

IN HIS OWN WORDS: CHARLES CARROLL OF CARROLLTON ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Excerpts from the Antilon-First Citizen Letters

Between January 7 and July 1, 1773, Charles Carroll and Daniel Dulany, a Maryland government official, conducted a debate in the form of a series of letters published in Maryland newspapers. At issue was the governor's proclamation setting government officials' public service fees at a high rate. Dulany defended the governor's act in a series of articles published in the Maryland Gazette. Dulany called himself "Antilon," which combines "anti" ("against") and an old English word meaning "unfair taxes."

Charles Carroll quickly responded. Writing under the name "First Citizen," Carroll argued that the fees were taxes. He contended that only the Maryland Assembly, not the governor, had the right to levy taxes. Dulany replied with both argument and personal attack. He questioned Carroll's right as a Catholic to become involved in public affairs.

Below are excerpts from the third and fourth letters written by Dulany and Carroll.

Antilon's Third Letter

Who is he [Carroll]? He has no share in the legislature, as a member of any branch; he is incapable of being a member; he is disabled from giving a vote in the choice of representatives, by the laws and constitution of the country, on account of his principles, which are distrusted by those laws. He is disabled by an express resolve from interfering in the election of members, on the same account. He is not a protestant.

First Citizen's Third Letter

What my speculative notions of religion may be, this is neither the place, nor time to declare; my political principles ought only to be questioned on the present occasion; surely they are constitutional, and have met, I hope, with the approbation of my countrymen.

Antilon's Fourth Letter

We are . . . put upon our guard by our laws, and constitution, which have laid him under disabilities, because he is a papist, and his religious principles are suspected to have so great influence, as to make it unsafe to permit his interference, in any degree, when the interests of the established religion, or the civil government, may be concerned.

First Citizen's Fourth Letter

I am as averse to having a religion crammed down people's throats, as proclamation. There are my political principles, in which I glory. . . . Knaves, and bigots of all sects and denominations I hate, and I despise. . . . [Catholics] cannot . . . enjoy any place of profit, or trust, while they continue papists; but do these disabilities extend so far, as to preclude them from thinking and writing on matters merely of a political nature? . . .

He will not allow me freedom of thought or speech. . . . That you have talents admirably well adapted to the works of darkness, malice to attempt the blackest, and meanness to stoop to the basest, is too true.

Source: From Peter S. Onuf, ed., *Maryland and the Empire, 1773: The Antilon-First Citizen Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 122, 125–126, 188, 226–227.