

CONSTITUTION OF RHODE ISLAND.

RATIFIED BY THE VOTE OF THE PEOPLE, NOV. 21, 22 AND 23, 1842.

WE, the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavours to secure and to transmit the same, unimpaired, to succeeding generations, do ordain and establish this Constitution of Government.

ARTICLE I. — DECLARATION OF CERTAIN CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND PRINCIPLES.

In order effectually to secure the religious and political freedom established by our venerated ancestors, and to preserve the same for our posterity, we do declare that the essential and unquestionable rights and principles hereinafter mentioned, shall be established, maintained, and preserved, and shall be of paramount obligation in all legislative, judicial and executive proceedings.

§ 1. In the words of the Father of his Country, we declare, that "the basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and alter their constitutions of government; but that the constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all."

§ 2. All free governments are instituted for the protection, safety, and happiness of the people. All laws, therefore, should be made for the good of the whole; and the burdens of the State ought to be fairly distributed among its citizens.

§ 3. Whereas, Almighty God hath created the mind free; and all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness; and whereas a principal object of our venerated ancestors, in their migration to this country and their settlement of this State, was, as they expressed it, to hold forth a lively experiment that a flourishing civil State may stand and be best maintained with full liberty in religious concerns: we, therefore, declare, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or to support any religious worship, place or ministry whatever, except in fulfilment of his own voluntary contract; nor enforced, restrained, molested or burthened in his body or goods; nor disqualified from holding any office; nor otherwise suffer on account of his religious belief; and that every man shall be free to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and to profess and by argument to maintain his opinion in matters of religion; and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect his civil capacity.

§ 4. Slavery shall not be permitted in this State.

§ 5. Every person within this State ought to find a certain remedy, by having recourse to the laws, for all injuries or wrongs which he may receive in his person, property, or character. He ought to obtain right and justice freely, and without purchase, completely and without denial; promptly and without delay; conformably to the laws.

§ 6. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, papers, and possessions, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated; and no warrant shall issue, but on complaint in writing, upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and describing as nearly