

BIBLICAL & RELIGIOUS

AARON'S SERPENT

It is said that the Foederal Government “if established will annihilate the legislatures of each state, and like Aaron’s serpent, swallow up the whole.”

Virginia Independent Chronicle, 28 November 1787 (CC 2, 243)

ALTAR OF TYRANNY

The *liberty, property*, and every social comfort in the life of the yeomanry in America, are to be sacrificed at the *altar* of tyranny.

“None of the Well-Born Conspirators,” Philadelphia *Freeman’s Journal*
23 April 1788 (CC 5, 205)

ANGEL OF DARKNESS

This government is no more like a true picture of your own, than an Angel of darkness resembles an Angel of light.

“Cato” IV (George Clinton?), *New York Journal*
8 November 1787 (CC 2, 11)

AN ARK

The philosophers will no longer consider a republic as an impracticable form of government; and pious men of all denominations will thank God for having provided, in our foederal constitution, an Ark, for the preservation of the remains of the justice and liberties of the world.

“Foederal Constitution,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*
10 October 1787 (CC 1, 364)

THE ARK THAT IS TO SAVE US

Good as well as bad men will probably unite their interest to oppose it, and some small convulsions may possibly happen in some of the states before it is adopted, but I am certain it is the ark that is to save us.

William Pierce to St. George Tucker, New York
28 September 1787 (RCS SUPPL. GA., #13, p. 10)

Printed in *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, 20 March 1788 (CC 4, 443)

THE ARK OF THEIR LIBERTIES

To encourage our dependence on Divine Providence, we are assured by the pen of inspiration, that “while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, day and night, winter and summer shall not cease;” and to animate our hopes that the blessings of freedom shall be ours, and descend to our posterity, let us reflect on the present spirit of enlightened patriotism that animates the citizens of these States. Behold them coalescing under a wise, a just, and liberal form of Government—A system, which while they contemplate its perfections (as a skillful artist does the happy result of his labours) gratitude expands their bosom to the fountain of all wisdom, who hath inspired them to shelter the ark of their liberties beneath its protecting wings.

Providence *United States Chronicle*

31 December 1789 (RCS SUPPL. R.I., #388, p. 269)

CHILD OF HEAVEN

If you, & the Friends to this child of Heaven, do not appear to nurture it, it will be crucified ere it is born, & will never become the Saviour of its Country.

Samuel Henshaw to Henry Van Schaack, Northampton, Mass.
18 October 1787 (RCS MASS., 100–101)



Exert yourself labor hard for without this child of Heaven our days in future will not be worth Counting.

Henry Van Schaack to Theodore Sedgwick, Pittsfield, Mass.
8 January 1788 (RCS MASS., 644)

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

The Fœderal Constitution is, in one respect, like the *Christian religion*, the more minutely it is discussed, the more perfect it will appear.

“Americanus” II, *Virginia Independent Chronicle*
19 December 1787 (RCS VA., 244)

COVENANT

What covenant are the freemen of Massachusetts about to ratify? A covenant that will degrade them to the *level of slaves*.

“The Republican Federalist” V (James Warren?)
Massachusetts Centinel, 19 January 1788 (RCS MASS., 750)

DEADLY SERPENT

But, fellow citizens! beware of this candied pill—under this specious covering lurks a deadly serpent, which like Aaron’s, will swallow up the liberties of your country!

Benjamin Russell to Eleazer Oswald, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
4 December 1787 (RCS MASS., 47)

DEVIL

That Union is the source of evil—
And Constitution is the Devil.

Newburyport, Mass., *Essex Journal*, 9 January 1788 (RCS MASS., 989)

DIVINE CODE

Nothing, surely, but the *Hand of GOD* could so completely have changed the tone of the pious and enlightened Clergy of this Commonwealth, who were formerly so vehement in their addresses in favour of the Liberties of mankind on very different principles from those on which the *Divine Code* before us was founded.

Boston *American Herald*, 28 January 1788 (RCS MASS., 814)

EVANGELICAL CONSTITUTION

And whereas it hath been reported that several of our *lowborn* brethren have had the horrid audacity to think for themselves in regard to this

new system of government, and, *dreadful thought!* have wickedly began to doubt concerning the perfection of this evangelical Constitution which our political doctors have declared to be a panacea.

“John Humble,” Address of the Lowborn, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
29 October 1787 (RCS PA., 205)

A GIFT FROM HEAVEN

Already we recognize the ingenuity and industry of this committee; the papers teem with paragraphs, correspondents, &c. that exhibit a picture which bears no resemblance to the original; if we view this mirror for the representation of the sentiments of the people, a perfect harmony seems to prevail, every body in every place are charmed with the new Constitution, consider it as a gift from heaven, as their only salvation.

“Centinel” X (Samuel Bryan), Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
12 January 1788 (CC 3, 362)

A GOD-LIKE WORK

What a God-like work, to embrace our growing numbers and extending settlements in one efficient system of government. This our new Constitution promises; and from the humanity of the age and the liberal principles of its policy, it is likely to perform.

David Ramsay, Oration, Charleston *Columbian Herald*
5 June 1788 (CC 6, 164)

GOLIATH, THIS UNCIRCUMCISED PHILISTINE

I have the fullest confidence that that God, who hath so lately delivered us out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, will also deliver us from this Goliath, this uncircumcised Philistine.

“A Real Federalist,” N.Y. *Albany Register*
5 January 1789 (supplement) (RCS N.Y., 2558)

GUARDIAN ANGEL

I presume you have had hot work in Congress about this new *apparition*. Some I suppose are frightened and others see it as a guardian angel.

Richard Butler to William Irvine, Carlisle, Pa.
11–12 October 1787 (RCS PA., 177)

HEAVENLY MANNA

We have too much reason to fear should the States refuse the proposed plan of government, that America is brooding them in her bosom—On the other hand should she accept the heavenly manna, her decision will be enstamped on the page of time.

Virginia Norfolk and Portsmouth Journal
21 May 1788 (RCS VA., 831)

IDOL

I therefore do not think any apology necessary for appearing in print; and I hope to avoid, at least, the indiscriminate censure which you have, with so much candor and liberality, thrown on those who will not worship *your idol*.

“Cincinnatus” I (Arthur Lee): To James Wilson, Esquire
New York Journal, 1 November 1787 (RCS N.Y., 162)



Shall we set up the idol, before which we shall soon be obliged, however, reluctantly to bow?

“Cincinnatus” IV (Arthur Lee): To James Wilson, Esquire
New York Journal, 22 November 1787 (CC 2, 188)

LEGS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Upon the whole I look upon the new system as a most ridiculous piece of business—something (*entre nous*) like the legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s image.

William Grayson to William Short, New York
10 November 1787 (RCS VA., 151)

THE MEANS OF OUR SALVATION

I am a great admirer of the Constitution, planned by the Convention for the United States. I think it will, if adopted, be the means of our salvation; and therefore, I most heartily and sincerely wish it may take place.

New York Packet, 1 February 1788 (CC 4, 507)

NEW DAGON CONSTITUTION

As you may well learn the malevolent, vindictive tempers of some of these harpies, at least I have found it so against anyone that dare either write, speak, or act or even think against their new Dagon Constitution.

Hugh Ledlie to John Lamb, Hartford, Conn.
15 January 1788 (RCS CONN., 581)

THE NEW FAITH

I know you are fully sensible of the *influence* they commonly have on the minds of the more *ignorant*, tho not less *virtuous* part, of the community; and I make not a doubt, but they will use their utmost exertions as well in, as out of Convention, to make proselytes to the *new faith*.

Charles Tillinghast to Hugh Hughes, New York
27–28 January 1788 (CC 3, 482)

NEW IDOL

This reflection, sir, is as ingenious as it is liberal. It reaches every man who will not worship the new idol. It is the shibboleth of your party.

“Cincinnatus” VI (Arthur Lee): To James Wilson, Esquire
New York Journal, 6 December 1787 (RCS N.Y., 370; CC 2, 362)

NEW SPECIES OF DIVINE RIGHT

Dr. Rush then proceeded to consider the origin of the proposed system, and fairly deduced it from heaven, asserting that he as much believed the hand of God was employed in this work, as that God had divided the Red Sea to give a passage to the children of Israel or had fulminated the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. Dilating some time upon this new species of *divine right*, thus transmitted to the future governors of the Union, he made a pathetic [i.e., emotional] appeal to the opposition.

Benjamin Rush, Speech in the Pa. Convention
12 December 1787 (RCS PA., 593)

NEW TESTAMENT

I am very happy in reflecting that but so small a part of what *was* the 13 States has had the unpardonable stupidity to refuse the good things

offered in the Constitution, that New Testament which confirms to us our political salvation.

Extract of a letter from Edenton, N.C., August 12, 1789
Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 8 September 1789 (RCS N.C., 675)

THE ONLY SALVATION FROM IMPENDING RUIN

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*.

“Foreign Spectator” (Nicholas Collin), Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*
2 October 1787 (CC I, 291)

OUR HOLY RELIGION

The Fœderal Constitution, like our holy religion, knows no invidious distinctions. It embraces, without discrimination, every individual citizen of the states, and considers every man as entitled to an equal share in the government.

“Americanus” II, *Virginia Independent Chronicle*
19 December 1787 (RCS VA., 247)

OUR POLITICAL BIBLE

I have now an opportunity of sending you Mr. [John] Trumbull’s papers, etc.; also [Joel] Barlow’s *Prospect of Peace*, which, with the Connecticut papers containing all the speeches in this Convention that have ever been published, I am indebted to our friend, Mr. [Isaac] Beer[s] of New Haven for. The *Prospect of Peace* you have never published. It is a delicate and pleasing compliment to men of note to see their speeches in print; it is due to the state; it preserves the various commentaries of our patriots on the text of our political Bible, which a century hence, will be of infinite value; and it is high good *policy in you* to pay the compliment to *influential* characters.

Nathaniel Hazard to Mathew Carey, New York
14 July 1788 (RCS SUPPL. CONN., #97, p. 117)

PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Behold the PEARL OF GREAT PRICE put into our hands; let us not be like the fool into whose hands such a price is delivered, who hath no heart to improve it.

Boston Gazette, 29 October 1787 (RCS MASS., 166; CC 1, 511)

THE POLITICAL SAVIOUR OF OUR COUNTRY

And out of the abundance of the heart, the long train of industrious *Tradesmen*, who are now spending their past earnings, or selling their tools for a subsistence—will resent it—nay, the whole body of an almost ruined people, will despise and execrate the wretch who dares blaspheme the POLITICAL SAVIOUR OF OUR COUNTRY.

“A Political Dialogue,” *Massachusetts Centinel*
24 October 1787 (CC 1, 456–57)

PRECIOUS BOND . . . DEED GIVEN BY HEAVEN

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.

“Foreign Spectator” (Nicholas Collin), *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*
2 October 1787 (CC 1, 291)

RIGHTEOUS CAUSE

Heaven grant us what is wanted most,
A Washington to lead our host;
A Congress to support our laws,
And long protect the righteous cause!

Newport Herald, 25 February 1790 (RCS R.I., 736)

ROCK OF OUR POLITICAL SALVATION

The report that General Washington was *drawn in* to sign it is as false as it is artful;—he looks up to it as the rock of our political salvation.

Tobias Lear to William Prescott, Jr., Mount Vernon
4 March 1788 (CC 4, 307)

ROCK OF OUR SALVATION

Length of time, and *costly* experience, are necessary to induce Legislatures of neighbouring States to act upon truly political general principles—An additional reason among ten thousand others, for embracing the federal Constitution, as the rock of our salvation.

Tristram Dalton to John Langdon, Boston
18 March 1788 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #808, p. 344)



Another learned and honorable gentleman on my left hand said, we must look up to it as the rock of our salvation. To make short sir, *necessitas non habeat legem*. [Necessity has no law]

Alexander Tweed, Speech in the South Carolina Convention
22 May 1788 (RCS S.C., 380)

ROCK OF SALVATION

I hope it will prove a Rock of Salvation on which we may rest in our career to that fatal extreme.

Archibald Stuart to James Madison, Richmond, Va.
9 November 1787 (RCS VA., 148)

THE SALVATION OF OUR COUNTRY

But I'll venter to write to you as a friend to it—for I cannot think that a man of your candour & discernment—unbiased by Interest—can stand forth, & wield the weapons of Anarchy—against the Salvation of our Country.

Simeon Baldwin to James Kent, New Haven, Conn.
8 March 1788 (CC 4, 350)

SAVIOR OF ITS COUNTRY

If you, & the Friends to this child of Heaven, do not appear to nurture it, it will be crucified ere it is born, & will never become the Saviour of its Country.

Samuel Henshaw to Henry Van Schaack, Northampton, Mass.
18 October 1787 (RCS MASS., 100–101)

A SYSTEM [FROM THE] FINGER OF GOD

For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system, which, without the finger of *God*, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests.

“Cæsar” II (Alexander Hamilton?), New York *Daily Advertiser*
17 October 1787 (CC I, 396)

TREE OF LIFE

It has been reared to Maturity by Men, who give Dignity to human Nature;—that it is *the Tree of Life*, whose Fruit will enthrone this western Empire high among the Nations, and raise the firmest and fairest Temple to LIBERTY, that has ever yet dignified this Globe.

Virginia Independent Chronicle, 26 September 1787 (RCS VA., 19; CC I, 255)

THE TRINITY

It promises security at home & respectability abroad I do not think any people could be long happy without ballances & checks in their constitutions: nor do I concieve it possible to organise a government with the three necessary checks on more unexceptionable principles out of homogeneous materials than has been done by the convention. It is an apt illustration of the Trinity.

David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, Charleston, S.C.
10 November 1787 (CC 2, 84)

THE WHALE THAT SWALLOWED UP JONAH

The new plan of partnership went by the name of *the fiddle*; those who were in favour of it called themselves *fiddlers*, and those who opposed it were stiled *antifiddlers*. The former said it was the best plan that human wisdom had ever contrived. The latter imagined it pregnant with mischief of every kind. The former compared it to a strong fence about a rich field of wheat. The latter compared it to the whale that swallowed up Jonah.

Jeremy Belknap: *The Foresters, An American Tale*
Boston, 1792 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #983, p. 344)