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Isaac Backus: Diary post-7 February 1788 (excerpt)

A journey to Boston.

A New Constitution for the United States of America, was finished at Philadelphia, Sept. 17. 1787; and our town met on Dec. 17, and chose four delegates to meet in Boston Jan. 9. 1788, with others in Convention, to establish or reject it; of which delegates I was the first, without the least motion of mine that way. When I was first informed of it on Dec. 20, I thot. I should not go; but as religious liberty is concerned in the affair, and many were earnest for my going, I consented, & went as far as elder Briggs's Jan. 14, and went into Boston the 15, and met with the Convention that day and the next in the State house; but as we had not room enough there, we removed the 17th. to mr. Belknap's meetinghouse in Long lane, where we continued our meetings from day to day, until the Constitution was ratified on Feb. 6, by 187 yeas, against 168 nays, being a majority of 19. Each delegate had full liberty, in his turn, to say all he pleased, for or against the Constitution; by means of which I obtained much more light, about the extensive affairs of our Country, the nature of the proposed Constitution, and the security of the rights of the people therein, than I had when I went from home, and therefore voted for it. And yet elder Alden of Bellingham, elder Rathbun of Pittsfield, elder Tingley of Waterborough (county of York) all voted against it, and so did two thirds of the baptist members of the Convention, of which there were above twenty. Elder Stillman, and I, with twelve congregational ministers, voted for it; though doubtless with very different views. The exclusion of any hereditary lordly power, and of any religious test, I view as our greatest securities in this Constitution; but perhaps many mean no more thereby, than the exclusion of such lordship as they have in England, & of requiring any assent to any prescribed forms of faith or worship. By the covenant of circumcision, the seed of Abraham were born with a right to buy others as servants, and the seed of Aaron were the only priesthood in that church, which was to be governed wholly by the revealed will of God, given in writing by the immediate inspiration of his holy Spirit. But the mystery of iniquity, by putting common parents in the place of Abraham, religious teachers in the room of the seed of Aaron, and the inventions & laws of men, in the place of the infalliable laws of God, has filled the world with confusion, blood and slavery; from which the only way of deliverance, is by allowing rulers no power but what the voice of the people can again take from them, & teachers no power but what is given and supported by the laws & Spirit of Christ, our one Lawgiver, James 4. 12, without any law of man in the case. . . .

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. VII: Massachusetts [4] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2001), 1593–95.