

William Rotch, Sr., to Moses Brown, Nantucket, 8 November 1787

WILLIAM ROTCH, SR., TO MOSES BROWN
Nantucket, November 8, 1787¹⁰

Thou queries how friends can be active in establishing the new form of Government, which so much favours Slavery; alas in this point I must refer thee to some advocate for it, as to my own part my heart has been often pained since the publication of the doings of the Convention; and much disappointed I am as I had entertain'd some hope that so many wise men, would have form'd some System of Government, founded on equity & justice, that thereby it might have acquir'd some strength and energy, and that it might be on such a basis that we as a Society might lend our aid in establishing it so far as it tended to peace and morality; but we may say in truth that the wisdom of man (as man) can or shall not work the Righteousness of God; and whatever high encomiums are given to it (the Constitution) it is evident to me it is founded on *Slavery* and that is on *Blood*, because I understand, some of the Southern members utterly refused doing any thing unless this horid part was admitted, which occasions me to say its very foundation was on Slavery & Blood, as that I suppose was the corner stone; there are many parts which meets my approbation, as it so nearly approaches a mix'd Monarchy, wch. I think a good exchange for an Ideal Republican; but the valuable parts are all marred to a great degree in my view, and often brings me into a deep consideration of the consequence that must eventually attend; can we expect additional judgments will not vissent our land when the people have given their own late declarations the lie in so bare faced a manner, some complaint has been made, that no Bill of Rights was prefixed to their doings; but how was it possible that it could be done, for what are those Rights, except the very Rights in part, and the most valuable part which they have declar'd they would not protect; and I much fear it will be taken for an implicit encouragement, to pursue the trade, though I sincerely wish the Northern States may manifest a better principle of justice than the united Wisdom of the Continent has exempl'd them in, & as thou observes it breaks up this Assylum of liberty (the Massachusets) thus my dear Friend thou may see I can by no means alleviate thy mind in this respect, except in being united with thee as a fellow sufferer in this great cause of oppression, interceding when a little strength is afforded that the Father of Mercies may in his own time open the hearts of the people and incline them to true justice and judgment, and grant that the bonds of the oppressed may be loosed, and indeed notwithstanding, I fear that for a time, an encouragement may be the consequence of that article; yet as the work is on the wheels I fully believe it is the determination of Heaven that Slavery shall be abolished, though it may be through some sore judgments; I am much affected at this time with this Subject from a recent Instance, though it may

Commerce in men under their Controul and Regulation as well as Other Matters, had this been done and nothing more said about it. Nor no infringement on the Constitution of the Massachusets in this Respect I should have been very Easy to have Trusted Congress with it, and as it affects the Essential Rights of Men, those States or men that could not be prevailed on to have Confided in Congress, Congress nor the other States, methinks can have little reason to Confide in them, had the period of 21 years been fixed for Abolishing Slavery as some Writers your way seems to represent, it would have been doing something, but that will be then to do with probably Less Ability to Effect it, if it be not now held up to be a sore Evil as it now stands and if possible to be Amended. When I consider us in New England calld upon once a Quarter and, to answer Conscientiously that we bear a faithful Testimony against Slavery, I cannot see how we can approve those Articles. I was & am very Sorry we have this renew'd Tryal for to me it is a pretty Close one to be Considerd as Oppos'd to that Constitution which is intended as a Reformation of the Govnt of these states, as I am Sensible there is Need of it. I know not that I should Object to any Other part, 'tho I think I can see wherein Friends may be Affected, and it behoves us to Act Wisely in this matter, to bear Our Testimony faithfully wherein that is Affected, Trusting in the protection of Divine Providence more than in this or Any Change of Government, Remembering Stephen Crisps Saying "Take heed of that part in you which Trusts & Relies upon any Sort of the men of this World"⁴— Inclosd I send a late publication on the African Trade Written by a presbeterian minister S. H. in Newport,⁵ and the Testimony of the Baptists at a late assosiation.⁶ As I expect it will be agreable to friends here to hear from friends with you, on this subject I am free thou should Shew this to Such Discreet friends for their Advice, as thou mayst think propper.