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About the Freedom of Religion

An American Citizen I: On the Federal Government Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 26 September 1787 (excerpts)

It is impossible for an honest and feeling mind, of any nation or country whatever, to be insensible to the present circumstances of America. Were I an East Indian, or a Turk, I should consider this singular situation of a part of my fellow creatures, as most curious and interesting. Intimately connected with the country, as a citizen of the union, I confess it entirely engrosses my mind and feelings.

To take a proper view of the ground on which we stand, it may be necessary to recollect the manner in which the United States were originally settled and established.—Want of charity in the religious systems of Europe and of justice in their political governments were the principal moving causes, which drove the emigrants of various countries to the American continent. The Congregationalists, Quakers, Presbyterians and other British dissenters, the Catholics of England and Ireland, the Hugonots of France, the German Lutherans, Calvinists, and Moravians, with several other societies, established themselves in the different colonies, thereby laying the ground of that catholicism in ecclesiastical affairs, which has been observable since the late revolution: Religious liberty naturally promotes corresponding dispositions in matters of government. . . .

The British King is the great Bishop or Supreme Head of an established church, with an immense patronage annexed. In this capacity he commands a number of votes in the House of Lords, by creating Bishops, who, besides their great incomes, have votes in that assembly, and are judges in the last resort. They have also many honorable and lucrative places to bestow, and thus from their wealth, learning, dignities, powers and patronage give a great lustre and an enormous influence to the crown.

In America our President will not only be *without* these influencing advantages, *but they will be in the possession of the people at large, to strengthen their hands in the event of a contest with him.* All religious funds, honors and powers, are in the gift of numberless, unconnected, disunited, and contending corporations, wherein the principle of perfect equality universally prevails. In short, danger from ecclesiastical tyranny, that long standing and still remaining curse of the people—that sacrilegious engine of royal power in some countries, can be feared by no man in the United States. . . .

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XIII: Commentaries on the Constitution, Public and Private [1] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1981), 247–51.