

## American Minute with Bill Federer

Patrick Henry "As for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

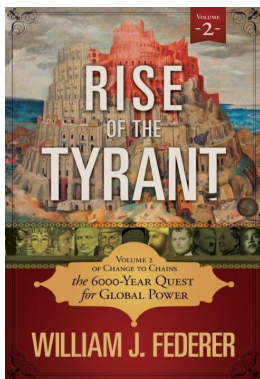
The **Declaration of Independence** states:

"... But when a long train of **abuses and usurpations** ... to reduce them under **absolute despotism**, it is **their right**, it is **their duty**, to **throw off such Government**, and to provide **new Guards for their future security.**"



The **Declaration** listed **27 "abuses and usurpations"** by which **King George III** relinquished his right to rule ... [continue reading American Minute here ...](#)

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This was supported by the teachings of **John Calvin**, who wrote in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1536:

"David says ... **'O ye kings ... kiss the Son**, lest he be

angry' (Psalm 2) ... He does not order them to lay aside their authority **but to make the power with which they are invested subject to Christ ...**

'Let every soul,' says Paul, 'be subject unto the higher powers' ... but in that obedience ... we must always **make the exception ... that it is not incompatible with obedience to Him** to whose will the wishes of **all kings should be subject ...**

And, indeed, how preposterous were it, **in pleasing men, to incur the offense of Him** for whose sake **you obey men!**

The Lord ... is **King of kings**. When He opens his sacred mouth, **He alone is to be heard ...**

**We are subject to the men who rule over us, but subject only in the Lord.** If they command anything against Him **let us not pay the least regard to it ...**

**Daniel ... refused to obey** his impious decree because **the king had exceeded his limits ...** by raising his horn against God, had virtually **abrogated his own power.** (Daniel 6)

... The **Israelites are condemned** for having **too readily obeyed the impious edict ...** when **King Jeroboam** made the **golden calf**, they **forsook the temple of God**, and, **in submissiveness to him**, revolted to new superstitions (1 Kings 12). For this **they are severely upbraided by the Prophet** (Hosea 5:11) ...

**Peter**, one of heaven's heralds, has published the edict, **'We ought to obey God rather than men'** (Acts 5:29) ...

**Paul** stimulates us by the additional consideration (1 Cor. 7:23), that **we were redeemed by Christ** at the great price ... that **we might not yield a slavish obedience to**

**the depraved wishes of men."**

Pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, **Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, wrote in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" 1963:

**"One may well ask: 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?'**

The answer lies in the fact that there are **two types of laws: just and unjust ...**

One has not only a legal but **a moral responsibility to obey just laws.** Conversely, one has **a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.** I would agree with St. Augustine that **'an unjust law is no law at all.'**

How does one determine whether a law is **just or unjust?** A **just law** is a man made code that **squares with the moral law or the law of God."**

**America's founding fathers** anticipated that there would be **those in the future who would be unaware of history** and would **think that they sinned by fighting the Revolution against the King**, so they **listed the ways** in which **the King "abrogated his own power,"** as John Calvin put it.

**Jefferson** penned in the Declaration, 1776:

"The history of the present **King of Great Britain** is a history of repeated **injuries and usurpations**, all having in direct object the **establishment of an absolute tyranny** over these states. **To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world ..."**

"He has **obstructed** the administration of **justice ..."**

"He has made **judges dependent on his will alone ..."**

"He has erected a **multitude of new offices,**

and sent hither **swarms of officers to harass our people ...**"

"He has **kept among us,** in times of peace, **standing armies ... independent of and superior to the civil power ...**"

"He has combined ... to **subject us** to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution ..."

"Giving his assent to their acts of **pretended legislation ...**"

"For **quartering large bodies of armed troops among us ...**"

"For **cutting off our trade ...**"

"For **imposing taxes** on us without our consent ..."

"For **depriving us** in many cases, of the benefits of **trial by jury ...**"

"Establishing therein an **arbitrary government ...** introducing the same **absolute rule** into these colonies ..."

"For ... **altering** fundamentally the forms of our governments ..."

"Declaring us **out of his protection** and **waging war against us ...**

"He has **plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people ...**"

"He is at this time **transporting large Armies of foreign**

**Mercenaries** to complete the works of **death, desolation, and tyranny**, already begun with circumstances of **cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled** in the **most barbarous ages**, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation ..."

"He has constrained **our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas** to bear **Arms against their Country**, to become the **executioners of their friends and brethren** ..."

"He has **excited domestic insurrections amongst us**, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the **merciless Indian Savages** whose known **rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.**"

"In every stage of these **oppressions** we have petitioned for redress ..."

The **Declaration** concluded:

"Our **repeated petitions** have been answered only by **repeated injury.**

**A Prince** whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a **tyrant**, is **unfit to be the ruler of a free people.**"

The **King of Great Britain** oversaw enactments of Parliament:

1764 Currency Act,  
1764 Sugar Act,  
1765 Stamp Act,  
1765 Quartering (Mutiny) Act,  
1766 Declaratory Act,  
1767 Townshend Act,  
1773 Tea Act,  
1774 Boston Port Act,

1774 Justice Act,  
1774 Massachusetts Government Act,  
1774 Quartering (Mutiny) Act,  
1774 Quebec Act,  
1775 Prohibitory Act, and  
1775 Proclamation of Rebellion.

**Jefferson** wrote November 29, 1775:

**"By the God that made me, I will cease to exist** before I yield to a connection **on such terms as the British Parliament propose**; and in this, I think I speak the sentiments of America."

On MARCH 23, 1775, **Patrick Henry** spoke to the Second Virginia Convention, which was meeting in **Richmond's St. John's Church** due to British hostilities:

"I consider it as nothing less than a question of **freedom or slavery** ...

I know of **no way of judging of the future but by the past.**

And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry ... to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves ...

Suffer not yourselves to be **betrayed with a kiss** ...

... **Let us not deceive ourselves**, sir.

These are the implements of **war and subjugation**; the last arguments to which **kings resort.**

I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to **force us to submission?**

Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world,



to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies?

No, sir, she has none. **They are meant for us:** they can be meant for no other.

They are sent over to **bind and rivet upon us** those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging ...

... Let us not, I beseech you, sir, **deceive ourselves.**

Sir, **we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm** which is now coming on.

**We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne ...**

... **Our petitions** have been **slighted; our remonstrances** have produced **additional violence and insult; our supplications** have been **disregarded;** and we have been **spurned,** with **contempt,** from the foot of the throne ..."

**Henry** continued:

**"There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations ...** who will raise up friends to fight our battle for us.

The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; **it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave ...**

... **Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?**

**Forbid it, Almighty God!**

I know not what course others may take; **but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"**

After he ended his speech, there was **stunned silence for several minutes.**

Virginia delegate **George Mason** stated of **Patrick Henry's** speech:

"He is by far **the most powerful speaker I ever heard.** Every word he says not only engages but commands the attention, and your passions are no longer your own when he addresses them ...

... He is, in my opinion, the first man upon this continent, as well in abilities as public virtues ... Had he lived in Rome about the time of the first Punic War ...

**Mr. Henry's** talents must have put him at the head of that glorious commonwealth."

After **Patrick Henry's** speech, **Virginia's Provincial Congress** passed a resolution for self-defense:

"Resolved, that a **well regulated militia** composed of **gentlemen and yeomen** is the **natural strength and only security of a free government;**

that such a **militia** in this colony would forever render it unnecessary for the mother country to keep among us ... any standing army of mercenary forces, always subversive of the quiet, and dangerous to the liberties of the people."

Present at **Patrick Henry's** speech was 29 year old Lutheran pastor, **John Peter Muhlenberg**, who had been elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses.

Inspired, he approached **George Washington**, who made him a colonel and told him to raise a regiment of troops.

**Muhlenberg** recruited 300 men from his church and



surrounding churches to form the 8th Virginia Regiment. His statue is in the U.S. Capitol's Statuary Hall.

**John Adams** voted for independence, then wrote July 2, 1776:

"I am apt to believe that day will be celebrated, by **succeeding Generations**, as the great anniversary Festival.

It ought to be commemorated, as the **Day of Deliverance** by **solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty.**"

After losing the Battle of Great Bridge, **British Governor Lord Dunmore** fled Virginia, **setting fire to Norfolk** on his way out.

**Patrick Henry** became the first American Governor of Virginia, serving five terms.

**Virginia's State Seal** has a female figure personifying **Virtus**, the Roman Republic's attribute of virtue, with **her foot victoriously crushing the neck of a tyrant.**

The Latin motto on the Seal, **Sic semper tyrannis**, means "**Thus always to tyrants.**"

In 1788, **Virginia** was holding its convention to **ratify the U.S. Constitution.**

After experiencing the abuse of power by King George III, **Patrick Henry** took the views of the **anti-federalists**, being suspicious that in the future the federal government would grow uncontrollably and usurp power.

Through ebb and flow of history, America has experienced abuse of power, followed by periods of reprieve, but future elections always hold potential dangers.

**Patrick Henry** warned June 5, 1788:

"My great objection to this Government is, that it does not leave us the means of defending our rights, or of **waging war against tyrants** ...

There is to be a **great and mighty president**, with very extensive powers -- **the powers of a king** ...

... **This Constitution** ... **squints towards monarchy** ...  
**Your president** may easily become **king** ...

If your **American chief** be a **man of ambition and abilities**, how easy is it for him to **render himself absolute!**

**The army is in his hands** ... and it will be ... with him to **seize the first auspicious moment to accomplish his design** ..."

**Patrick Henry** concluded his warning of a despotic President:

"**The President** ... can prescribe the terms on which **he shall reign master**, so far that it will puzzle **any American** ever to **get his neck from under the galling yoke** ...

Where is the existing force to punish him? **Can he not, at the head of his army, beat down every opposition?**

**Away with your President!** We shall have a **king: the army will salute him monarch** ... What will then become of you and your rights? Will not **absolute despotism ensue?** ...

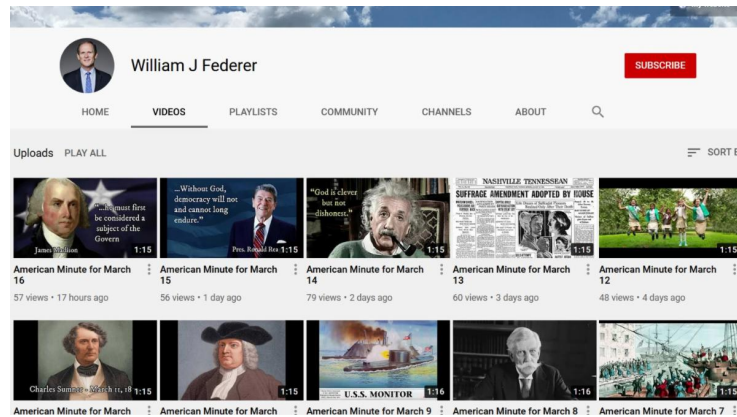
... My great objection to the Constitution ... that the **preservation of our liberty** depends on the single chance of **men being virtuous enough to make laws to**

punish themselves."

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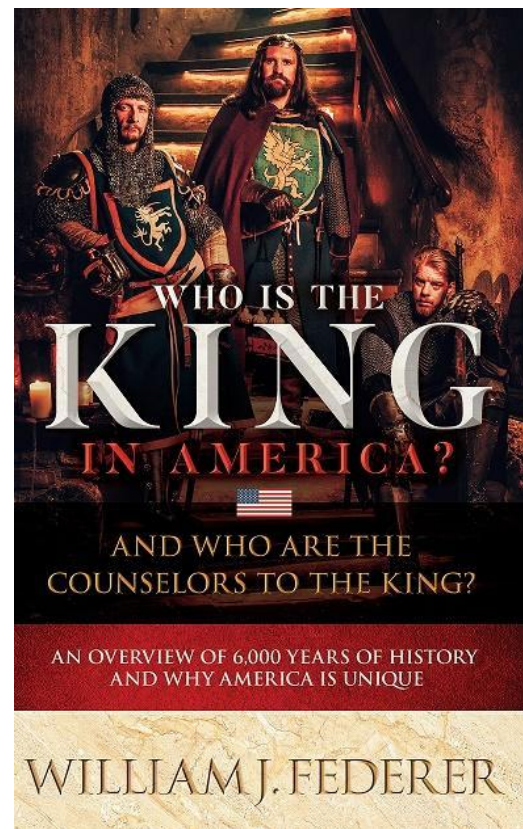
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