

An Act for establishing Religious Freedom.

Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free, that it 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, who being Lord both of body and mind will chuse not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to us, that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who being themselves but fallible and unassur'd 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, endeavouring to impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world, and through all times, that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical; that even the forcing him to support the 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 not; that the rightfulness and is withdrawing from the Ministry those temporary rewards, which, proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct are an essential incitement to earnest and unswerving labors for the instruction of mankind; that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions any more than our opinions in physics or geometry; that therefore the persecuting any citizen as unworthy the public confidence, by laying upon them an incapacity of being called to offices of trust and emolument, would be profane or ridiculous; that that religious opinion, is depriving him unjustly of the temporal benefits and advantages to which, in common with his fellow citizens he has a natural right, that it tends only to corrupt the principles of our religion, if it would be encourage, by giving with a monopoly of worldly honors with emoluments therewith, and extend its power and conformity, that those who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those concerned who are the best in their way.

That to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the propagation of principles on suspicion of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy which at once destroys all religious liberty, because he being of course judge of that tendency will exercise his power to suppress the opinions he disapproves or condemns, and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only, as they shall square with or differ from his own; that it is true enough in 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: Be it enacted by the General Assembly that no man shall be compelled, in 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 other wise 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 irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are justly declar'd, 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.

Richard Henry Lee
Vice President

Resolved, That the sum of one hundred and thirty five thousand pounds sterling be appropriated to the improvement of the navigation of James River.

An Act to amend an Act entitled an Act for clearing and improving the navigation of James River.

Whereas in the said Act... it is among other things provided that the first subscribers should contribute the sum of one hundred thousand pounds... Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly that it shall be lawful for the said Company at any general meeting to extend the share or to extend one hundred in addition to those already subscribed...

Attest in open Court this 14th day of March 1774
John C. Calhoun

An Act to authorize the election of certain Pastors.

Whereas the members of the Protestant Episcopal Church residing in many parishes and in this Commonwealth have been prevented from carrying into execution an act for incorporating the Protestant Episcopal Church within the period therein limited for the election of pastors... Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly that no person shall be admitted to the office of pastor in any parish within this Commonwealth...

Attest in open Court this 14th day of March 1774
John C. Calhoun

An Act for establishing Religious Freedom.

Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free, that all attempts to restrain it by temporal punishment or burthen or by civil incapacitations tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and were to pack up from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind will chuse not to propagate it by coercions or other such worldly means... Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly that no person shall be compelled to attend any religious worship or to contribute to the support of any religious institution...

that it ought not still to intrude his power into the field of opinion, and to exercise the prerogative of appropriation. A power of this nature is dangerous, falling as it does at once, besides all religious scruples, to invade the domain of that freedom, and to invade the domain of judgment and advice, or to condemn the sentiments of others, not as they stand equal with it, nor from his own, but at a time when the rightful business of civil government for its office is to be done, when principles break out into open acts against peace and good order, and finally, that Truth is great and will prevail of itself, for that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict, which 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: Be it enacted by the General Assembly that no man shall be compelled, in frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be compelled, or restrained, or inhibited, in his body or goods, nor shall either either suffer, on account of his religious opinions or beliefs, 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 alter their civil capacities. And though we well know that this Assembly elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only has no power to restrain the acts of succeeding Assemblies constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrepealable would be of no effect in law, yet we do 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.

Richard Henry Lee
Pres. of the Convention

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An Act for establishing an inspection of tobacco at Henrich and discontinuing that at Duke Warehouse, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly that the inspection of tobacco at Henrich warehouses in the County of Westmoreland, from first and strike to the day of February next be discontinued, and that the inspection of tobacco shall be and the same is hereby established in the town of Henrich, from the first day of January next, and known by the name of Henrich, provided the said town shall build convenient houses at his own expense, the transfer of the land on the inspection of Henrich shall be made in the manner as that of Duke Warehouse, and shall be under the same inspection and government, and it is further enacted that from and after the first day of October next the inspection of tobacco at Royal Station's warehouse shall be removed to and established in the lands of the proprietors thereof adjoining to Bellings and Tabb's Mill, and that convenient and proper houses shall be built thereon at the expense of the proprietors. The inspection of tobacco at Inghams warehouse in the County of King and Queen shall be and the same is hereby removed and established for and during the term of two years, and be it further enacted that the inspection of tobacco in the town of Suffolk is hereby revived and established, the proprietors of the said town being willing to rebuild convenient houses thereon, provided always and be it further enacted that if at the expiration of two years from the passing of this Act the quantity of tobacco stored at Suffolk warehouse shall not be sufficient to pay the rents and proprietors salaries, that henceforth the said inspection shall be discontinued. There shall be allowed and paid annually to each of the proprietors of Inghams the sum of twenty five pounds, to each of the proprietors of Suffolk the sum of twenty pounds, and to each of the proprietors of Westmoreland warehouse the sum of eighty pounds, and to each of the proprietors of Henrich the sum of twenty pounds, and no more. And further that by an act of Assembly passed in May, one thousand seven hundred and eighty three entitled an Act to amend and alter the several acts of Assembly for the inspection of tobacco into one act, it is among other things enacted that in case any of the said warehouses therein named shall not after the first day of October next and before the first day of October one thousand seven hundred and eighty five receive a sufficient quantity of tobacco to pay the rents and salaries, and unless the warehouses the inspection of tobacco at such warehouses respectively shall receive three fold or double the same sum to be supported by private expenses, provided that this clause shall not extend to the warehouses at any time of two warehouses warehouses which may be in the same County or County next adjacent, and in such cases that warehouse shall be discontinued, in which the smaller quantity of tobacco may be brought in the year aforesaid, and it is further enacted that the operation of the said clause shall be suspended. Be it therefore enacted that the operation of the said clause shall be and the same is hereby suspended from and after the said first day of October next until the first day of October one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven.

Richard Henry Lee
Pres. of the Convention

Copy of
the
General Assembly
of
Virginia
1792