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About the Freedom of Religion

Timothy Meanwell

Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer, 29 October 1787

(excerpt)

Friend Oswald, As I sometimes (though not very often) read newspapers, and when I do read any, I generally give thine the preference; because if there is any dispute a—going, thee generally has both sides of the question. I have also read the new constitution which is offered to us, and I am very sorry to inform thee that I don't altogether like it.

I have searched it from beginning to ending, and I don't find a protection for the liberty of conscience, and that all men shall worship GOD agreeable to their own dictates. I should have liked the constitution much better if our friends of the Convention had inserted the 2d article of the Bill of Rights prefixed to the Constitution of Pennsylvania. — “That all men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God, according to the dictates of their own conscience and understanding: And that no man ought, or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, or erect or support any place of worship, or maintain any ministry, contrary to, or against his own free will and consent: Nor can any man, who acknowledges the being of a God, be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right as a citizen, on account of his religious sentiments, or peculiar mode of religious worship: And that no authority can or ought to be vested in, or assumed by any power whatever, that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner controul, the right of conscience in the free exercise of religious worship.” . . .

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