

## Providence *United States Chronicle*, 27 March 1788

Mr. WHEELER, *By publishing the following Copy of a Letter from a Hermit to his Friend, in your impartial Chronicle, you will oblige some of your Readers.*

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DEAR SIR, Yours, which inclosed the form of the new Constitution, proposed by the honorable Convention at Philadelphia, for the future government of the thirteen free and independent States of America, hath at last reached my lonely cottage; and I am surprized to find you, Sir, endeavouring to support it, and cannot account for it any other way than that you expect to be promoted (under it) to a place of profit or honour—which generally governs the principles of men;—for upon a perusal thereof, I find it to be fraught with many errors, and things that may be made use of to the total destruction of the *liberty* of the people; and think it may be very well added to the seven wonders of the world, and so be an eighth.—That a set of men, endowed with great abilities, as those gentlemen who composed the Convention certainly were, should presume to present to the great tribunal of the public such a monster, that far exceeds the description of the wonderful Colossus at Rhodes<sup>1</sup>—for that is said only strided over a river of fifty fathoms wide, and held in its hand a light-house, for the direction of vessels into the harbour—but this monster is not only to stride over a territory of fifty fathoms, but over the thirteen States of America—and instead of holding a light-house in its hand, holds forth to the people the sword of tyranny, which doubtless the framers thereof meant to have brandished over the heads of the people of these States, as soon as it should be adopted: And if ever it is, and by some unforeseen event should be thrown down, as the famous Colossus was, it would operate very differently to the interests of the people, as that deprived them of the light which directed them, and the destruction of the latter would suffer the people to see and enjoy again that liberty which God and nature has entitled them to;—and upon a further investigation I find, that almost every section of each article, admits of a double construction, and requires an interpreter to explain them; but if it should be rejected by the States, it might not be lost, but would answer to sell to a Jew, or an Infidel, as well as the former; as neither are exempted from holding any office under said Constitution, as nothing but age and residence are required as qualifications. But you say, Sir, that without doubt they will be men of principles who will be appointed to hold the important stations, under the new Constitution; but as the deistical principle is gaining ground very fast in these States, I think, Sir, it would not be safe to trust the very best political men we have among us with such power—when history doth not afford us any instance where the people have entrusted absolute power in their rulers, but what in time they have used it to the enslaving the people: For I conceive, Sir, that a Constitution ought to be so framed, if possible, that the worst of men entrusted with power, could not, agreeable to the Constitution, use it to the destruction of the liberties of the people;—and I think, Sir, there is not a sufficient guard in the Constitution for the preventing those, who may hold offices under the Constitution, from a combination to perpetuate themselves and posterity in office. I agree with you, Sir, that there needed some farther power to have been vested in Congress, under some certain restrictions, for which I conceived the Convention was delegated with power to do, by revising and

amending the old, but not by forming a new one.—Neither do I conceive that the free-born sons of America will vest any set of men on earth with power to call them to arms at any time (unless the States should be invaded) at his or their will or pleasure, and order them to any part of the world, where they may be in alliance with any King, Prince, or State, to defend such part of his or their territory as may be invaded; for I see nothing in the Constitution to prevent the President and those in power from calling the militia together, and hiring them out in the same way as the Germans, and other arbitrary Princes, do their enlisted soldiers. Will a people, Sir, who by such violent struggles have just saved themselves from the chains of Britain, peaceably submit to such an arbitrary form of government: No, Sir, I believe they never will;—the dear-bought privileges of the free-born sons of America, I hope never will be admitted by the benevolent Father of mankind to be trifled away, in such a manner. I observe, Sir, by the proposed Constitution, that the liberty of the press is not secured, that great palladium of freedom—no bill of rights—no power reserved to the State legislatures—a standing army in time of peace—and a trial by jury in civil cases, not secured to the people; and persons indicted under any pretence whatever, are triable only before the Federal Court—as in that case the State becomes a party—so a man in New-Hampshire, indicted for any supposed crime, that he is in no wise guilty of, must be at the expence of appearing before the Federal Court, for trial, and that then may be setting in Georgia; but as a *discrimination* of the whole of the proposed Constitution would far exceed the bounds of a letter, shall conclude with the following remarks:—That there is room to fear, that a majority of those who composed the Convention were deists, or men of little or no religious principles—as they have made no provision for those who refuse to bear arms; especially the society of Friends, or Quakers, so called, a very large and respectable body of people in these States, who have ever refused to war or fight, not only in America, but wherever they are known as a people; believing, as they say, it is not consistent with the gospel dispensation: And I doubt not but what if those worthy gentlemen (as many of those who were the framers of the new Constitution, are) were to have it in their power again, would not only provide for the latter, but make many alterations in said Constitution.—Therefore, I conceive, Sir, it would be better and safer for the people to remit it back again to those gentlemen who were the framers of it, with their objections, in order for a revisal and alteration; or appoint a new Convention, with power to revise this or the former, which they may think may be easiest altered, to suit the conditions of the people, than to adopt it in its present form.—For can I conceive, that such a set of worthy gentlemen as composed the Convention, and framed the Constitution, many of whom not only ventured their fortunes, but their lives, to protect us from British tyranny, which we were so loudly threatened with—I say, Sir, had these men no other motives in protecting us from them, than that of having us to tyrannize over themselves: But I say it, with sorrow, that it appears to have been too much the governing principle. And another part of the Constitution, I observe, Sir, with sorrow—the toleration for the continuance of that inhuman practice of enslaving the poor Africans; a practice that is a disgrace to human nature, much more to a people who have tasted the sweets of liberty. But as the adoption of it I conceive will never operate to my disadvantage, as a cave answers for a place of my habitation, and as the last war did not rouse me from my lonely cottage, I

conclude I shall be left to enjoy it under whatever administration may prevail; and I trust, Sir, the same God, who protected the people of these States from the chains of Britain, will still protect them from the adoption of this Constitution in its present form.

1. One of the seven wonders of the Ancient World.

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