Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, 1786

“That no man shall be compelled to 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 otherwise 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…We are free to 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 shall be an infringement of natural right.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because…

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George Washington, “Thanksgiving Proclamation,” 1789

“That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks, for his kind care and protection of the People of this country previous to their becoming a Nation, for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his providence, which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war, for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed, for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted, for the civil and religious liberty with which we have been blessed.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because…

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Directions: Read the quotes below. Under each quote, complete the phrase given based on your understanding of the quote. At the bottom of the handout, summarize the arguments supporting religious liberty.
James Madison, Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776
“All men are equally entitled to the full and free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because...

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Declaration of Independence, 1776
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because...

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First Amendment, 1791
“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because...

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Isaac Backus, Baptist Minister, “A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the State of Massachusetts-Bay, in New England,” 1779

“As God is the only worthy object of all religious worship, and nothing can be true religion but a voluntary obedience unto his revealed will, of which each rational soul has an equal right to judge for itself, every person has an unalienable right to act in all religious affairs according to the full persuasion of his own mind, where others are not injured thereby. And civil rulers are so far from having any right to empower any person or persons, to judge for others in such affairs, and to enforce their judgments with the sword, that their power ought to be exerted to protect all persons and societies, within their jurisdiction from being injured or interrupted in the free enjoyment of this right, under any pretense whatsoever.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because...

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James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments,” 1785

“Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, “that Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.” The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right. It is unalienable, because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated by their own minds cannot follow the dictates of other men...We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no man's right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because...

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“In a word, as a man is said to have a right to his property, he may be equally said to have a property in his rights.

Where an excess of power prevails, property of no sort is duly respected. No man is safe in his opinions, his person, his faculties, or his possessions…

Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in various rights of individuals, as that which the term particularly expresses. This being the end of government, that alone is a just government, which impartially secures to every man, whatever is his…

More sparingly should this praise be allowed to a government, where a man’s religious rights are violated by penalties, or fettered by tests, or taxed by a hierarchy. Conscience is the most sacred of all property; other property depending in part on positive law, the exercise of that, being a natural and unalienable right. To guard a man’s house as his castle, to pay public and enforce private debts with the most exact faith, can give no title to invade a man’s conscience which is more sacred than his castle, or to withhold from it that debt of protection, for which the public faith is pledged, by the very nature and original conditions of the social pact.”

Religious liberty is a basic right of all people because…

Summary/Arguments in favor of Religious Liberty: