

The Christian's Declaration

***“If the Son
therefore shall
make you free, ye
shall be free
indeed.”
—John 8:36***

DURING THE LATE EIGH-teenth century, there developed among the thirteen British colonies on the American Continent a growing desire to separate from the governing rule of the mother country and establish a free and independent state. Foremost among the factors contributing to this end was the authoritarian attitude of King George III of England, and especially the British government's practice of “taxation without representation.” Such domineering could not be endured long by men who had sacrificed much to begin life anew and to escape the oppression of the Old World.

Accordingly, the American colonies called a Continental Congress in 1774 to consider possible courses of action. Within two years, a committee of five prominent colonial leaders was appointed to draw up an official statement of independence to be ratified by all the colonies. Thomas Jefferson was assigned the task of composing the document. The result

was the historic statement which came to be known as the Declaration of Independence.

This document set forth in masterful and concise language some of the basic needs and desires of all people the world over. School children and statesmen alike have thrilled at contemplating some of the thoughts expressed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, 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.”

After listing in detail the outstanding grievances against the British Crown, the document has a final paragraph which begins: “We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; ... And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” The declaration was signed by fifty-six members of the Congress.

A WANING FAITH

We today who read this document and others which pertain to the original establishment of our nation, cannot help but be impressed with the

reverential spirit in which they were written. Most of our founding fathers had a deep reliance upon the overruling providence of God and demonstrated this in their lives and words. Many of the colonies had been established by deeply religious men who sought a refuge from the political and religious persecutions then prevailing in Europe. A free system of public education was set up to ensure that all would be enabled to read the Bible, which, together with the English primer, became the first textbook.

What a change, however, has been wrought in less than two hundred and fifty years, and especially in the last few decades! Today we are witnessing an ever-increasing deterioration of faith in God and belief in spiritual things. Whether it be in high levels of government, in the education systems, in society at large, or even within the province of the churches themselves, the result has been the same. One must look far and wide to find God-fearing individuals who have not lost their integrity or their confidence in God, and who still stand for the principles of truth and righteousness.

One notable exception to this condition of spiritual and moral decay which is sweeping our land and the world today is to be found in the lives of a relatively few individuals who might be termed "footstep followers of Christ Jesus." These are those of an honest and upright heart to whom the Lord has been pleased to reveal himself and to entrust them with an understanding of his plans and purposes. They are his lights and witnesses in a rapidly darkening and degenerating society. They have not let go their faith and trust in God.—Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:6; I John 2:6

In the face of the massive unbelief and materialism which threatens to engulf all, and as a source of spiritual strength in this special day of testing, it would be well for all believers to affirm their faith by setting forth their own “Declaration of Independence.” By this we mean a declaration of independence, or freedom, from both the spirit of the world and the cares and anxieties which press upon them, and which threaten to overwhelm even the most ardent believer. Such a declaration would prove helpful because it would take them back to the Word of God as the source of inspiration and help.

Let us consider, then, what might be said in the Christian’s Declaration of Independence, to be constructed as a summary not of our grievances or dissatisfactions, but of our causes for gratitude. Let it serve also as an inventory of the reasons for our hope and confidence in God. In place of the signers of the Declaration of 1776, we shall append a listing of Bible texts, some of the most precious and uplifting to the believing heart. Grammatically, we will use the first person, singular, to highlight the privilege of our personal relationship with the Father.

THE CHRISTIAN’S DECLARATION

1. The Bible declares that upon the basis of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all consecrated believers in him enjoy a standing of reckoned perfection in the Father’s sight, called in the Scriptures, “justification.” Through the study of God’s Word and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, I have accepted this basic truth and am now also covered by Jesus’ righteousness. I therefore have

had Adamic condemnation, which rests heavily upon all, lifted from me, and have been forgiven of all my inherited and unintentional sins and shortcomings. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. 5:1

2. Having come to appreciate that it was the Father’s will for me to consecrate my life to his service, I have renounced my former ways and have come to him in full surrender. I have endeavored to heed God’s call: “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.” (Prov. 23:26) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1) I desire, by the Heavenly Father’s grace, to continue this work of sacrificing the flesh and its interests, that I might eventually attain a heavenly inheritance. I shall endeavor not to be conformed to this world, nor allured by its transitory pleasures, for my life is no longer my own. It belongs to God and to his Son, my Redeemer. “They which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—II Cor. 5:15

3. The Bible further declares that the common experiences of those who have chosen to walk the Christian pathway would be twofold: special blessings accruing from the Lord, but hardship and persecution coming from the world. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Tim. 3:12) “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” (John 16:33) Counterbalancing this, the Scriptures abound with precious promises to the people of God, giving assurance of divine protection and

care. These promises are the mainstay of the believer, his touchstone of confidence and hope. Having come into intimate relationship with the Father through faith and consecration, I am thoroughly convinced that it is my privilege to reach out and embrace these promises, to make them my very own, and to watch for their fulfillment in my life.—II Pet. 1:4

4. With great joy, I realize that the way has been prepared for me to live a victorious life in Christ, possessed of his peace and his assurance. No longer must I be bound either by worldly temptation or by the shackles of anxiety and care which before have confounded me. My life is “hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:3) I therefore now resolve to accept with gratitude the inner strength, peace, and joy which my Lord has made the heritage of all who place their trust in God. In so doing, I hereby declare my full independence from all worldly desire, fear, or distress which otherwise would weigh me down. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. 11:28-30

5. I understand from the Bible that the acceptance of this divine legacy of strength and peace is not a passive matter, and that it requires continual, conscious effort on my part. “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest,” which is provided for “the people of God.” (Heb. 4:9-11) I thus resolve also to renew my determination to “fight the good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12) I will strive to repel all the anxious thoughts, discontent, and discouragement which the Adversary daily thrusts against me. Implicitly trusting God’s daily care, I will seek to

neither murmur nor resist what his providence may permit, knowing that faith can firmly trust him in every experience of life.

6. In place of the former cares which crowded my mind, I will substitute the higher thoughts that center on spiritual truths. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." (Col. 3:1) "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4:8) In addition, I will direct my energies in the service of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren to the extent of my abilities and opportunities. I will also try to keep the vision of the coming kingdom so strongly before me that no room will be left for the former concerns.

7. The basis of this Declaration of Independence from all worldliness and the cares of this life is to be found in the precious promises of God's Word, the Holy Scriptures. In them are contained the assurances of the nearness of the Heavenly Father, of his great love, and of his power working in me. Added below are those very special promises and exhortations which have stood as a bulwark of divine comfort and strength, especially in my times of need. I desire not only to be reminded of them, but to permit them to exercise their full sanctifying influence upon my heart and mind. Thus confident of God's power operating in my life and strengthened with spiritual food, I shall rise above the cares of the present and be transported to the expectant joys of sharing the ages of eternity with my Heavenly Father and

his dear Son, and being privileged to partake in the uplifting and blessing of the groaning world of mankind during Christ's Millennial Kingdom.—Rom. 8:18-22, *New American Standard Bible*

THE SCRIPTURES—OUR SOURCE OF STRENGTH

1. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."—Isa. 26:3

2. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—John 14:27

3. "Do not worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:6,7, *J. B. Phillips New Testament*

4. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—Rom. 12:2; I John 2:15; 5:4

5. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."—Prov. 3:5,6

6. "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28, *NASB*

7. "For this reason I charge you not to be over-anxious about your lives, inquiring what you are to eat or what you are to drink, nor yet about your bodies, inquiring what clothes you are to put on. ... For all these are questions that Gentiles are always asking; but your Heavenly Father knows that you need these things—all of them. But make his kingdom and righteousness your chief aim, and then these things shall all be given you in addition."—Matt. 6:25,32,33, *Weymouth New Testament*

8. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:19

9. "Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on him; for he cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully."—I Pet. 5:7, *The Amplified Bible*

10. "The Father himself loveth you."—John 16:27

11. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try [Greek: prove] you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—I Pet. 4:12,13; II Cor. 4:17

12. "No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it."—I Cor. 10:13, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

13. "He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly,

therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."—II Cor. 12:9,10, *NASB*

14. "Since God is for us, who can be against us?" "For God is he who is working effectually among you, both to will and to perform, on account of his benevolence." "Having this same confidence, that he who commenced a good work among you will continue to complete it till the day of Christ Jesus." —Rom. 8:31; Phil. 2:13; 1:6, *Diaglott*

15. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10 ■