

## American Minute with Bill Federer

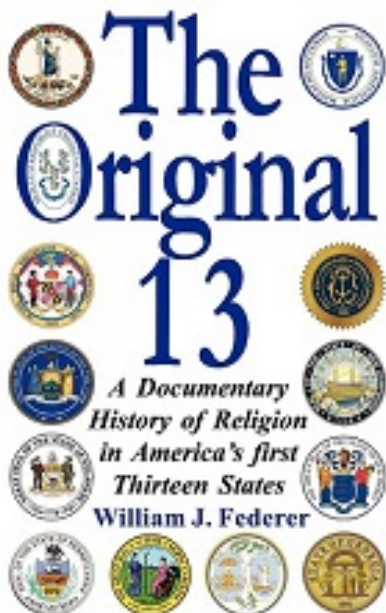
### Articles of Confederation: The First U.S. Government & the Role of Religion in the States that Ratified It

What was the government in the United States **before the U.S. Constitution** was written?



It was the **Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union.**

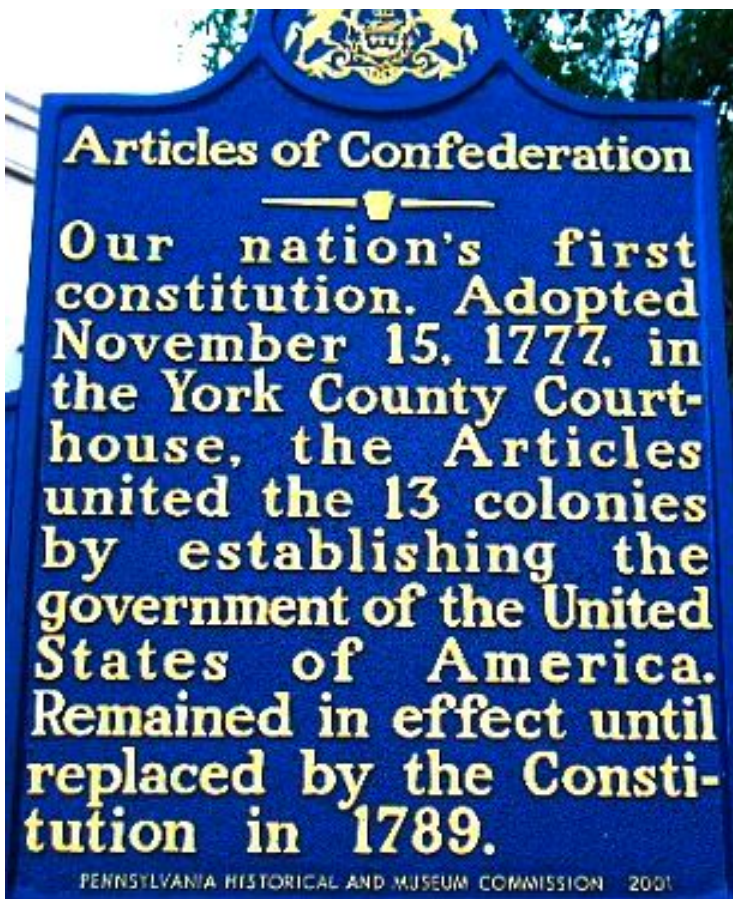
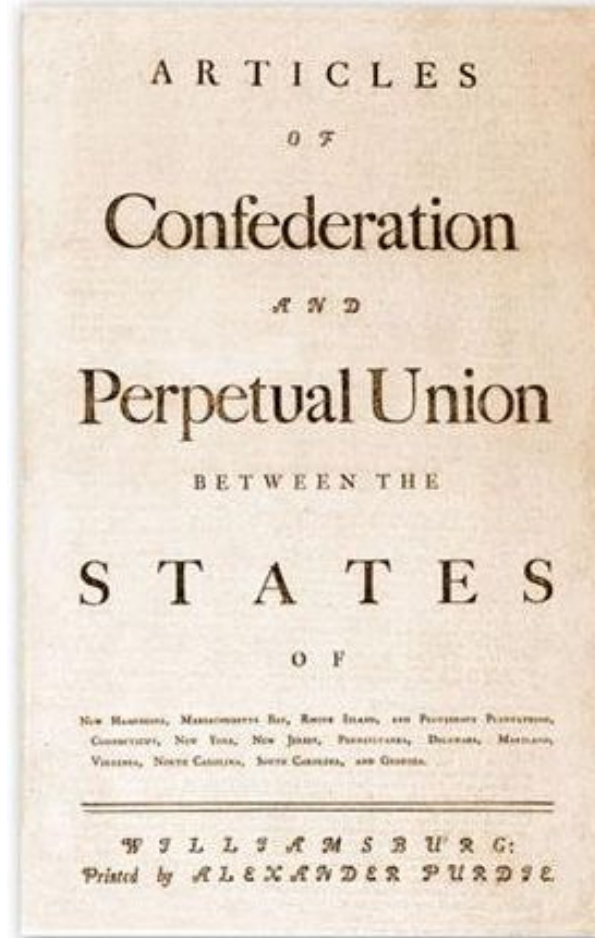
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[THE ORIGINAL 13 - A Documentary History of Religion in America's First Thirteen States](#)

The **Articles of Confederation** were **introduced** in the Continental Congress on July 12, 1776, a little over **a week after Congress**

approved the  
Declaration of  
Independence.



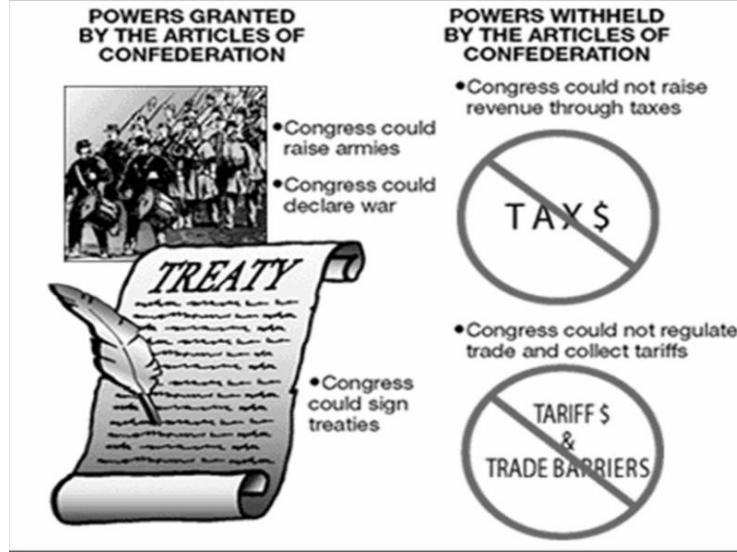
After a long debate, the **Articles of Confederation** were approved on November 15, 1777 and sent to the States for ratification.

The **Articles of Confederation** were an attempt to loosely knit the



thirteen States together, while leaving most of the authority under each individual State's jurisdiction.

### The Articles of Confederation:

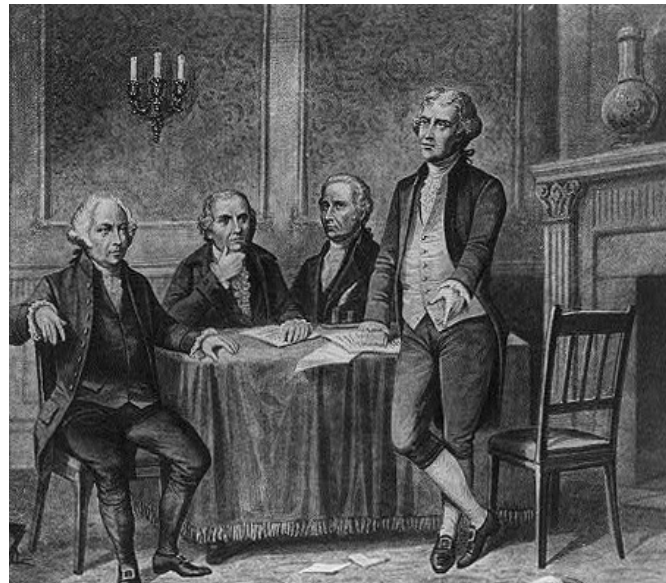


-GRANTED TO CONGRESS the power to raise armies, declare war and sign treaties;

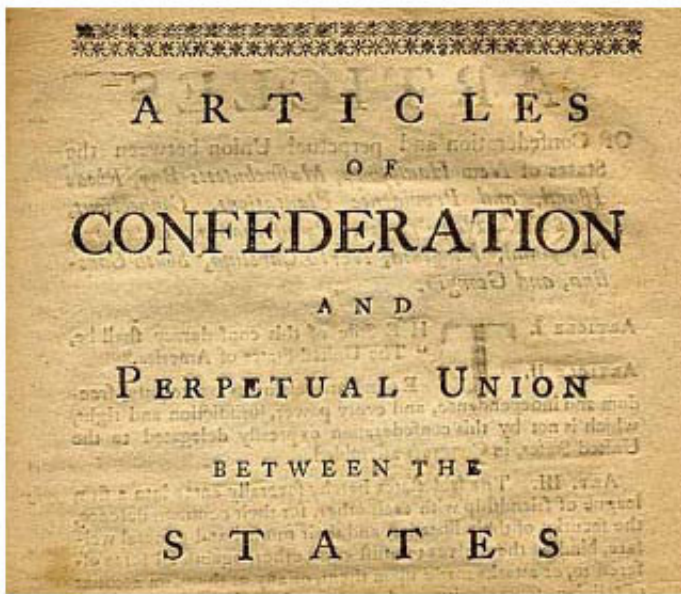
-WITHHELD FROM CONGRESS the power to raise revenue through taxes, regulate trade or collect tariffs.

The Articles of Confederation were signed by such statesmen as:

- John Hancock,
- Samuel Adams,
- Roger Sherman,
- John Witherspoon,
- Richard Henry Lee,
- Robert Morris,
- John Dickinson,
- Daniel Carroll, and
- Gouverneur Morris.



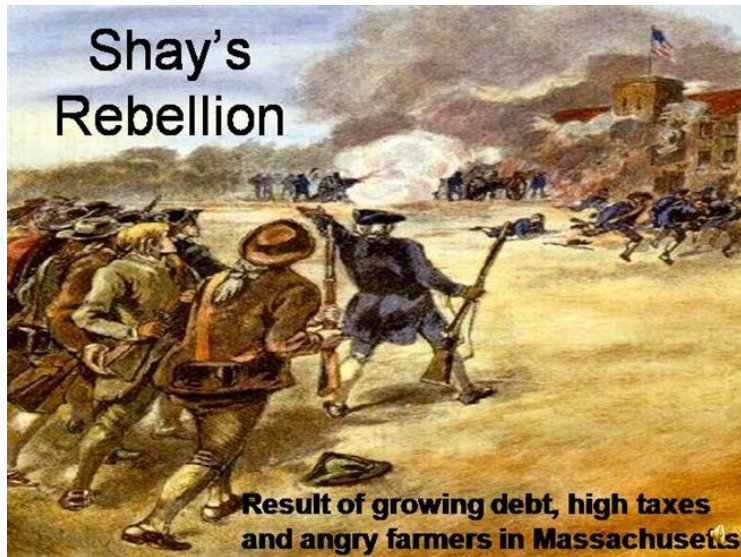
The original States finally ratified the **Articles of Confederation** on MARCH 1, 1781.



The **Articles of Confederation** were fully in effect as the **government in the United States** for over 6 years.

In 1786, **Daniel Shay** began **Shay's Rebellion**.

**Soldiers**, who had received little pay for fighting in the **Revolution**, returned to their **farms**, only to find they were denied **credit**.



**Result of growing debt, high taxes and angry farmers in Massachusetts**

With class taxes, town taxes, and state taxes, many became delinquent and tax collectors obtained judgements to evict farmers from their land.

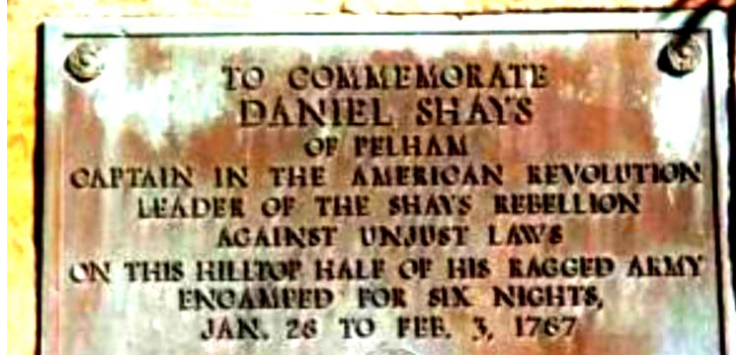


Four thousand disgruntled farmers joined in **Shay's Rebellion, 1786-1787**, which almost toppled the government of **Massachusetts**.

As divisions spread to other



states, it became apparent that the **Federal Government** needed to be involved, as Britain might see the internal confusion as an opportunity to restart the war.



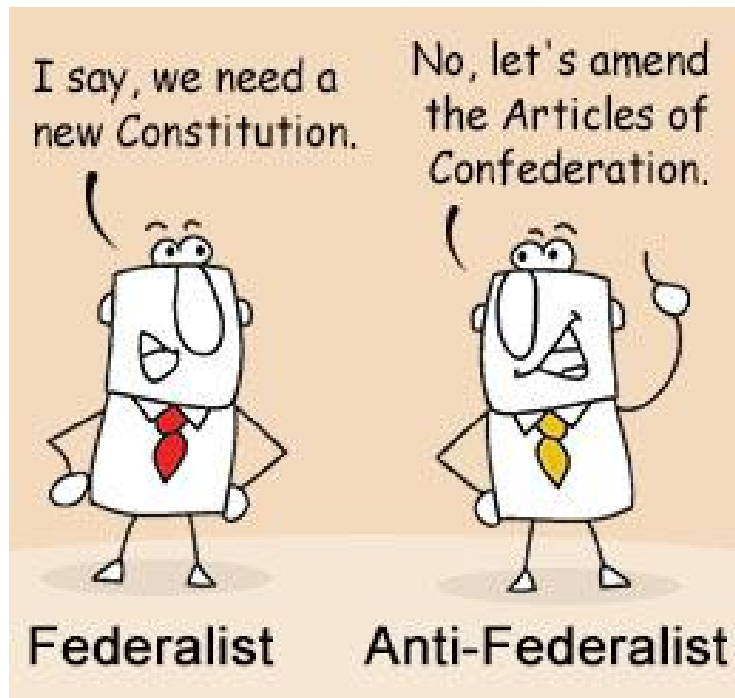
Federalists	Anti-Federalists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Favored the creation of a strong federal government that shared power with the states.</li><li>• Believed that because the national government represented so many people, it would be less likely to fall under the sway of factions.</li><li>• Believed that separation of powers in the Constitution kept the national government from becoming too powerful.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preferred the loose association of states established under the Articles of Confederation.</li><li>• Feared that a strong national government would lead to tyranny.</li><li>• Believed that states are better able to represent people's rights and preserve democracy.</li><li>• Were concerned that the Constitution did not contain a Bill of Rights.</li></ul>

A nationalist movement spread calling for a **revision** of the **Articles of Confederation**.

**Anti-Federalists** were skeptical that **states** would

**lose their rights** if the **central government** became **too powerful**.

On May 25, 1787, Congress met in Philadelphia to simply **REVISE** the **Articles of Confederation**, but instead revising them, they **ended up REPLACING** them with the **United States Constitution**.



**Abraham Lincoln** considered the **Articles of Confederation** and **Perpetual Union** as



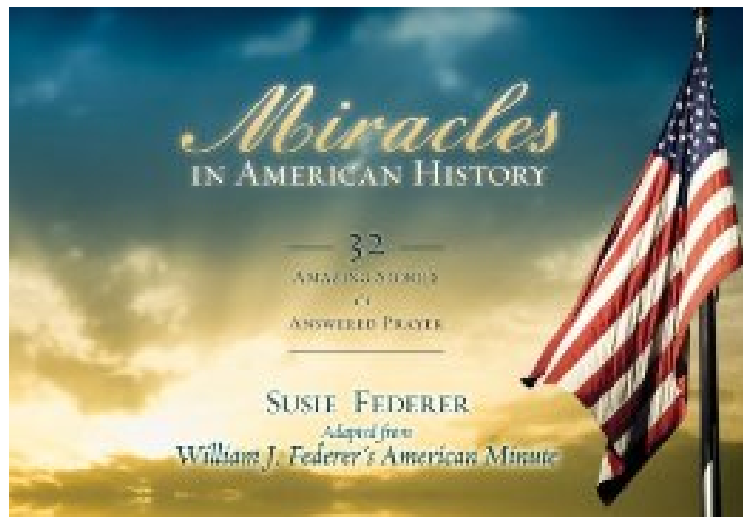
expressing the will of the founders.

He cited them in his **First Inaugural Address**, March 4, 1861, to support his view that **States should not be allowed to leave the Union:**

"The UNION is much OLDER than the CONSTITUTION ... the faith of all the then **thirteen States** expressly plighted and

engaged that it should be **PERPETUAL**, by the **Articles of Confederation** in 1778."

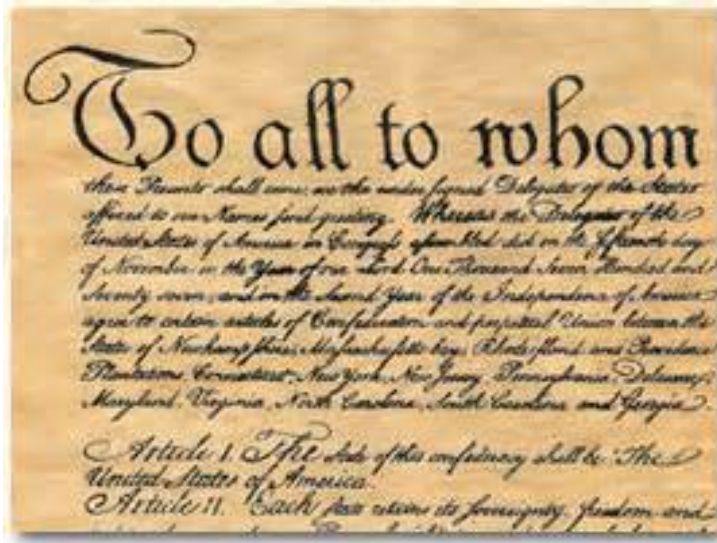
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The **Articles of Confederation** declared:

"To all to whom these Presents shall come ...

Whereas the



delegates of the United States of America in Congress assembled did on the fifteenth day of November in the Year of Our Lord 1777, and in the second year of the independence of

## America agree on certain Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union between the States ...

The said **States** hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, **binding themselves to assist each other**, against all force ... or attacks made upon them ... **on account of religion**, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense."

The **Articles of Confederation** ended with the line:

"It has pleased the **Great Governor of the World** to incline the hearts of the Legislatures we respectively represent in Congress, to approve of and to authorize us to ratify the said **Articles of Confederation.**"



As the importance





of **religion** to the founders has been marginalized by revisionist historians, it is appropriate to examine the **role of religion** in the

constitutions of the states which **ratified** the **Articles of Confederation**.

**VIRGINIA** was the first State to ratify the Articles of Confederation on December 16, 1777.

At that time, **Virginia's Constitution**, adopted 1776, stated in its Bill of Rights:



"That **religion**, or the **duty which we owe to our Creator**, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence;

and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of **religion**, according to the **dictates of conscience**; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice **Christian forbearance, love, and charity** towards each other." (current)

**SOUTH CAROLINA** was the 2nd State to ratify the Articles



of Confederation,  
February 5, 1778.

At that time,  
**South Carolina's  
Constitution**,  
adopted 1778,  
stated:

"We, the people of  
the State of South  
Carolina ...  
**grateful to God**  
for our liberties ...



No person shall be eligible to sit in the House of  
Representatives unless he be of the **Protestant religion**  
... (changed in 1870 to current "the existence of the  
**Supreme Being**")

All persons and religious societies who acknowledge that  
there is **one God**, and a future state of rewards and  
punishments, and that **God is publicly to be  
worshiped**, shall be freely tolerated.

The **Christian Protestant religion** shall be deemed ...  
**the established religion of this State.**

That **all denominations of Christian Protestants** in this  
State ... shall enjoy **equal religious and civil privileges**  
...

That every society of **Christians** ... shall have agreed to  
... the following five articles ... (See Locke's Constitution,  
Article 97-100):

1. That there is **one eternal God**, and a future state of  
rewards and punishments.
2. That **God is publicly to be worshiped.**

3. That the **Christian religion is the true religion**
4. That the **Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments** are of **Divine inspiration**, and are the rule of faith and practice.
5. That it is lawful and the duty of every man being thereunto called by those that govern, to bear witness to the truth ...

No person shall officiate as minister ... until the minister ... shall have ... subscribed to the following declaration ...:

That he is determined by **God's grace** out of the **Holy Scriptures**, to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing as required of necessity to **eternal salvation** but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and **proved from the Scripture**;

That he will use both public and private admonitions, as well to the sick as to the whole within his cure, as need shall require and occasion shall be given, and that he will be **diligent in prayers**, and in reading of the same;

That he will be diligent to frame and fashion his own self and his family according to the **doctrine of Christ**, and to make both himself and them, as much as in him lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to **the flock of Christ.**"

**NEW YORK** was the 3rd State to ratify the Articles of Confederation.

At that time, **New York's Constitution**, adopted 1777, stated:



"Whereas the Delegates of the United American States ... solemnly ... declare, in the words following; viz:

'... Laws of nature and of **nature's God** entitle them

...

All men are created equal; that they are endowed by their **Creator** with certain unalienable rights ...

Appealing to the **Supreme Judge of the world** for the rectitude of our intentions ...

with a firm reliance on the protection of **Divine Providence ...'**

This convention doth further ... declare, that the free exercise and **enjoyment of religious profession and worship**, without discrimination or preference, shall forever hereafter be allowed, within this State, to all mankind:

Provided, That the **liberty of conscience**, hereby granted, shall **not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness.**" (till 1846)

**RHODE ISLAND**  
was the 4th State to ratify the Articles of Confederation, February 9, 1778.



At that time,  
**Rhode Island** was  
continuing to use  
its **1663 Charter**,  
which stated:

"That they,  
pursuing ...  
religious  
intentions, of  
**Godly edifying**  
themselves, and  
one another, in the  
**Holy Christian**  
**faith and worship ...**



Together with the gaining over and conversion of the  
poor ignorant Indian natives, in those parts of America, to  
the sincere profession and obedience of the same **faith**  
**and worship ...** by the **good Providence of God ...**  
there may, in due time, by the **blessing of God** upon  
their endeavors, be laid a sure foundation of happiness to  
all America ...

that among our English subjects, with a **full liberty in**  
**religious concernements**; and that true piety **rightly**  
**grounded upon Gospel principles**, will give the best  
and greatest security ...

to secure them in the free exercise and enjoyment of all  
their **civil and religious rights**, appertaining to them, as  
our loving subjects; and to preserve unto them that  
liberty, in the **true Christian faith and worship of God**  
...

and because some of the people and inhabitants of the  
same colony cannot, in their private opinions, conform to  
the ... ceremonies of the Church of England ... our royal



will and pleasure is, that no person within the said colony ... shall be any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion in **matters of religion ...**

**not using this liberty to licentiousness and profaneness ...** that they may be in the better capacity to defend themselves, in their just rights and liberties against all the enemies of the **Christian faith ...**

and ... by their good life and orderly conversations, they may win and invite the native Indians of the country to the knowledge and obedience of **the only true God, and Savior of mankind.**" (changed in 1842 to "So help me **God.**")

**CONNECTICUT**  
was the 5th State  
to ratify the  
Articles of  
Confederation,  
February 12,  
1778.

At that time,  
**Connecticut** was  
continuing to use  
its **1662 Charter**,  
which stated:

"Our said people  
inhabitants there,  
may be so  
religiously,  
peaceably and civilly governed, as their good life and  
orderly conversation may win and invite the natives of the  
country to the knowledge and obedience of **the only true  
GOD, and the Savior of Mankind**, and the **Christian  
Faith**, which ... is the only and principal End of this



Plantation." (changed in 1818 to "Every society or **denomination of Christians** in this state, shall have and enjoy the same and equal powers, rights and privileges.")

**GEORGIA** was the 6th State to ratify the Articles of Confederation, February 26, 1778.

At that time, **Georgia's Constitution**, adopted 1777, stated:



"Representatives shall be chosen out of the residents in each county ... and they shall be of the **Protestant religion** ...

Every person entitled to vote shall take the following oath ... 'I, A B. do voluntarily and solemnly swear (or affirm, as the case may be) that I do owe true allegiance to this State, and will support the constitution thereof; So Help Me **God.**'" (changed in 1877 to "All men have the natural and inalienable right to **worship God**, each according to the **dictates of his own conscience.**")

**NEW HAMPSHIRE** was the 7th State to ratify the Articles of Confederation, March 4, 1778.

At that time, **New Hampshire's Constitution**,



adopted 1784,  
stated:

"As **morality and piety**, rightly grounded on **evangelical principles** (changed in 1968 to "high principles") will give the best and greatest security to government ... the people of this state

... empower the legislature to...make adequate provision ... for the support and maintenance of **public Protestant teachers of piety, religion and morality** ...



**Every denomination of Christians** demeaning themselves quietly, and as good subjects of the state, shall be equally under the protection of the law ...

No person shall be capable of being elected a Senator who is not of the **Protestant religion** ... (till 1877)

Every member of the House of Representatives...shall be of the **Protestant religion** ... (till 1877)

The President (Governor) shall be chosen annually; and no person shall be eligible to this office, unless ... he shall be of the **Protestant religion.**" (till 1877)

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

was the 8th State to ratify the Articles of Confederation, March 5, 1778:

At that time,  
**Pennsylvania's  
Constitution**,  
adopted 1776,  
stated:



"Government  
ought to ... enable  
the individuals ...  
to enjoy their  
natural rights, and  
the other blessings  
which **the Author  
of Existence** has  
bestowed upon man ...

That all men have a natural and unalienable right to  
**worship Almighty God** according to the **dictates of  
their own consciences** ...

Nor can any man, who **acknowledges the being of a  
God**, be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right ...

Each member, before he takes his seat, shall make ...  
the following declaration, viz:

'I do believe in **one God, the Creator and Governor of  
the Universe**, the **Rewarder** of the good and the  
**Punisher** of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the  
**Scriptures of the Old and New Testament** to be given  
by **Divine Inspiration**. And no further or other **religious  
test** shall ever hereafter be required ... (changed in 1790  
to "No person who acknowledges the **being of a God**  
and a future state of rewards and punishments, shall ...  
be disqualified to hold any office.")

Laws for the encouragement of **virtue**, and **prevention  
of vice and immorality**, shall be made and constantly

kept in force ... **All religious societies** ... shall be encouraged."

## **MASSACHUSETTS**

was the 9th State to ratify the Articles of Confederation, March 10, 1778:

At that time, **Massachusetts' Constitution**, adopted 1780, stated:



"We, therefore, the people of Massachusetts, acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the goodness of the **Great Legislator of the Universe**, in affording us, in the course of **His Providence**, an opportunity ... of forming a new constitution of civil government ...

It is the right as well as the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons to **worship the Supreme Being**, the **great Creator and Preserver of the Universe** ...

Civil government, essentially depend upon **piety, religion and morality**; and as these cannot be generally diffused through a community, but by the institution of the **Public worship of God** ...

The people of this commonwealth ... authorize ... the **public worship of God**, and for the support and maintenance of **public Protestant teachers of piety, religion and morality** ...

And **every denomination of Christians**, demeaning themselves peaceably, and as good subjects of the



commonwealth, shall be **equally under the protection of the law ...**

The Governor shall be chosen annually; and no person shall be eligible to this office, unless ... he shall declare himself to be of **the Christian religion ...**

'Any person chosen governor, lieutenant governor, counselor, senator or representative, and accepting the trust, shall ... make ... the following declaration, viz.- 'I, A. B., do declare, that I believe **the Christian religion**, and have a firm persuasion of its truth.'" (changed in 1917 to "**The public worship of God and instructions in piety, religion and morality**, promote ... the security of a republican government.")

**NORTH CAROLINA** was the 10th State to ratify the Articles of Confederation, April 5, 1778.

At that time, **North Carolina's Constitution**, adopted 1776, stated:



"That all men have a natural and unalienable right to **worship Almighty God** according to the **dictates of their own consciences ...**

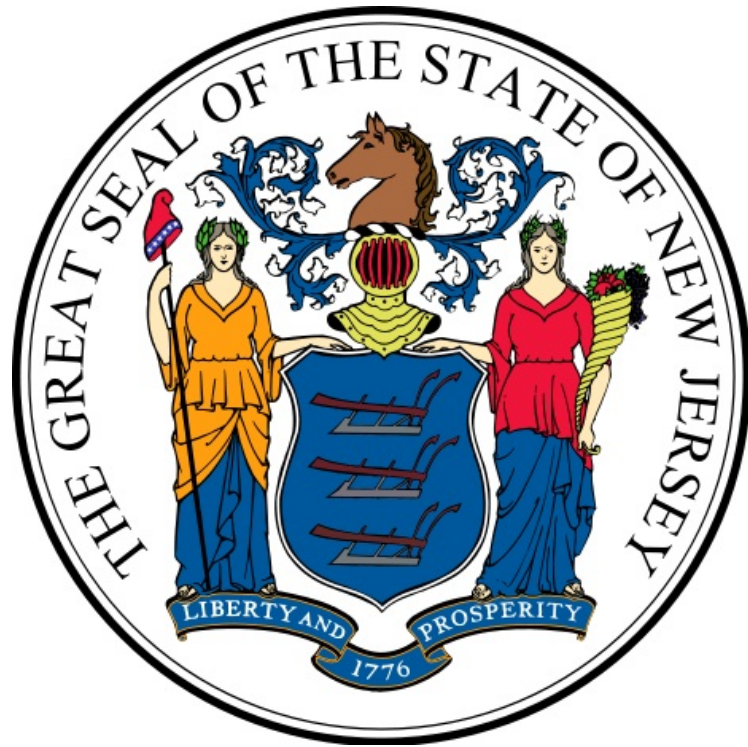
That no person, who shall deny **the being of God** or the truth of **the Protestant religion**, or the **Divine authority** either of the **Old or New Testaments**, or who shall hold **religious principles** incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office ... (changed in 1835 to "That no person, who shall deny

the being of God or the truth of the Christian religion ... shall be capable of holding any office.")

That there shall be no establishment of any one religious **Church or denomination** in this State, in preference to **any other.**"

**NEW JERSEY**  
was the 11th State  
to ratify the  
Articles of  
Confederation,  
November 19,  
1778.

At that time, **New Jersey's Constitution**, adopted 1776, stated:



"That no person shall ever ... be deprived of the inestimable privilege of **worshipping Almighty God** in a manner agreeable to the **dictates of his own conscience** ...

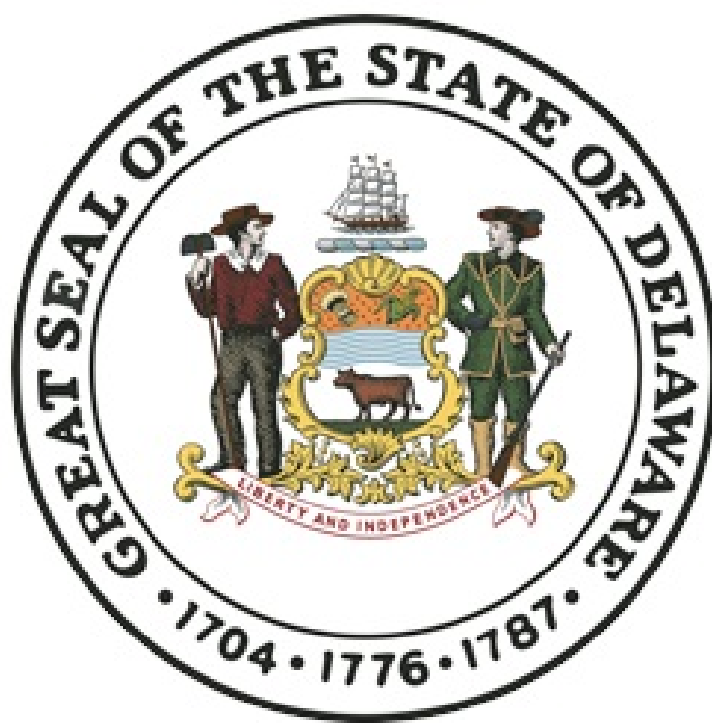
No **Protestant** inhabitant of this Colony shall be denied the enjoyment of any civil right ...

All persons, professing a belief in **the faith of any Protestant sect**, who shall demean themselves peaceably under the government ... shall be capable of being elected into any office." (changed in 1844 to "No person shall be deprived of the inestimable privilege of **worshipping Almighty God** in a manner agreeable to **the dictates of his own conscience.**")

**DELAWARE** was the 12th State to ratify the Articles

of Confederation,  
February 1, 1779.

At that time,  
**Delaware's  
Constitution**,  
adopted 1776,  
stated:



"Every ... member  
of either house ...  
before taking his  
seat ... shall ...  
make ... the  
following  
declaration, to wit:

'I ... do profess **faith in God the Father**, and in **Jesus Christ His only Son**, and in the **Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore**; and I do acknowledge the **Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament** to be given by **Divine inspiration.**'

There shall be no establishment of **any religious sect** in this State **in preference to another ...**

That all Men have a natural and unalienable Right to **worship Almighty God** according to the **Dictates of their own Consciences ...**

That all Persons professing **the Christian Religion** ought forever to enjoy equal Rights and Privileges in this State." (changed in 1792 to "All men have, by nature, the rights of **worshipping** and serving their **Creator** according to the **dictates of their consciences.**")

**MARYLAND** was  
the 13th State to  
ratify the Articles of



Confederation,  
February 22, 1781.

At that time,  
**Maryland's  
Constitution**,  
adopted 1776,  
stated:

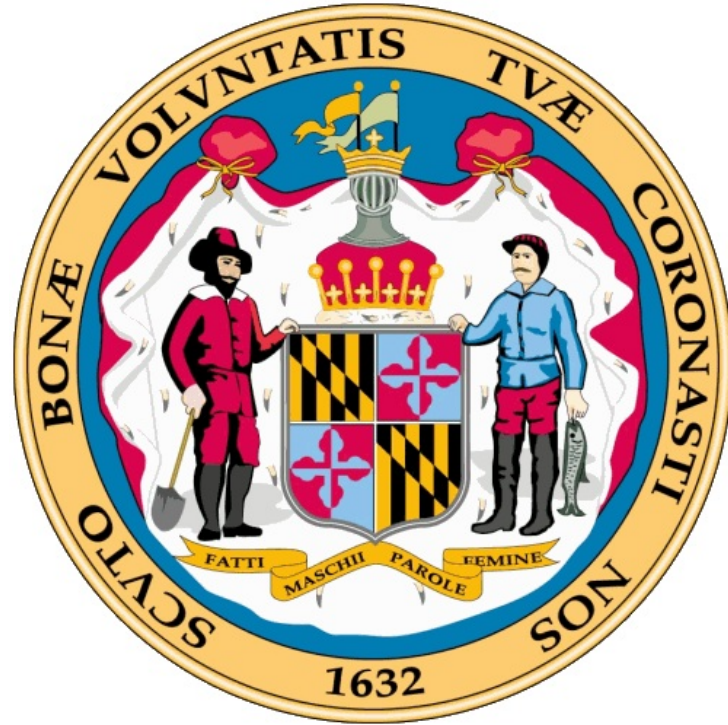
"It is the duty of  
every man to  
**worship God** in  
such manner as  
**he thinks most  
acceptable to him**; all persons, professing the **Christian  
religion**, are equally entitled to **protection in their  
religious liberty ...**

The Legislature may, in their discretion, lay a general and  
equal tax for the support of **the Christian religion**;  
leaving to each individual the power of appointing the  
payment ... to the support of ... **his own denomination ...**

That no other test or qualification ought to be required,  
on admission to any office ... than such oath of ... fidelity  
to this State ... and **a declaration of a belief in the  
Christian religion.**

That every person, appointed to any office ... shall ... take  
the following oath; to wit:

'I, A. B., do swear, that I do not hold myself bound in  
allegiance to the King of Great Britain, and that I will be  
faithful, and bear true allegiance to the State of  
Maryland;' and shall also subscribe **a declaration of his  
belief in the Christian religion.**" (changed in 1851 to "in  
the **Christian religion**; and if the party shall profess to  
be a **Jew**, the declaration shall be of his **belief in a  
future state of rewards and punishments.**")



**VERMONT** was its own independent republic in 1777.

Even though it did not participate in the Articles of Confederation, **Vermont's Constitution in 1777**, as well as its **1786**

**Constitution**, in effect at the time President George

Washington approved **Vermont** as the 14th State, stated:

"Whereas, all government ought ... to enable the individuals ... to enjoy their natural rights, and the other blessings which the **Author of Existence** has bestowed upon man ...

That all men have a natural and unalienable right to **worship ALMIGHTY GOD**, according to the **dictates of their own consciences** and understanding, **regulated by the Word of GOD ...**

Nevertheless, every sect or denomination of people ought to observe the **Sabbath, or the Lord's Day**, and keep up, and support, some sort of **religious worship**, which to them shall seem most agreeable to the **revealed Will of GOD ...**

And each member, before he takes his seat, shall make ... the following declaration, viz.

'I \_\_\_\_\_ do believe in **one God, the Creator and Governor of the Universe**, the **Rewarder** of the good and **Punisher** of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the



Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration, and own and profess the Protestant religion." (changed in 1793 to "So help me God.")



**Rep. James Meacham** stated in a **House Judiciary Report**, March 27, 1854:

"Down to the Revolution, **every colony did sustain religion** in some form. It was deemed peculiarly proper that **the religion of liberty** should be upheld by a free people ...

Had the **people**, during the Revolution, had a suspicion of any attempt to **war against Christianity**, that **Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle.**"

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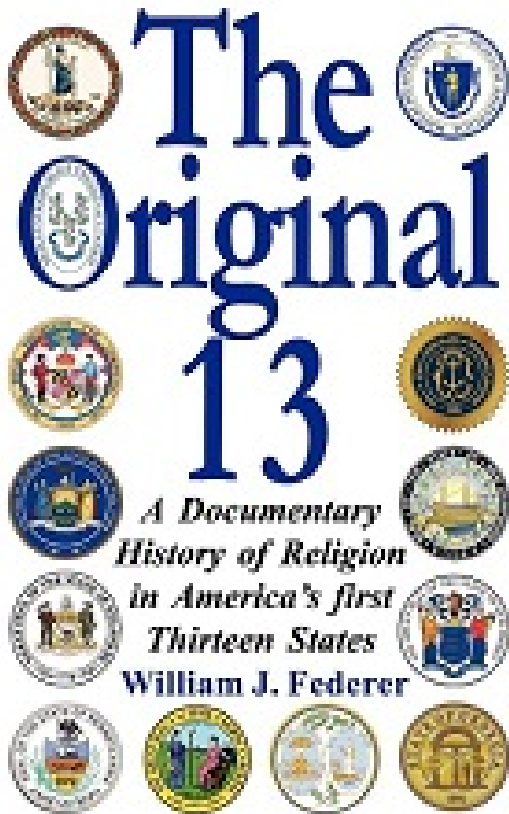
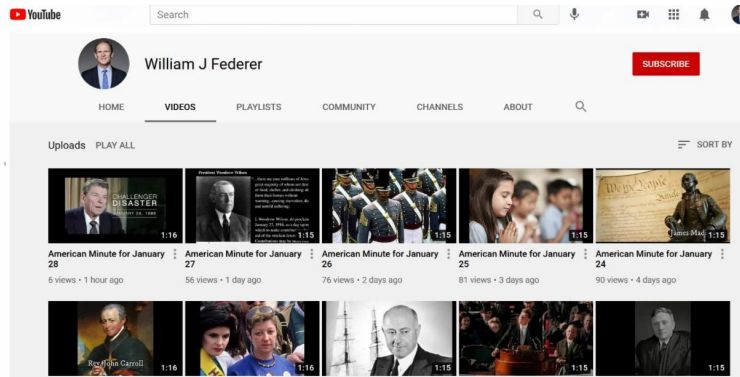
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