

Foreign Spectator, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 2 October 1787

By his own admission, the “Foreign Spectator” was Nicholas Collin (1746–1831), a Swedish immigrant and the pastor of Old Swedes Church. In his essays, Collin argued that the Constitution did not have to be amended.

The fate of empires is an object of the first magnitude to the understanding and heart of man. The situation of America at this important crisis, does not only deeply interest every patriotic American, but draws the eyes of politicians throughout the civilized world. Sensible that a foreigner may hazard the imputation of impertinence by writing on national affairs with that freedom the subject may require, I was loth to take up the pen. But as no person seemed disposed to take a full federal view of the union, a matter at this time of very great consequence; I ventured to publish these reflections of mine, which are general political principles, applied to the well known situation of the United States, without the least influence whatever from persons or things. My residence here for 17 years, and a function, that in every feeling mind must animate the sentiments of humanity, intitles me to claim some knowledge of this country, and interest in its felicity. Steady and permanent federal sentiments cannot be procured merely by the warmest addresses to the passions, or the clearest conviction of the understanding, nor even the best devised federal government. Fixed principles and settled habits are necessary for the stability of Republics. I have therefore taken up a great part of this treatise with the subjects of education, morals, religion, manners, laws, and learning. By the good sense of the people at large, and the beneficial influence of those who have their confidence, the federal constitution will no doubt be established; but its energy and stability will depend on the conduct of a free people. I repeat again the principles at first laid down, and so warmly urged, that the United States must be eminently virtuous; that integrity and goodness are the very elements of their political union; that mildness and generosity are not mere ornaments on the temple of federal liberty, but columns that support it—because it is impossible to fix all the punctilios of right, and reconcile all the varieties of interest, between the states; and because the federal government has no power to maintain the union against their will. Nothing but a great army could compel only one of the greater states to act its part in the confederation—How should it be raised? Would it in that unhappy necessity act with a federal spirit? and if, would not such a dreadful tumult spread to neighbouring states, and like an earthquake convulse the whole union. Again, should a majority of delegates in either house on important occasions act from political and local views, great evils will necessarily befall the union—The constituents must then be generous and federal, and far from censuring, applaud the liberal federal conduct of their representatives in Congress: The house of representatives will especially resemble the great body of the people; and the senate will also in a great measure speak popular sentiments; the whole fabric is truly republican, and depends on virtue, the vital principle of republics. It is then devoutly to be wished, that the states may cherish each other with a sisterly affection; not suspect one another or the common guardian of any sinister views; not wound each other for a cruel punctilio of honor; scan mutual infirmities with a sisters eye; and generously sacrifice particular advantages for the common glory and happiness. *Divine Providence has placed them together in this western hemisphere sequestered from a*

tumultuous world, to enjoy a felicity which nothing but their own perverseness can annoy— Their federal bond of union was wrought with toil and distress—by numberless endearing proofs of mutual fidelity in a severe trial of seven years—steeped in mingled tears and streams of blood—drawn close by many expiring heroes; let it then be kept sacred with a perpetual affection—may the sacrilegious hand wither, that would tear a thread of this precious bond, and annul the deed given by Heaven for the national happiness of millions. I have clearly proved, that a fatal disunion would inevitably produce the horrid calamities of civil wars and foreign conquest: indeed it is almost self-evident, because this disunion can proceed from nothing else than a dreadful corruption, that hates all order, virtue and good government. The constitution now offered does not assume an inch of unnecessary power, perhaps it is rather *too free*; if it is not received the people are too bad to be happy—but I am confident that a great majority have sense and goodness enough to accept with joy *the only salvation from impending ruin.*

Ye votaries of religion, consider how necessary civil order is for the promotion of piety and every moral virtue? Ye teachers of whatever name, discharge conscientiously the sacred federal duty you owe to God and your country? let there not be one evil spirit of discord among you, who are *the messengers of peace*: exert all the influence of your office and characters for the good of a people that must be dear to you. Ye good of all denominations reflect, that the common interest of religion, and the honest predilection you have for your particular modes of worship, both require the independency, safety, and general welfare of your country—shudder at the impieties and outrages on humanity committed by monsters in human form in the scenes of general anarchy. *Ye friends of peace*, who more peculiarly detest violence and bloodshed, reflect how necessary public tranquility is to you! how precarious your situation would be in that dreadful tumult, when the sword is the last arbiter of right, of property and life! rejoice in the security of a peaceful constitution. Ye proprietors of land, do you wish to reap wheat you have sown, and to gather the fruit of your trees; remember that a firm constitution is the only effectual deed—if this is broke, foreign and domestic armies may change into a dreary waste the land that now flows with milk and honey—nay many of you may be forced to toil in your own fields as indigent laborers for an insolent landlord, who gained by his sword or infamous arts of party your fair patrimony, and the inheritance of your children—alas! the furrows you have so often moistened with your sweat, may be steeped with the vital blood of your valiant sons. Ye fair cities and towns reared as it were by a creative power in a country that was two centuries ago a howling wilderness! Ye seats of industry, plenty and elegance! embrace with rapture a federal government; it is your only fortification—without it, you are not only an easy prey to every powerful invader, but may be sacked and burnt by rude and desperate banditties of American name. Ye men of wealth! without the public protection you may be reduced to beggary. Ye poor with honest industry! under the security of just and wise laws you may become rich, at least you will obtain the real comforts of life. Ye men of distinguished virtues and abilities, whom Heaven has made the natural guardians of your fellow citizens! exult in a constitution, by which superior merit alone will procure the sublime glory and happiness of making millions blessed, of exerting that patriotic affection which is the first in exalted minds. Ye wise and good Americans in general, triumph in a constitution, that permits you, poor or rich, to entrust your dearest concerns with men of your own choice; men whose power ceases with your confidence—use this noble liberty with judgment, integrity, with a

federal generosity that becomes freemen and brothers united in life and death. Ye mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of America! dear names to every manly heart—your influence in every civilized society is like the vernal sun, and the gentle rains of May. Your prudence, frugality and taste are of peculiar importance in the present exigency—*your hearts are naturally federal*, prone to friendship, pity, love, and generosity; exert all your federal influence with husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, as your happiness is wrapped in theirs, as you cannot live without them, and they would die for you. Ye parents, bequeath to your beloved children a federal constitution as the best inheritance—Ye hoary sires, who wish to descend in peace the vale of life, with the assistance and filial comfort of your dearest connexions, how bitter would civil broils be to you; how painful to be driven from your house and separated from your family! but what grief would bend your grey heads, if your sons should fall by fraternal wounds!—You who are surrounded with a blooming offspring, regard it with awful tenderness as a pledge of fidelity to your count[r]y: The innocent at the mother’s breast; he that fondly strives to call you father; and the daughter whose youthful charms may in public disorders prove her ruin, tenderly implore you to be federal.—Hear then ye people of the United States! reason dictates, every feeling of the heart entreats, and Heaven commands, *be federal and happy for ever*.

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