

Daniel Adams Jr. to Daniel Adams

Townshend, Massachusetts, 31 December 1787.

Manuscript document signed, 3 pages + docket.

To Capt. Daniel Adams –

Sir The business, in which you are chosen to act for us, in the State Convention; appointed to consider the pro[po]sed Federal Constitution, being very interesting; & you choosing to act under our direction; or at least to have our minds clearly expressed on the occasion; We therefore observe, That we are sensible of the neces[inserted: s]ity of amendments in the Confederation of the United States; and approve of the method which has been adapted for such amendments, (viz.), by a Continental-Convention; & we doubt not but the members of the said Convention were in general Wise. Politicians, & readily acknowledge that some & perhaps all of them, have proved themselves true patriots in our late struggle for Liberty, whose eminent [sic] services we still remember with gratitude, yet we presume they would not esteem it an honour to be considered as infallible; & it would be a Dishonour to us to yield an implicit faith to the opinions of any men Altho' the said convention was call'd for the sole purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation, yet if instead of that, they had sent out a fraim [sic] of government, which we could Judge adequate to the exigencies of the states & consistent with there [sic] Constitutions, We would cherefully [sic] have adopted it. [struck: But we can't avoid a suspicion that those who would deviate from the business assigned them & attempt something quite different & unexpected would also recommend a government unfavorable to our liberty {inserted: but we find} not Least in some important effects & this suspicion is increased by] some things contained & [struck: by] others omitted in the Constitution [inserted: proposed] which we are bound in Duty both to ourselves and our Postarity [sic] to object to & shall now point [struck: out as the foundation of our objection to the same] --them out.

1 the said Constitution does not contain a clear declaration of the Rights of the people; or of the Powers of the Several State governments, which we view as a matter of unspeakable importance--

2 the Right of Election is not sufficiently secur'd to the People – as appears, [struck: as appears] from the latter part of the fourth – Section in the first Article of said Constitution, and as

Representation depends upon Election; we find if the proposed Plan should take Place, these two main Pillars of a free government will be much weakned [*sic*]; which are rights of the greatest magnitude & absolutely necessary to the safety of the people. [2]

3 The Legislative power is blended with the Executive, the President [*sic*] being vested with both & having no other Council than the Senate –

4 the powers of the proposed congress we conceive would be too Extensive & dangerous, both as to our property & even our lives –

5 the Judicial Powers also would be dangerous as well as very Expensive--

6 The Time for which the members of this Congress are to be chosen is in our opinion too long especially the Senate –

7 In the proposed Constitution it is Containd, that all civil offices both of the United States & of the several States shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this Constitution, but that no Religious Test shall Ever be required as a qualification to office or public Trust under the United States, But we think it necessary that our Civil rulers be professors of the true religion and apparent friends to it; & this has been the opinion of all wise & good men among us from the first settlement of this Country; if therefore any who have been chosen into public trust should afterward appear to be destitute of this essential qualification, the People must have a Right to Remove them. Nor can we on any consideration agree to a Constitution Which Will admit into govern^t, Atheists Deists Papists or abettors of any false religion; tho' we would not Exclude any Denomination [*inserted*: of] Protestants who hold the fundamentals of our religion, True religion distinguished from Infidelity & Idolatry [*struck*: & hereby] is the foundation of good government, as Well as of morality & happiness. To be secured in the free enjoyment of this our ancestors emigrated into this Country, and settled here in such dangers & distresses [*sic*] as should never be forgotten - This priviledge [*sic*] then has been Purchased at too dear a rate, to be viewed With indifferency [*sic*] – it should be dearer to us than property or life itself: Nor can we consent to support any in authority who are not bound to defend this our greatest priviledge [*sic*]. – In the Bill of rights for this Commonwealth it is declar'd that the happiness of the people, & the Preservation of civil government [3] depend upon piety religion & morality; & that the people have a right to invest their Legislature With Power to require that provision be made for the public Worship of God & the support of protestant teachers; & require the attendance of People upon such Worship & instructions – And it is not of as much consequence that a continental

Legislature be vested with Such authority as a State Legislature but What Purpose will it answer if they are not abettors of the Protestant Religion – Will they Employ their power [*inserted: &*] influence this Way – upon the Whole whether [*inserted: a*] Religious Test be agreed to or not – We must insist that the Continental Constitution Contain a Bill of Rights which by express declaration will secure to us our priviledges especially our religion and such rulors [*sic*] to support it as we can put confidence in & while we view them as friends to the great Author of our religion, may expect his Presence With them, that so they may be ministers of God for the Good of his people for the interest of his religion & for the honour of his Name –

– Townshend Dec^m. 31 day 1787 –

by Order of the Town – Daniel Adams Jun^r. Town Clerk –

[*docket:*]

Instructions