

## **Denatus, *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 11 June 1788**

*To the MEMBERS of the VIRGINIA FEDERAL CONVENTION, collectively, and individually.*

GENTLEMEN, Happy in the enjoyment of my own reflections, the tranquility of my neighbours, and the peace and prosperity of every good man, I pass a great part of my time in solitude. At these periods, the fœderal constitution, with the criticisms of the wise upon it, made their appearance. Considering the work itself, I could not bring it within my view. To me, the commentators have bewildered the subject, and hid it from my mind, in impenetrable obscurity. After reading it three times carefully, I formed an opinion, which I still retain, and which, daily, sinks deeper into my belief. That opinion I now lay before you, in hopes that some thought of mine, may be worthy of observation and contribute to the general good.

Men of learning and experience, judge of others with humanity. You have too much liberality, and too great a desire for the improvement of every useful degree of human study, to blame me for this address. Those who determine without reason, may think otherwise: to them I reply,

As man is an accountable being, to his creator and to his fellow-creatures, the study of morality would enable him to act consistent with his duty to society, and the study of religion, with his duty to God. I will venture to affirm, that was this mode established we would have fewer law suits, less backbiting, slander, and mean observations, more industry, justice and real happiness, than at present. Says a pious writer, “be careful not to neglect religion in the education of your children, in vain will you endeavour to conduct them by any other path: If they are dear to you, if from them you expect to receive credit or comfort from religion must be derived their happiness and your own.” Another elegant writer observes nearly in the same manner, speaking to a father of his son. “Teach him science, and his life will be useful. Teach him religion and his death will be happy.”

The above in part, are my objections to the fœderal constitution, each of which, is a genus. As I am a warm friend to the union, and to justice among its individuals—I will object no more—My sincere prayer is, that it may be amended, and then adopted—It certainly has a great many excellent qualities, and as many bad ones. The ambiguity of the whole, is its greatest fault. I remember, in a public court yard, to have heard a baptist preacher make three score and sixteen objections to it, and grunt and condemn it from end to end—and within five minutes a practitioner of the law, to defend it most vociferously from end to end.—A blacksmith at my elbow, pitied them both—I really thought then, what I still think, that we all knew very little about it.

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