insignificance that could befall a community so peculiarly blessed with natural advantages as we are, which
does not form a part of the dark catalogue of our public misfortunes?

This is the melancholy situation to which we have been brought by those very maxims and councils which
would now deter us from adopting the proposed Constitution; and which, not content with having
conducted us to the brink of a precipice, seem resolved to plunge us into the abyss that awaits us below.
Here, my countrymen, impelled by every motive that ought to influence an enlightened people, let us make a
firm stand for our safety, our tranquillity, our dignity, our reputation. Let us at last break the fatal charm
which has too long seduced us from the paths of felicity and prosperity.

It is true, as has been before observed that facts, too stubborn to be resisted, have produced a species of
general assent to the abstract proposition that there exist material defects in our national system; but the
usefulness of the concession, on the part of the old adversaries of federal measures, is destroyed by a
strenuous opposition to a remedy, upon the only principles that can give it a chance of success. While they
admit that the government of the United States is destitute of energy, they contend against conferring upon it
those powers which are requisite to supply that energy. They seem still to aim at things repugnant and
irreconcilable; at an augmentation of federal authority, without a diminution of State authority; at sovereignty
in the Union, and complete independence in the members. They still, in fine, seem to cherish with blind
devotion the political monster of an imperium in imperio. This renders a full display of the principal defects of
the Confederation necessary, in order to show that the evils we experience do not proceed from minute or
partial imperfections, but from fundamental errors in the structure of the building, which cannot be amended
otherwise than by an alteration in the first principles and main pillars of the fabric.

The great and radical vice in the construction of the existing Confederation is in the principle of
LEGISLATION for STATES or GOVERNMENTS, in their CORPORATE or COLLECTIVE
CAPACITIES, and as contradistinguished from the INDIVIDUALS of which they consist. Though this
principle does not run through all the powers delegated to the Union, yet it pervades and governs those on
which the efficacy of the rest depends. Except as to the rule of appointment, the United States has an
indefinite discretion to make requisitions for men and money; but they have no authority to raise either, by
regulations extending to the individual citizens of America. The consequence of this is, that though in theory
their resolutions concerning those objects are laws, constitutionally binding on the members of the Union, yet
in practice they are mere recommendations which the States observe or disregard at their option.

It is a singular instance of the capriciousness of the human mind, that after all the admonitions we have had
from experience on this head, there should still be found men who object to the new Constitution, for
deviating from a principle which has been found the bane of the old, and which is in itself evidently
incompatible with the idea of GOVERNMENT; a principle, in short, which, if it is to be executed at all,
must substitute the violent and sanguinary agency of the sword to the mild influence of the magistracy.

There is nothing absurd or impracticable in the idea of a league or alliance between independent nations for
certain defined purposes precisely stated in a treaty regulating all the details of time, place, circumstance,
and quantity; leaving nothing to future discretion; and depending for its execution on the good faith of the
parties. Compacts of this kind exist among all civilized nations, subject to the usual vicissitudes of peace and
war, of observance and non-observance, as the interests or passions of the contracting powers dictate. In