

The Declaration of Independence Is the American Creed

The Declaration of Independence contains the clearest, most concise and most eloquent articulation of the American creed, says David Azerrad, “a political definition of man in two axioms, and three corollary propositions on government”:

In the course of making this argument and building their case, the founders also laid down the timeless and universal principles that were to define the new country. In that second paragraph, we find the clearest, most concise and most eloquent articulation of the American creed. The truths proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence define us as a nation and bind us together as Americans. They unite the diverse pluribus into an American unum.

Natural human equality is the first axiom of the American creed. The founders, of course, recognized that human beings are different and unequal in more ways than anybody could count. But for political purposes, all men and women—regardless of race, religion, sex or whatever the oppressed category—are born equally free and independent and therefore may not be ruled without their consent. In America, we recognize neither natural slavery nor divine-right monarchy. The differences that separate us are never so great as to create a chasm between human beings. As Thomas Jefferson explained: ‘Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding he was not therefore lord of the person or property of others.’

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