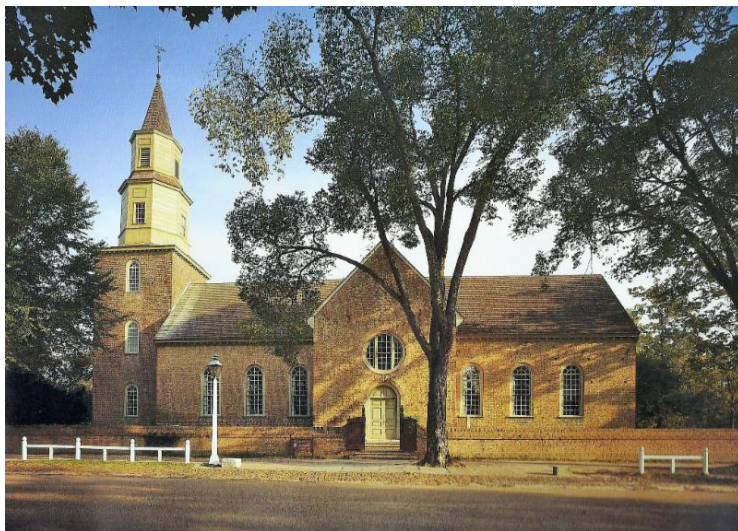
Cruelty taxed ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance."



So many Baptist ministers were harassed, and their church services disrupted, that **James Madison** introduced legislation in Virginia's Legislature on October 31, 1785, titled "**A Bill for Punishing Disturbers of Religious Worship,**" which passed in 1789.



Colonial Virginia had an "establishment" of the **Church of England**, or "**Anglican Church**" from 1606 to 1786.



Establishment meant:

- mandatory membership;
- mandatory taxes to support it; and
- no one could hold public office unless they were a member.

This was modeled after European nations who had

establishments of different Christian denominations, as well as Islamist and atheistic countries which effectively established their belief systems.

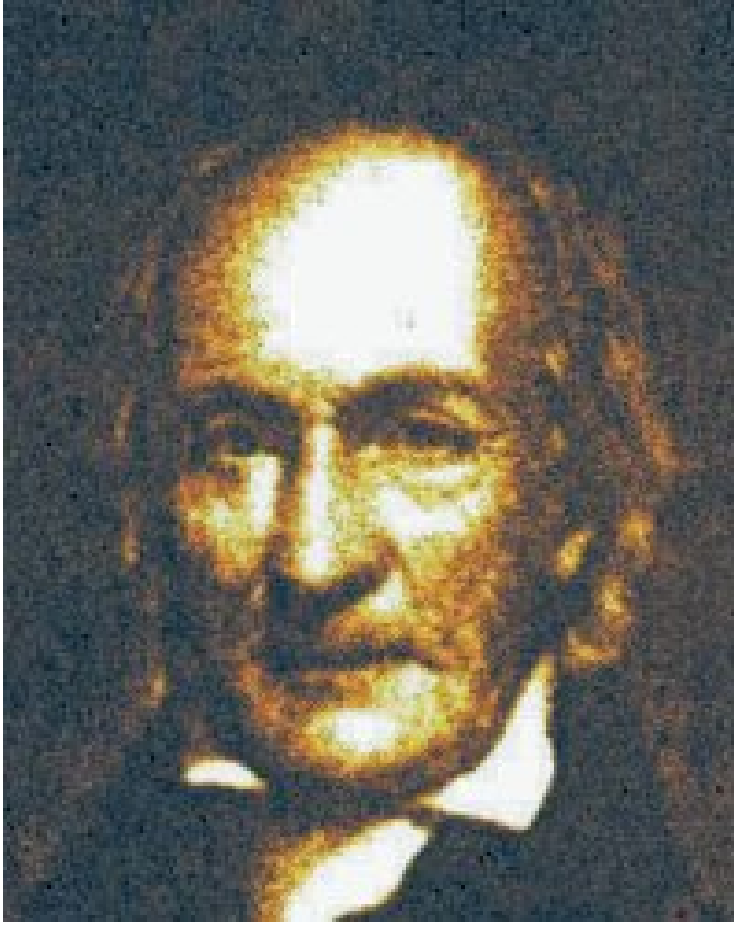


In **Virginia**, lax enforcement allowed immigration of **"dissenting"** religious groups, the first being **Presbyterians** and **Quakers**, followed by **German Lutherans**, **Mennonites** and **Moravian Brethren**, then finally **Baptists**.

Patrick Henry almost succeeded in having **Virginia not ratify the Constitution** as it did not have a **Bill of Rights** guaranteeing, among other things, the **freedom of religion**.



Baptist Preacher John Leland had considered running for



Congress, as he wanted an **Amendment** added to the new United States Constitution which would **protect religious liberty**.

Leland reportedly met with **James Madison** near Orange, Virginia.

Upon **Madison's** promise to introduce what would become the **First**

Amendment, **Leland** agreed to **persuade Baptists** to **get involved in politics** and support **Madison**.



John Leland wrote in *Rights of Conscience Inalienable*, 1791, that they wanted not just toleration, but equality:

"Every man must



give account of himself to **God**, and therefore **every man** ought to **be at liberty** to serve **God** in a way that he can best reconcile to **his conscience**.

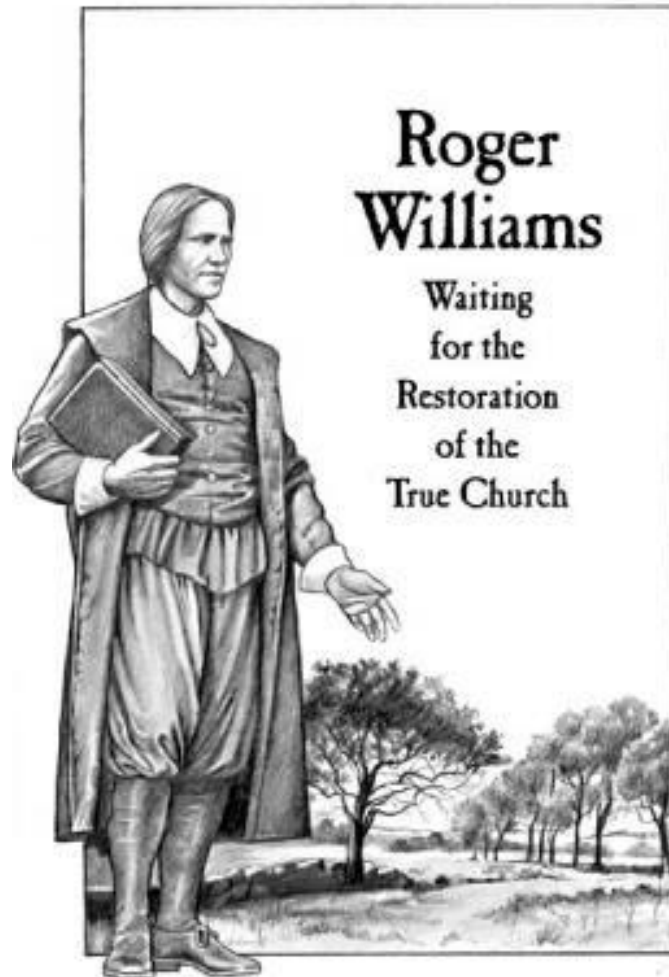
If government can answer for individuals at the **day of judgment**, let men be controlled by it in

religious matters; otherwise, let men be free."

John Leland was following in the tradition of the **Baptist Roger Williams**, who fled England to Massachusetts, then fled to found Rhode Island.

The situation was that Puritans were persecuted by the established Anglican Church in England.

They fled in a **Great Puritan Migration** to Massachusetts, where they proceeded to **establish Puritanism**.



Supreme Court Justice Hugo Lafayette Black wrote in *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962:

"When some of the very groups which had most strenuously **opposed the established Church of England** found themselves sufficiently in control of colonial governments in

this country to write their own prayers into law, **they passed laws making their own religion the official religion** of their respective colonies."



Roger Williams wrote in his *Plea for Religious Liberty*, 1644:

"The doctrine of **persecution for cause of conscience** is most **contrary** to the **doctrine of Christ Jesus the Prince of Peace**

...

God requireth not a uniformity of religion to be enacted and enforced in

any civil state;

which **enforced uniformity** (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civil war, **ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Jesus** in his servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls."

A few years later, **Quaker** founder of Pennsylvania **William Penn** wrote in *England's Present Interest Considered*, 1675:

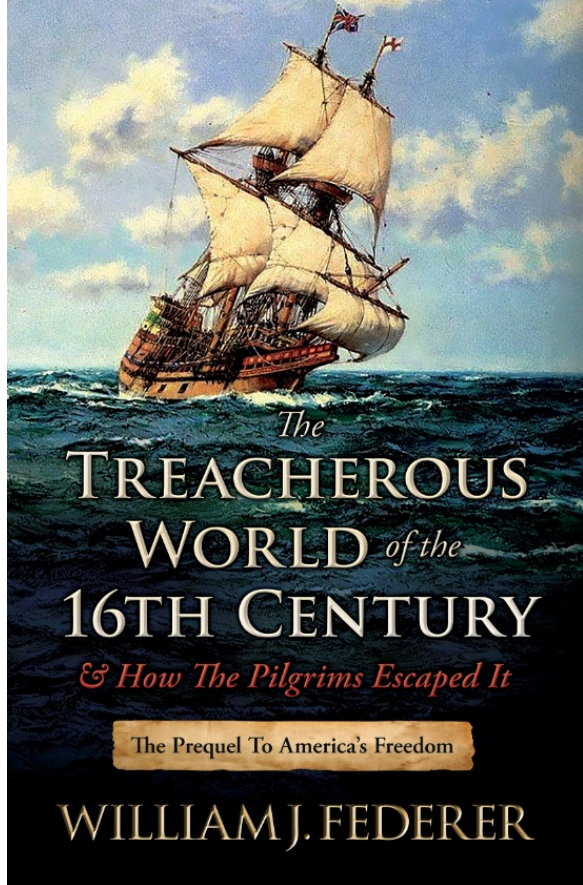
"Force makes hypocrites, 'tis **persuasion** only that makes converts."

Freedom of conscience gave birth to **public evangelistic meetings**.

It is rooted in the belief that **God loves us** and **our response** is to **love Him back**, but **love**, by definition must be **voluntary**.



[The Treacherous World of the 16th Century and How the Pilgrims Escaped It: The Prequel to America's Freedom](#)



Following George Whitefield's **First Great Awakening Revival**, 1730-1755, a **Second Great Awakening Revival** took place between 1790-1840.



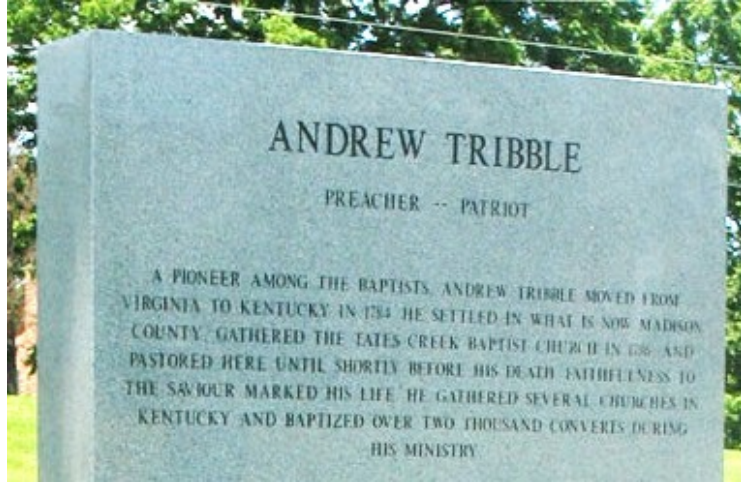
In **Thomas Jefferson's** county of Albemarle, **Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist revival meetings** were held.

Even **Jefferson's daughter, Mary**, attended a **Baptist revival** preached by **Lorenzo Dow**.

On July 4, 1826,
the editor of the
*Christian
Watchman*
(Boston, MA)

published an account:

"ANDREW TRIBBLE was the **Pastor of a small Baptist Church**, which held its monthly meetings at a short distance from **Mr. JEFFERSON'S house**, eight or ten years before the American Revolution.



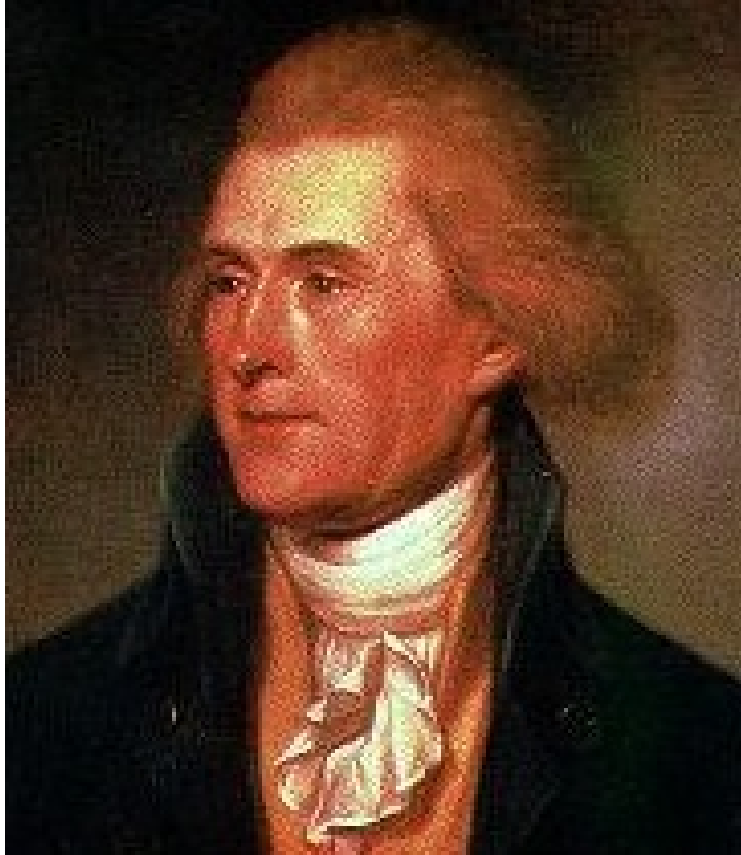
... **Mr. JEFFERSON** attended the **meetings of the church** for several months in succession, and after one of them, asked **Elder TRIBBLE** to go home and dine with him, with which he complied.



Mr. TRIBBLE asked **Mr. JEFFERSON** how he was pleased with **their Church Government?**

Mr. JEFFERSON replied, that it had struck him with great force, and had interested him much; that he considered it the only form of **pure democracy** that then existed in the world, and had

concluded that it would be **the best plan of Government for the American Colonies.**"



Thomas F. Curtis wrote in *The Progress of Baptist Principles in the Last Hundred Years* (Charleston, S.C.: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1856):

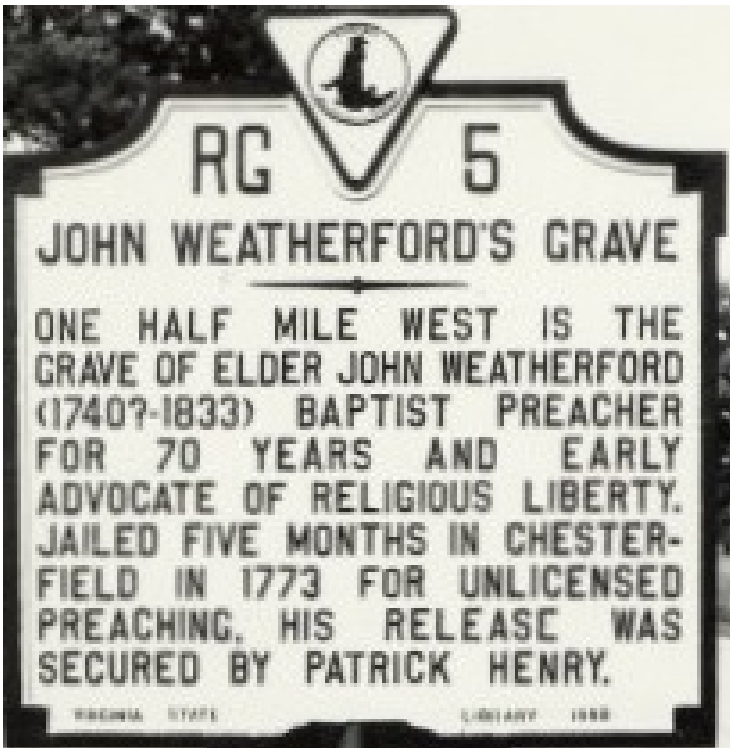
"A gentleman ... in North Carolina ... knowing that the venerable **Mrs. (Dolley) Madison** had some recollections on the subject, asked her in regard to them.

She expressed a distinct remembrance of **Mr. Jefferson** speaking on the subject, and always declaring that it was a **Baptist church** from which these views were gathered."

President Calvin Coolidge stated at the

150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1926:

"This preaching reached the neighborhood of **Thomas Jefferson**, who acknowledged that his **'best ideas of democracy'** had been secured at **church meetings.**"



During the Revolution, Anglican ministers had sided with **King George III**, who was **head of the Anglican Church.**

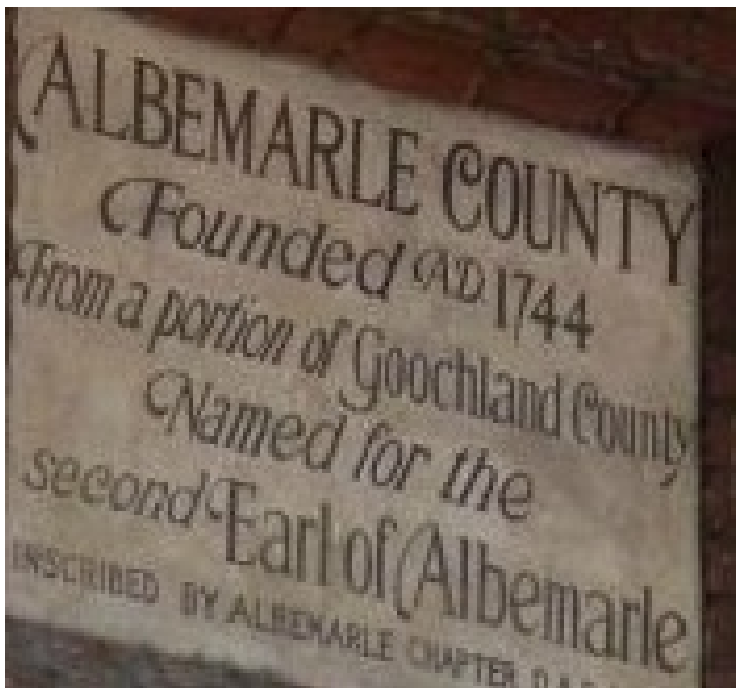
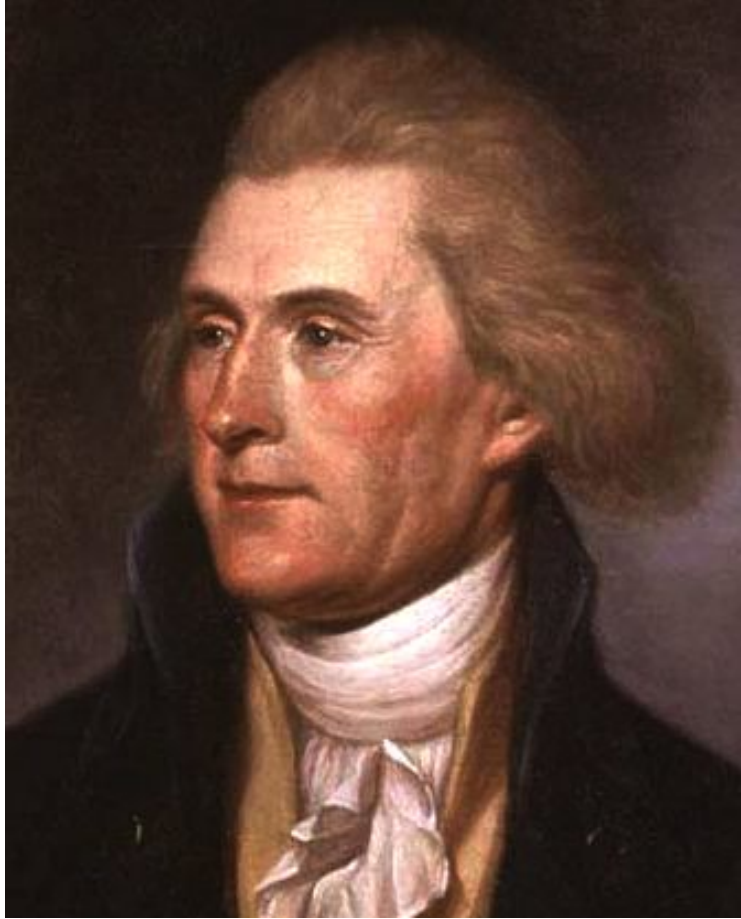
As a result, patriotic parishioners gained courage to **migrate out of the "established"**

churches and filter into "dissenting" churches.

Jefferson was baptized, married and buried in the **Anglican Church**, which was called **"Episcopal"** after America's

Revolution, as recorded in his family Bible.

In 1777, though, he started a dissenting church named the **Calvinistical Reformed Church**.



Jefferson drew up the bylaws of the church, which met in the **Albemarle County Courthouse**.

His idea was for it to be a **"voluntary" church**, supported only by the voluntary

donations of those who attended.

This contrasted with the **Anglican model** of church support where citizen paid **mandatory taxes** to the government, which in turn dispensed funds to established churches.

Jefferson's
memorandum

book showed he contributed to the evangelical pastor of the **Calvinistical Reformed Church, the Rev. Charles Clay.**



Jefferson also gave generously to missionaries and various other churches:

"I have subscribed to the building of an **Episcopal church**, two hundred dollars, a **Presbyterian**, sixty dollars, and a **Baptist**, twenty-five dollars."



After the Revolution, the **Virginia legislature** rewrote its laws, removing all references to the King.

"Dissenting" churches lobbied **Jefferson** to take this opportunity to "**disestablish**" the Anglican Church.

Jefferson responded by

writing his **Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom.**

In 1779, fellow member of

Jefferson's Calvinistical Reformed Church, Col. John Harvie, introduced the bill in Virginia's Assembly.

It took seven years to pass.

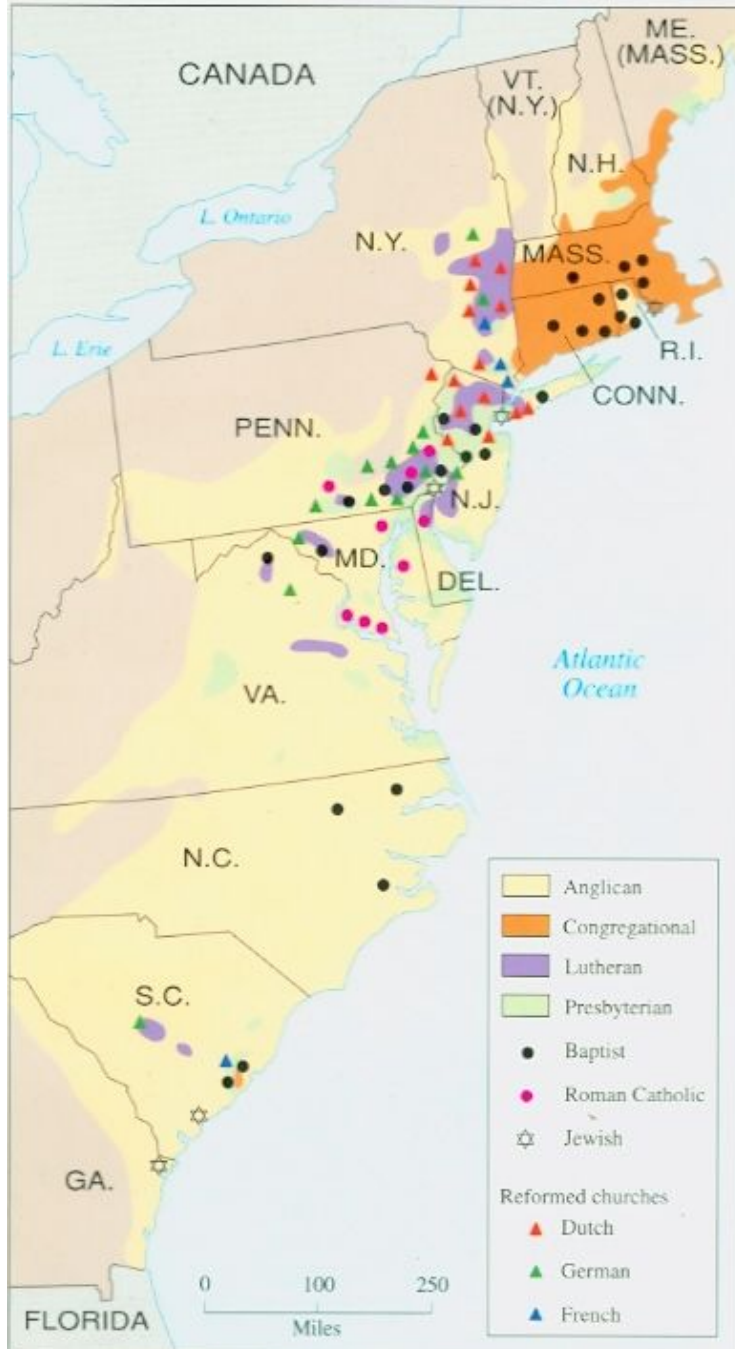
Court Square

The courthouse was also a place of worship and Jefferson himself helped organize an independent congregation led by Rev. Clay beginning in 1777 called the Calvinistical Reformed Church. A member of this church, Col John Harvie, introduced Jefferson's famous Bill for Religious Freedom to the Virginia legislature that same year. Many years later Jefferson called the courthouse the "common temple" and proudly spoke of its use each Sunday by four Protestant denominations in turn.

Justice Hugo Black wrote in *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962:

"But the successful Revolution against English political domination was shortly followed by intense **opposition to the practice of establishing religion by law.**

This opposition crystallized rapidly into an effective political force in **Virginia** where the



minority religious groups such as **Presbyterians, Lutherans, Quakers** and **Baptists** had gained such strength that the adherents to the **established Episcopal Church** were actually a **minority themselves.**

In 1785-1786, those opposed to **the established Church ...** obtained the enactment of the famous **'Virginia Bill for Religious Liberty'** by which all religious groups

were placed on an equal footing."

After three of **Jefferson's** children died, his wife, **Martha**, died in 1782.

After her funeral, **Jefferson** suffered depression and withdrew from politics.



JEFFERSON'S ARRIVAL AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

In his grief, he burned every letter he had with his wife and sequestered himself in his room for three weeks, only venturing out to ride horseback through the hills of his estate.

Jefferson's daughter, Martha 'Patsy' Jefferson, described how he wept for hours:

"In those melancholy rambles I was his constant companion ... a solitary witness to many a violent burst of grief ... the violence of his emotion ... to this day I do not describe to myself."

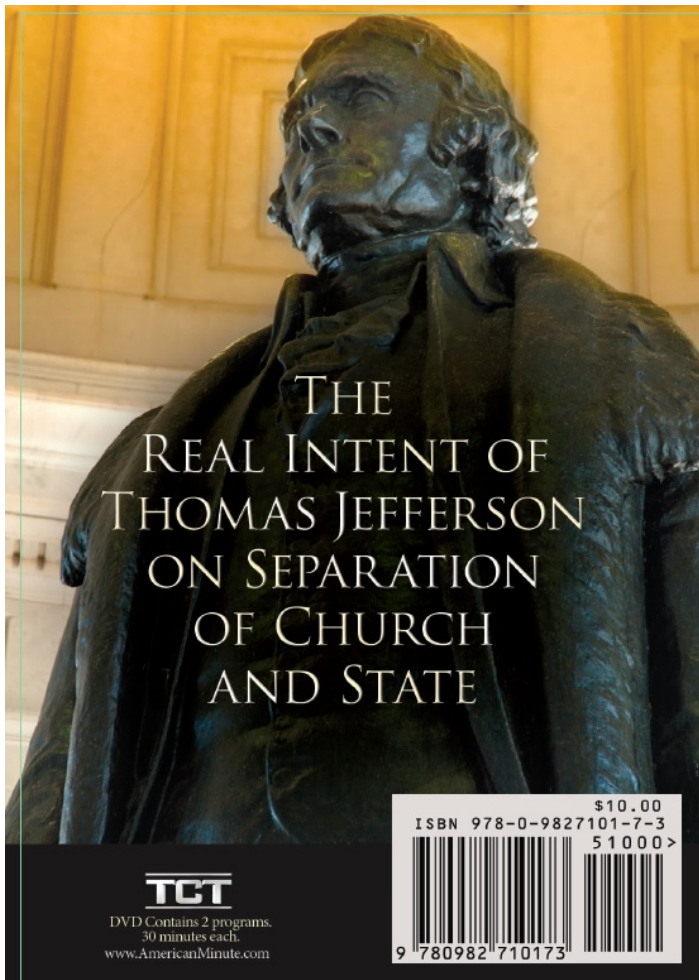


Trying to help, Congress asked **Jefferson** in 1784 to be the U.S. ambassador to France.

France was going through a period of "**French infidelity**" prior to its **bloody French Revolution and Reign of Terror**.

Upon returning to America, **Jefferson** entertained liberal "deist-Christian" ideas, though

in later life he was described simply as a "liberal Episcopalian."



[\(DVD\) The Real Intent of Jefferson on Separation of Church and State](#)

Jefferson's bill, with the help of James Madison, finally

passed by **Virginia's Assembly**, January 16, 1786.

So significant was this, that **Jefferson** noted it on his gravestone as "**The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom.**"

It stated:

"Almighty God hath created the mind free ...

All attempts to influence it by temporal

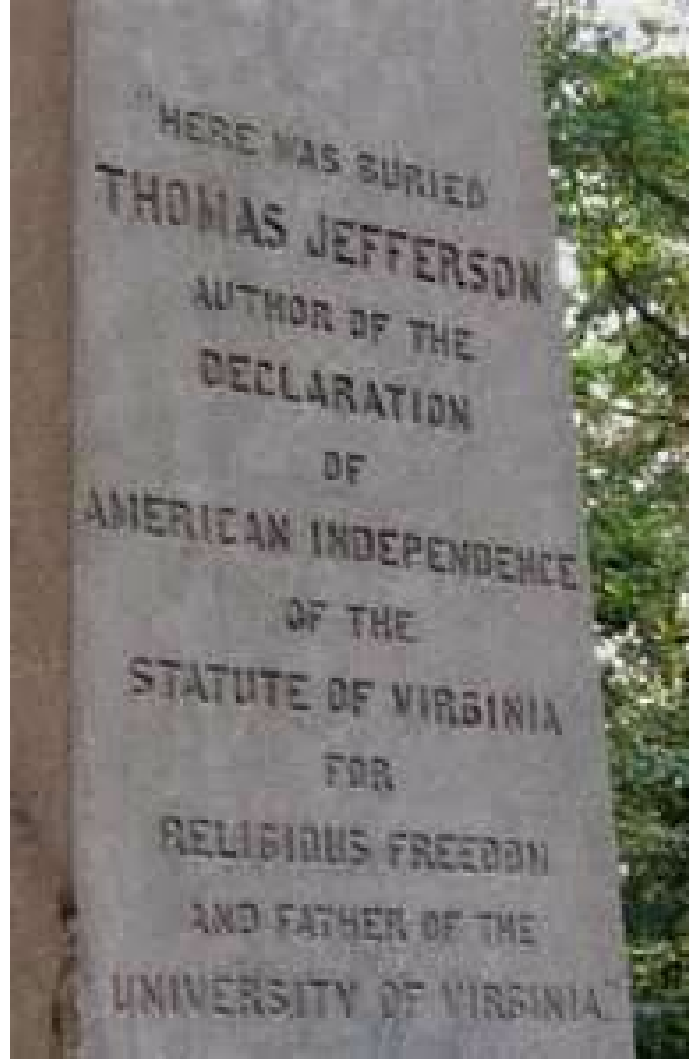
punishments ... are a departure from the plan of the **Holy Author of religion,**

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 ...

To compel a man to furnish **contributions of money** for the **propagation of opinions**, which he **disbelieves** is **sinful** and **tyrannical** ...

Be it enacted ... that no man shall ... suffer on account of his **religious opinions.**"

This last paragraph, if applied today, would mean that **Jefferson** would have **opposed**



Christian parents having to **pay taxes** to have **their children indoctrinated** in **public schools** with **anti-biblical views on sex and marriage.**



Jefferson acquired a **Qur'an** in 1765, but after studying it, he only had praise for **the morality of Jesus**, as he wrote to William Canby, September 18, 1813:

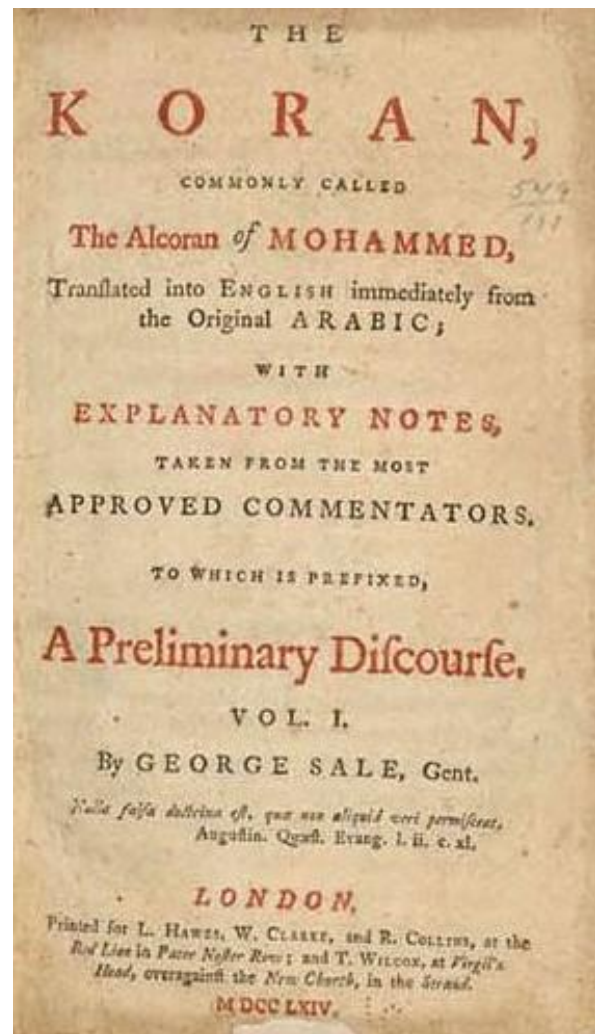
"Of all the systems of morality, ancient or modern, which have come under my observation, none appear to me so pure as that of Jesus."

Jefferson wrote to Jared Sparks, November 4, 1820:

"I hold the precepts of Jesus as delivered by Himself, to be the most pure, benevolent and sublime which have ever been preached to man."

Jefferson wrote to Joseph Priestly, April 9, 1803, regarding **Jesus**:

"His system of morality was **the most benevolent and sublime probably that has been ever taught, and**



consequently **more perfect** than those of any of the **ancient philosophers.**"



Jefferson's belief that "**the Holy Author of religion ... chose not to propagate it by coercions**" is consistent with an account in the **Gospel of John:**

"Many of his disciples ... said, 'This is a hard saying; who can hear it?'

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, 'Doth this offend you?'

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, 'Will ye also go away?'

Then Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.'

Jesus' example of being willing to let disbelievers **voluntarily** depart is **in stark contrast** with the coercion present in **Islamic "ridda" apostasy laws**, where Mohammed said:

"Whoever changes his Islamic religion,

kill him." (Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 9, No. 57)

Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari, narrated by Abdullah:

"Allah's Apostle said, 'The blood of a Muslim ... cannot be shed except ... in three cases ...

the one who reverts from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims." (Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 9, Book 83, No. 17)



Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari, narrated by Ikrima, stated:

"Ali burnt some people (hypocrites) ... No doubt, I would have killed them, for the Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, **kill him.**'" (Hadith Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 4:260, Vol. 9, Book 84, No. 57)

Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari stated:

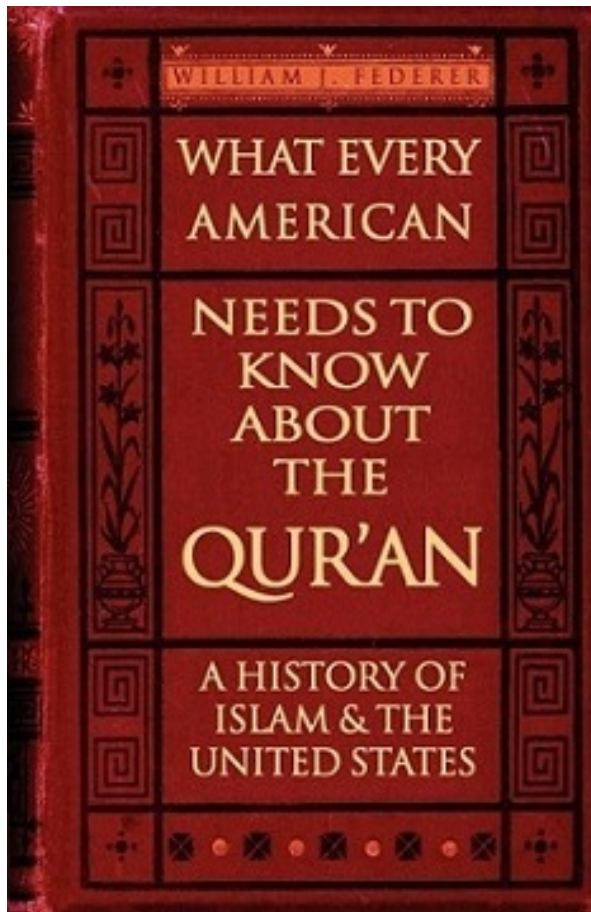
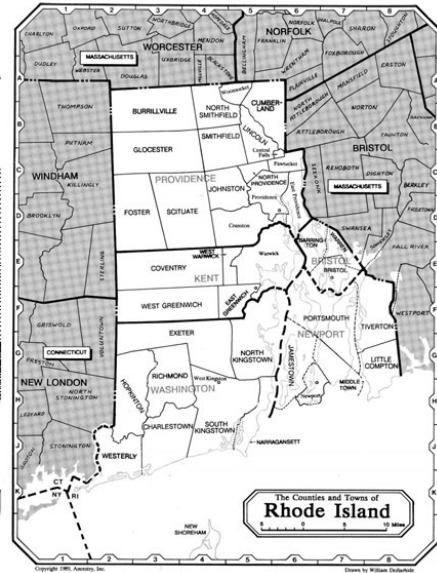
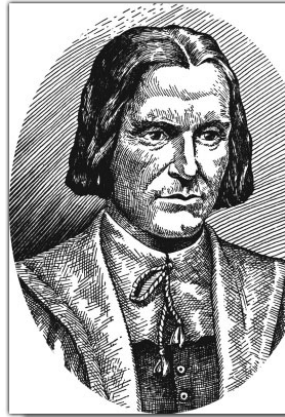
"The punishment for **apostasy (riddah)** is well-known in Islamic Sharee'ah. **The one who leaves Islam** will be asked to repent by the Sharee'ah judge in an Islamic country;

if he does not repent and come back to the true religion, **he will be killed as a kafir and apostate**, because of the command of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): 'Whoever changes his religion, **kill**

him." (Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari, 3017)

Baptist founder of Rhode Island,
Roger Williams, wrote:

"That religion cannot be true which needs such instruments of violence to uphold it."



[What Every American Needs to Know About the Qur'an-A History of Islam and the United States](#)

Jefferson's efforts to **disestablish the Anglican Church** in **Virginia** would never have passed had it not been for **Methodist Bishop**

Francis Asbury splitting the popular **Methodist movement** away from the **Anglican Church** into its own denomination in 1785, forming the **Methodist Episcopal Church**.



African American Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia



Francis Asbury also ordained **Richard Allen** as the **first black deacon**, and preached the dedication service at **Allen's "Mother Bethel" African Methodist Episcopal**

Church in 1794.

Virginia had notable leaders who **resisted "disestablishing" the Anglican**, or as it was now called, the **Episcopal Church**, such as **Governor Patrick Henry**.

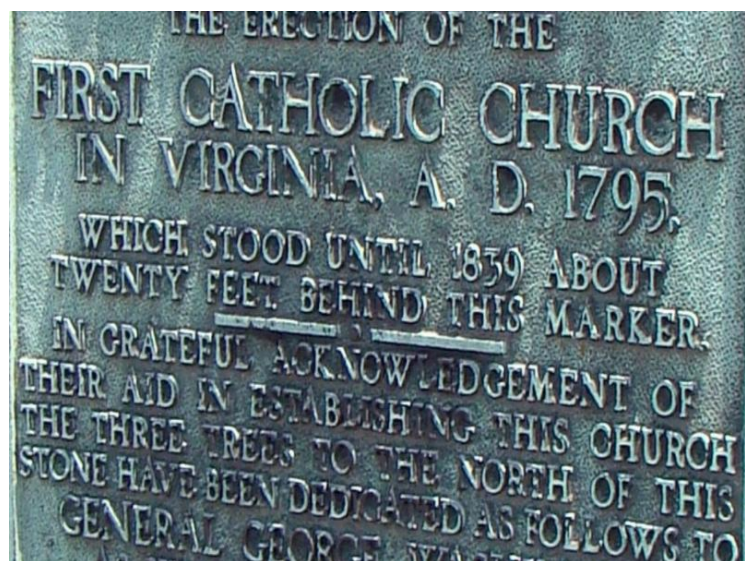
This movement was later termed

"anti-disestablishmentarianism,"
which for decades was **the longest**
word in the English Language.

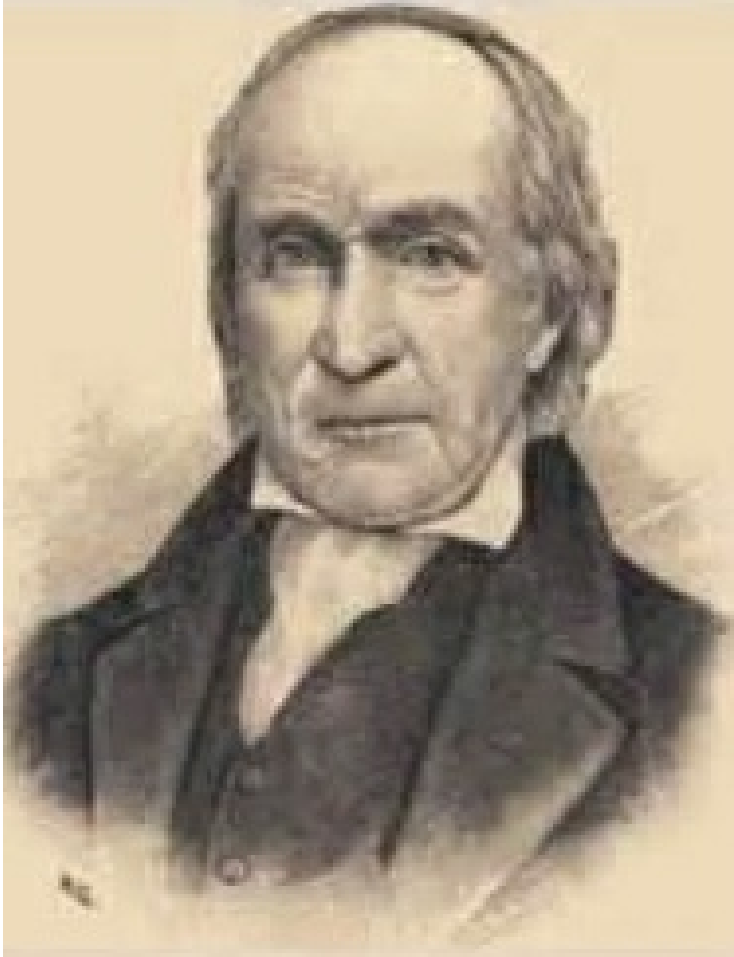


Virginia built its
first Jewish
Synagogue,
Kahal Kadosh
Beth Shalome, in
1789.

Virginia built its
first Catholic
Church, St. Mary
Church, in
Alexandria in
1795.

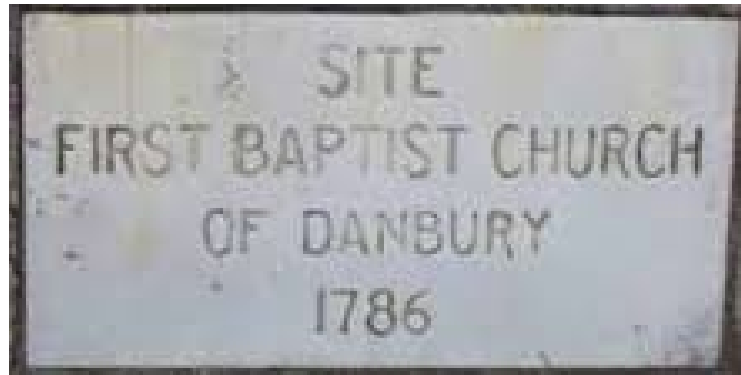


John Leland then
helped start



Baptist churches in Connecticut -- which was a State having the Congregational Church established from its founding in 1639 until 1818.

Baptists in Connecticut formed the **Danbury Baptist Association** which sent a letter to **President Jefferson**, October 7, 1801:



"Sir ... Our Sentiments are uniformly on the side of **Religious Liberty**

--That **Religion** is at all times and places a Matter between **God** and **Individuals**

--That **no man ought to suffer** in Name, person or effects on account of his **religious Opinions**

--That the **legitimate Power of civil Government extends no further** than to punish the man who works ill to his neighbor:

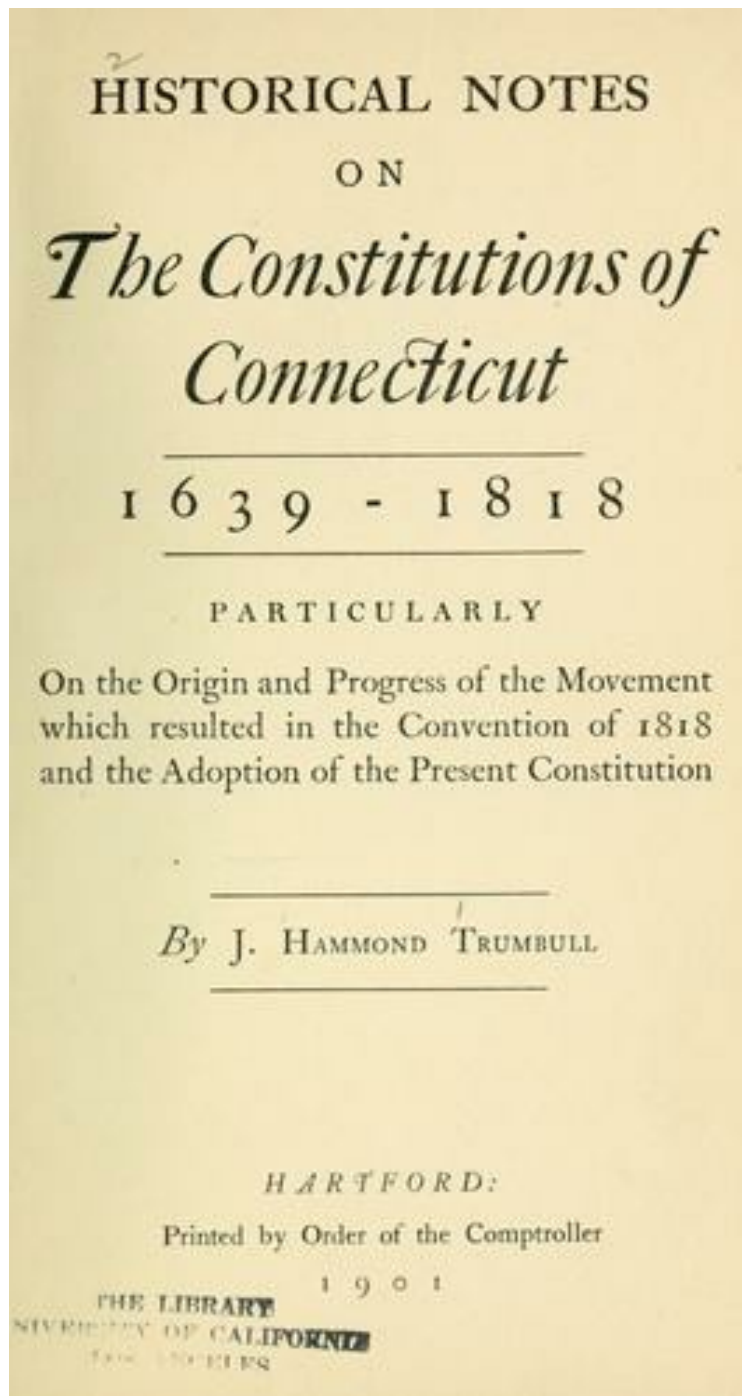
... But Sir ... our ancient (Connecticut) charter, together with the Laws made coincident therewith ... are; that ... what religious **privileges** we enjoy (as Baptists) ... we enjoy as **favours** granted, and not as **inalienable rights** ...

Sir, we are sensible that the President of the united States IS NOT the national Legislator

& also sensible that the national government CANNOT destroy the Laws of each State;

but our hopes are strong that the sentiments of our beloved President, which have had such genial Effect already, like the radiant beams of the Sun, will shine & prevail through all these States and all the world till Hierarchy and Tyranny be destroyed from the Earth."

In other words, **Baptists** hoped that **Jefferson's** sentiments which



Connecticut



helped disestablish the **Anglican Church in Virginia** might also help disestablish the **Congregational Church in Connecticut**, and likewise influence all other States.

The **Danbury Baptist** letter to **Jefferson**

continued:

"Sir ... we have reason to believe that America's **God** has raised you up to fill the chair of State ... May **God** strengthen you for the arduous task which **Providence** & the voice of the people have called you ...

And may the **Lord** preserve you safe from every evil and bring you at last to **His Heavenly Kingdom** through **Jesus Christ** our Glorious Mediator."

Jefferson replied with his famous **letter**, January 1, 1802, **agreeing with the Danbury's Baptists**, even repeating sections of their letter almost verbatim:

"Gentlemen ...
Believing **WITH YOU**

--that **religion** is a matter which lies solely between man and his **God**,
--that he owes account to none other for faith or his worship,
--that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions,



I contemplate with solemn 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 and State ..."**

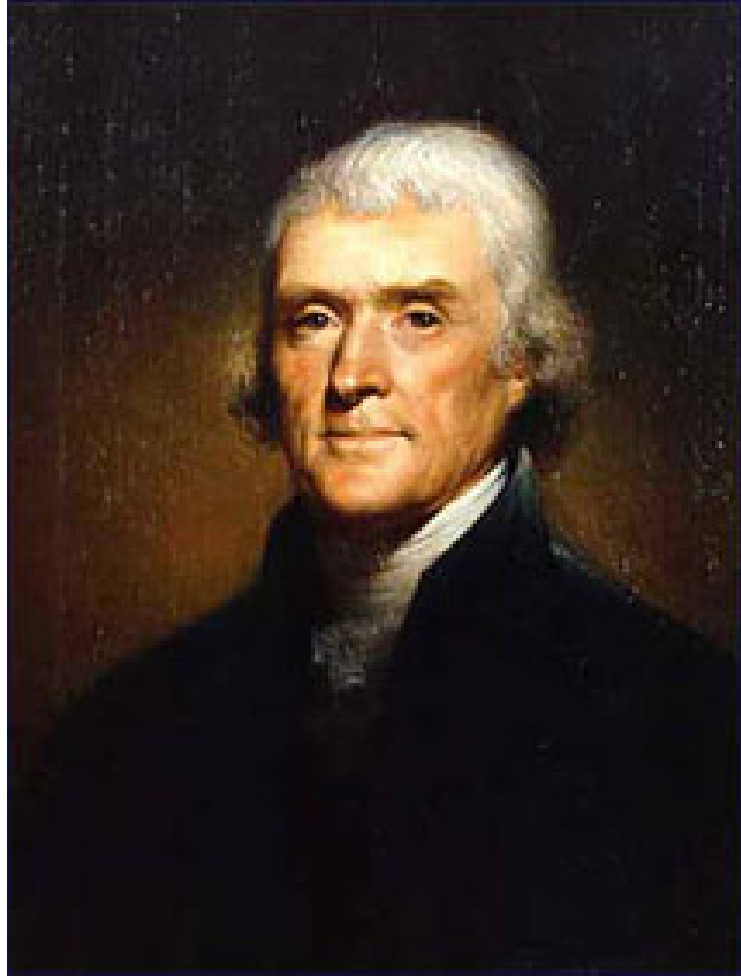
Jefferson ended:

"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 man to all his natural rights**, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection and blessing of the common **Father** and **Creator of man.**"



Baptists were familiar with Jefferson's metaphor "**wall of separation**," as the Baptist founder of Rhode Island, **Roger Williams**, used it in his ***Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Conscience Sake***, 1644:

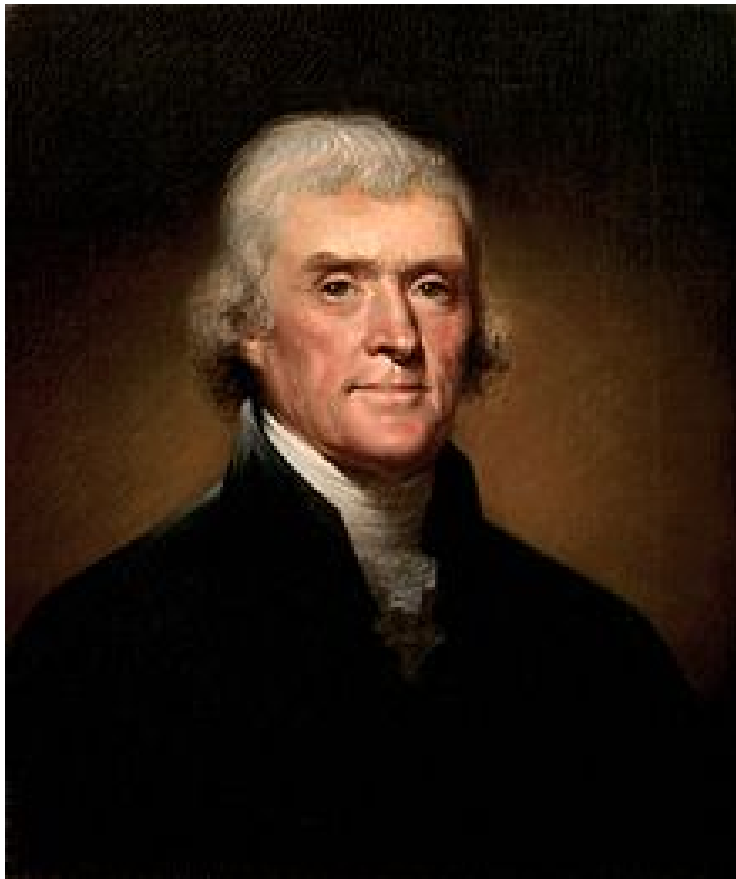
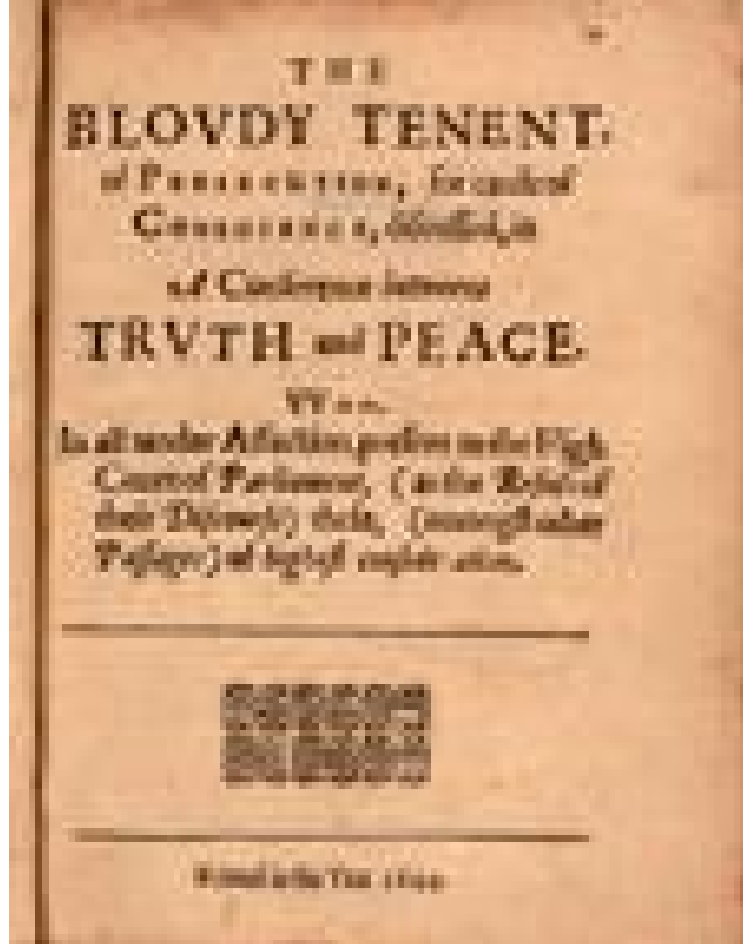
"Jews under the Old Testament ... and ... **Christians** under the New Testament ... were both **separate from the world;**



and that when they have opened a gap in the hedge, or **wall of separation**, between the **garden of the Church** and the **wilderness of the world**, God hath ever broken down the **wall** itself ...

And that therefore if **He** will ever please to **restore**

His garden and paradise again, it must of necessity be walled in peculiarly unto Himself from the world."



Jefferson viewed the "wall" as limiting the federal government from "inter-meddling" in church government, as explained in his letter to Samuel Miller, January 23, 1808:

"I consider the government of the United States as interdicted

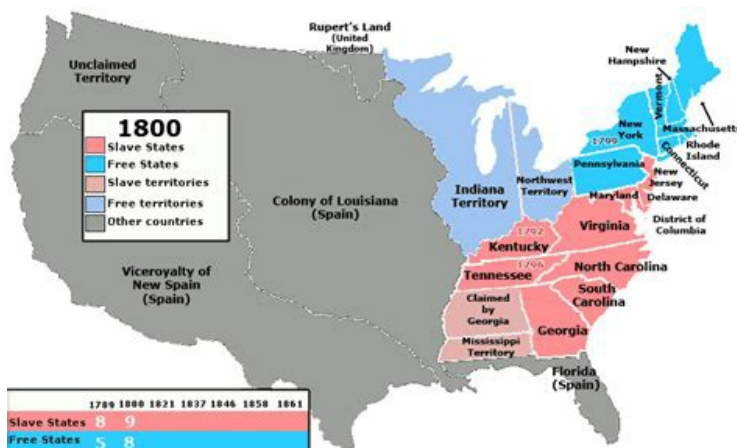
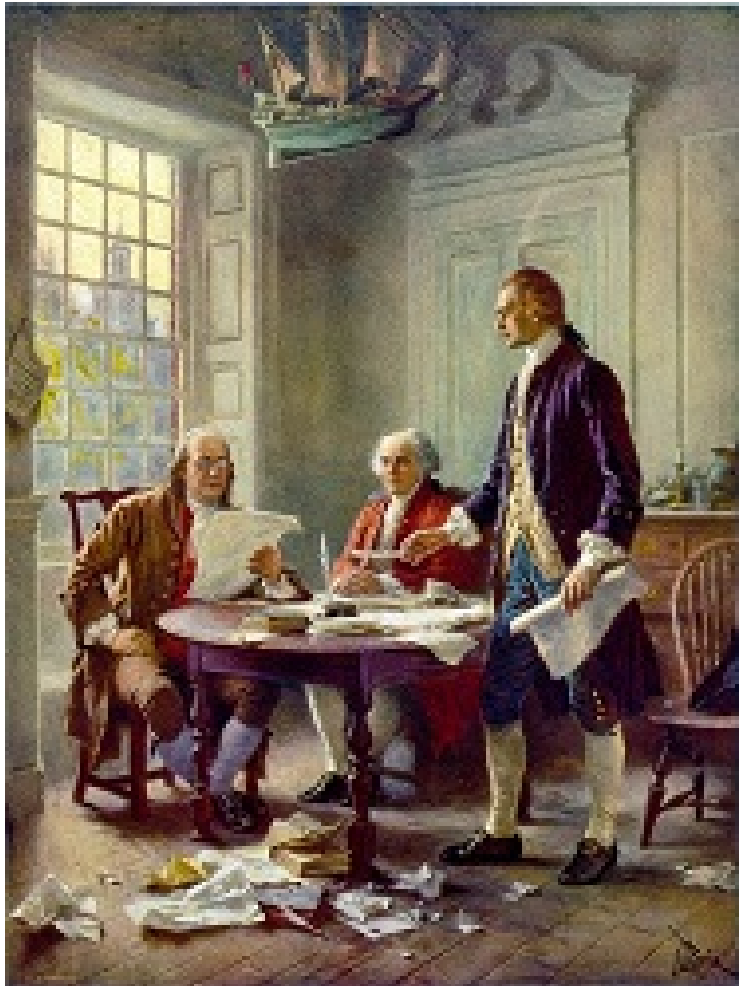
(prohibited) by the Constitution from inter-meddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercises.

This results not only from the provision that no law shall be made respecting the establishment or free exercise of religion, but from **that also which reserves to the states the powers not delegated to the United States** (10th Amendment) ..."

Jefferson
continued:

"Certainly no power to prescribe any **religious exercise**, or to assume **authority in religious discipline**, has been delegated to the **General (Federal) government** ...

Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the times for these exercises, and the objects proper for them, **according to their own particular tenets."**



Though **Jefferson** considered the **Federal Government** limited from **"inter-meddling"** with what was under States' jurisdiction, it was

not limited from spreading religion in **Federal territories**, as on April 26, 1802, **Jefferson's** administration extended a 1787 act of Congress where

lands were designated:

"For the sole use of **Christian Indians** and the **Moravian Brethren missionaries** for civilizing the **Indians** and **promoting Christianity.**"

And again,
December 3,
1803, during
Jefferson's
administration,
Congress ratified a
treaty with the
Kaskaskia
Indians:



"Whereas the
greater part of the
said tribe have
been **baptized**
and received into
the **Catholic Church** ... the **United States will give**
annually, for seven years, one hundred dollars toward
the **support of a priest of that religion**, who will engage
to perform for said tribe the duties of his office, and also
to **instruct as many of their children as possible** ...

And the **United States** will further **give** the sum of **three**
hundred dollars, to assist the said tribe in **the erection**
of a church."

When Abigail
Adams died,
Thomas
Jefferson wrote to
her husband, John
Adams, November
13, 1818:

"The term is not



very distant, at which we are to **deposit** in the same cerement, our sorrows and **suffering bodies**, and to **ascend** in essence to an ecstatic **meeting with the friends**

we have loved and lost, and whom **we shall still love and never lose again.**

God bless you and support you under your heavy affliction."



Twelve years before his death, **Jefferson** shared his personal views to Miles King, September 26, 1814:

"We have heard it said that there is not a **Quaker** or a **Baptist**, a **Presbyterian** or

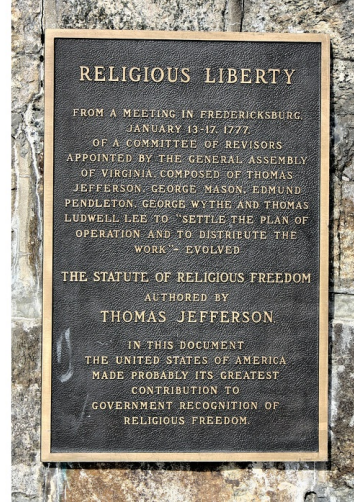
an **Episcopalian**, a **Catholic** or a **Protestant** in heaven; that on entering that gate, **we leave those badges of schism behind ...**

Let us be happy in the hope that by these different paths we shall all meet in the end. And that you and I may meet and embrace, is **my earnest prayer.**"

Jefferson's religious views went through **four**

periods:

- **faithful Anglican** prior to the Revolution, as one could not even hold office in colonial Virginia unless one took the Oath of Supremacy;



- **friend of the dissenters** during the Revolution, championing the cause of Baptists and other non-conformists;
- **friend of deists** after his wife died prior to the French Revolution, corresponding with Dr. Joseph Priestly;
- **liberal Episcopalian** during his term as President, having his administration support Christian missionaries among the Indians and espousing the superior ethics of Jesus.

In a sense, one can have Jefferson say whatever one wants, just pick which period of his life to quote from.

Consistent throughout his life, though, **Jefferson believed** that there was a **Creator** and that the **government** should never force **one's conscience**.

Over time, brilliant legal minds have **used Jefferson's words to prohibit Jefferson's beliefs**.



Jefferson
believed in a
Creator, as he
wrote in the
Declaration:

"All men are
endowed by their
CREATOR,"



yet in 2005, **U.S.**

District Judge John E. Jones, in *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, ruled **students could not be taught** of a **CREATOR**: "to preserve the **separation of church and state**."

In other words,
activist judges
have used
Jefferson's
phrase
**"separation of
church and
state"** out of
context to remove
national
acknowledgments
of **God**, despite
Jefferson's
specific **warning
not to do that**.



Inscribed on the **Jefferson Memorial**, Washington, DC is **Jefferson's warning:**

"God who gave us life **gave us liberty**. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when **we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of**

God?

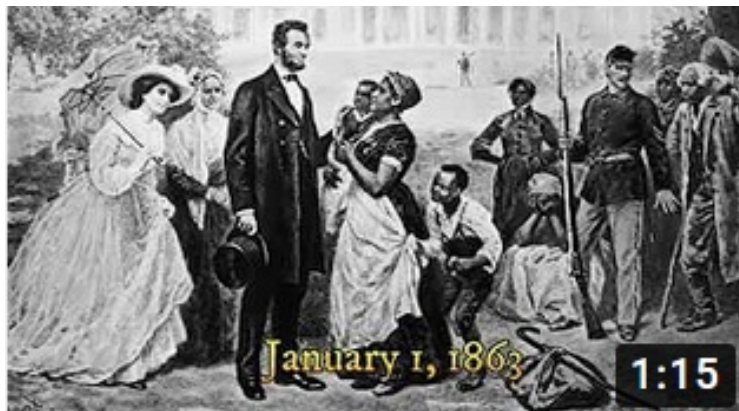
Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that **God** is just, that **His justice cannot sleep forever.**"

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[Read as PDF ... First Things First: Religious Freedom! Who influenced Jefferson's views on Separation of Church & State](#)

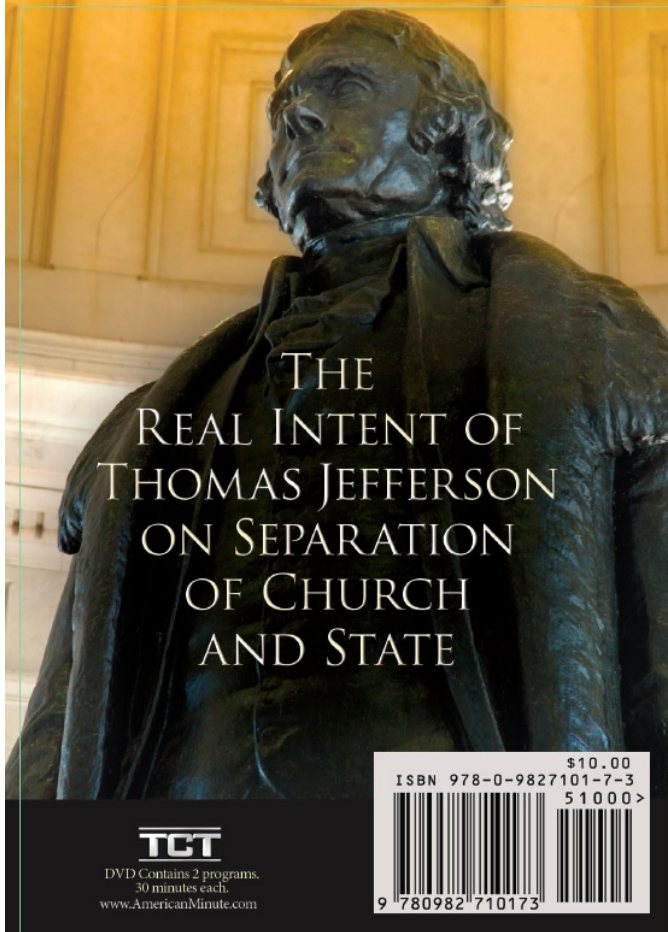
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