

## Letter from Patrick Henry to Archibald Blair

*Patrick Henry was an attorney from Virginia whose famous exhortation to "give me liberty, or give me death" made Virginia a hotbed of revolutionary sentiment in the lead-up to the Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, he staunchly opposed the French Revolution because its leaders had exiled or executed thousands of Catholic clergy.*

**Question: What threat does Henry believe the "armor" of "virtue, morality, and religion" protects us against?**

Dear Sir:

Red Hill, Charlotte, 8 January 1799

Your favor of the 28<sup>th</sup> of last month I have received. Its contents are a fresh proof that there is cause for lamentation over the present state of things in Virginia. It is possible that most of the individuals who compose the contending factions are sincere and act from honest motives. But it is more than probable that certain leaders meditate a change in government...

I do acknowledge that I am not capable to form a correct judgment on the present politics of the world. The wide extent to which the present contentions have gone will scarcely permit any observer to see enough in detail, to enable him to form any thing like a tolerable judgment on the final result, as it may respect the nations in general. But, as to France, I have no doubt in saying, that to her it will be calamitous. Her conduct has made it the interest of the great family of mankind to wish the downfall of her present government; because its existence is incompatible with that of all others within its reach. And, whilst I see the dangers that threaten ours from her intrigues and her arms, I am not so much alarmed as at the apprehension of her destroying the great pillars of all government and of social life; I mean virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible. These are the tactics we should study. If we lose these, we are conquered, fallen indeed. In vain may France show and vaunt her diplomatic skill, and brave troops; so long as our manners and principles remain sound, there is no danger. But believing as I do that these are in danger that infidelity in its broadest sense, under the name of philosophy, is fast spreading, and that under the patronage of French manners and principles, everything that ought to be dear to man is covertly but successfully assailed, I feel the value of those men amongst us who hold out to the world the idea, that our continent is to exhibit an originality of character; and that instead of that imitation and inferiority, which the countries of the old world have been in the habit of exacting from the new, we shall maintain that high ground upon which nature has placed us, and that Europe will alike cease to rule us and give us modes of thinking.

But I must stop short, or else this letter will be all preface. These prefatory remarks, however, I thought proper to make, as they point out the kind of character amongst our country men most estimable in my eyes...

Farewell. I am, dear Sir, yours,

Patrick Henry. To Archibald Blair, Esq.