

tions which drove him to the act of taking another individual's life.

Thus, the French revolutionaries focused their efforts to build the virtuous society by removing what they mistakenly thought caused people to act in "antisocial" ways. By reconstructing society through the power of the State, they were convinced that people would return to their basic goodness, virtue, and righteousness.

The government leaders of the French Revolution said that they loved humanity. They said that they were for the "poor and homeless," "the helpless and abused," and "the needy," but in reality, they rejected the true meaning of human dignity contained in the Declaration of Independence. They placed Society and the State above the individual and individual freedom, whereas the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence in America placed the individual above the State.

The patriots of the American Revolution had faith in individual freedom. Freedom—not government power—was the foundation for true progress, self-improvement, and happiness. Absolute equality and perfection brought about by government authority were illusions. Only free individuals in a truly free nation could achieve material welfare, human dignity, and personal fulfillment. Only when the individual has both the freedom to make choices

and the corresponding obligation to abide by the just consequences of those choices, can he achieve self-respect.

By adhering to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, Americans have attained material abundance and personal dignity. The blessings of liberty have been enjoyed because free individuals have been allowed in the past to labor freely in a free society. Yet, we have also been abandoning the basic truths upon which America was founded.

"Omnipotent" Government

From the halls of Congress to the academic forum, we hear that government has the answer to all of our society's ills. We are assured that government can and should solve every problem from hunger to faulty automobile bumpers. Commissions . . . regulations . . . controls . . . rules . . . coercion . . . Congressional committees . . . subcommittees . . . regimentation . . . and more regimentation—all should remind us of the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence.

Coercion, paternalism, restrictive legislation, and unconstitutional government intervention will gain ground to the extent that we are indifferent to the cause of true freedom. When we remain silent, we will be responsible for our own destruction—moral degeneracy, material/

economic stagnation, and eventual physical slavery.

The principles of freedom will continue to be eroded as long as free individuals relax in their complacency. "Is this the part of wise men," asked Patrick Henry in March, 1775, "engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation?"

Freedom is threatened today just as it was threatened at the time of the Declaration of Independence. The colonists wanted less government—not more of it in their daily lives. They wanted to be free to release their own creativity and energies. The "pursuit of happiness" was their own responsibility. They stated in the Declaration "that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." The early patriots of America believed that government should protect their "unalienable rights." It had no right to interfere with "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" other than that of prosecuting law-breakers and maintaining self-defense from foreign aggression. The colonists were free people struggling to remain free.

Living in freedom had strengthened the character of the colonists.

They recognized the existence of moral absolutes. Right was right. Wrong was wrong. They were individuals who valued honesty, hard work, thrift, and an equal respect for the rights of others. They knew what they believed and *why* they believed it. They said what they meant and *meant* what they said.

Humble Before God

Although the colonists were self-reliant and independent, they were humble before God. True liberty was found in a genuine reverence for Almighty God and obedience to His commandments—not worship of government authority. Their spiritual faith gave them a clear understanding of their personal roles in life. They accepted the rugged challenges of life, knowing that in worldly affairs, the Lord, indeed, helped those who helped themselves.

The farmers and shopkeepers who took up arms against the Redcoats heeded Ben Franklin's admonition: "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

The patriots of 1776 chose both liberty and the responsibility of defending that freedom. The Continental soldier fought at Trenton and Germantown . . . suffered at Valley Forge . . . and finally won independence. The "spirit of '76" is the faith and spirit of freedom. If Patrick