

A Nation of Christians

Author Anonymous

Is what you believe about a “separation of Church and State” important? I have spoken to many Christians and non-believers that believe that our founders placed “separation of Church and State” into our Constitution of the United States. They are mistaken. I believe that this is because we do not know our history concerning civics; and because of this, it is the belief by many that our government is corrupt or run by the corrupt. Although our founders were not perfect men, they did give us an excellent form of government which did not prohibit religious influence.

Webster’s online dictionary defines civics as “a social science dealing with the rights and duties of citizens,” and it defines duty as “1: conduct due to parents and superiors 2a: obligatory tasks, conduct, service, or functions that arise from one’s position 3a: a moral or legal obligation.”

The attached extracts of state constitutions, pre-Philadelphia constitutional convention, give examples of “rights” and “duties,” as they relate to God and religion. These constitutions (12) and charters (2) were the governing documents of the states/colonies at the ratification of both the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights; and were, the majority, created after being instructed by the Continental Congress to establish governments that would “best conduce to the happiness and safety” of their people.

Look through the attached extracts of state constitutions and charters; by today’s misinformed standards they would violate “separation of Church and State.” What came first - the states or the federal government? Did the states create the federal government or vice versa? Even Virginia, the home State of Thomas Jefferson, included this in their Bill of Rights “...that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other.” Connecticut though declaring themselves independent of the crown and Britain in 1776, operated their government under the 1662 Charter from Charles the Second, a “Church of England” King.

President Thomas Jefferson, in January 1802, replied to a letter from the Danbury Baptist Church in which the phrase “separation of Church and State” was coined. All persons that cite this phrase to mean that the government should be free of religion, take it out of context. As stated above, the President was responding to a letter from the Danbury Baptist Church, located in Connecticut.

The Danbury Baptist Church’s letter to President Jefferson states...

“...Our ancient charter together with the law made coincident therewith, were adopted as the basis of our government, at the time of our revolution; and such had been our laws and usages, and such still are; that religion is considered as the first object of legislation; and therefore what religious privileges we enjoy (as a minor part of the state) we enjoy as favors granted, and not as inalienable rights; and these favors we receive at the expense of such degrading acknowledgements as are inconsistent with the rights of freemen...”

Below is President Jefferson’s answer, in part. The quote refers to the 1st Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.

His answer clearly refers to the federal level of government; and it has succeeded on not establishing a religion; though the same cannot be said about “prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

The people of Connecticut adopted a new State Constitution in 1818; in which it stated “each and every society or denomination of Christians in this State shall have and enjoy the same and equal powers, rights, and privileges.”

Does it matter if Christians believe whether or not there is a “separation of Church and State” in our constitution?

Yes, it does. Many believers and non-believers think politics and politicians are corrupt. What does it say about “we the people” that elect those same politicians? Are the righteous electing the wicked? What qualities of character did we use to decide on our choice for office? Did we take the time to meet and question candidates for office? The same qualities that we see in our brothers and sisters in Christ should be observed in those that we elect.

The State Constitutions, in existence at our founding, seem to indicate that we were a nation of Christians; with some States requiring that elected representation be of the Christian faith. Over time, Christians have been deceived into believing to leave their faith out when considering candidates to fill positions responsible for protecting life, liberty and happiness.

John Adams is quoted as saying “our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Instructions from Continental Congress to Colonies and Samples of Religion in Each State's Constitution

Instructions from Congress to Colonies/States 1775 & 1776:

These are extracts come from volumes (34 in all) of the: Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789 (Edited from the original records in the Library of Congress by Worthington Chauncey Ford, Chief, Division of Manuscripts)

This is the advice that the Continental Congress gave to the conventions of Massachusetts bay and New Hampshire in 1775 concerning a lack of an ability to govern within the colony. These were followed by the Continental Congress recommendation to all colonies in May 1776 concerning establishing government that would “best conduce to the happiness and safety” of their people; a portion of the resulting constitutions is in the next section.

Volume II. 1775 May 10-September 20

Friday, June 9, 1775

The Congress met according to adjournment.

The report of the committee, on the Letter from the convention of Massachusetts bay, being again read, Congress came to the following resolution:

Resolved, That no obedience being due to the Act of parliament for altering the charter of the Colony of Massachusetts bay, nor to a Governor, or a lieutenant-Governor, who will not observe the directions of, but endeavour to subvert that charter, the gov. and lieutenant-gov. of that Colony are to be considered as absent, and these offices vacant; and as there is no council there, and the inconveniences, arising from the suspension of the powers of Government, are intolerable, especially at a time when Gen. Gage hath actually levied war, and is carrying on hostilities, against his Majesty's peaceable and loyal subjects of that Colony; that, in order to conform, as near as may be, to the spirit and substance of the charter, it be recommended the provincial Convention, to write letters to the inhabitants of the several places, which are intituled to representation in Assembly, requesting them to chuse such representatives, and that the Assembly, when chosen, do elect counsellors; which assembly and council should exercise the powers of Government, until a Governor, of his Majesty's appointment, will consent to govern the colony according to its charter.

Ordered, that the president transmit a copy of the above to the convention of Massachusetts bay. (pg 84)

Note: Unlike the New Hampshire request below, the Massachusetts bay request is not found in this journal. There is a possible reference to such a request from Massachusetts bay on June 3 in

a resolution to form a committee to address advice requested by the colony in a letter dated May 16.

Volume III. 1775 September 21 – December 30

Wednesday, October 18, 1775

The delegates from New Hampshire laid before the Congress, a part of the instructions delivered to them by their Colony, in the following words:

We would have you immediately use your utmost endeavours to obtain the advice and direction of the Congress, with respect to a method for our administring Justice, and regulating our civil police. We press you not to delay this matter, as, its being done speedily, (your own knowledge of our circumstances must inform you) will probably prevent the greatest confusion among us. On this the delegates apply for advice. (pg 298)

Friday, November 3, 1775

The Congress, taking into consideration the report of the Com[mitt]ee on the New Hampshire Instructions,

Resolved, That it be recommended to the provincial Convention of New Hampshire, to call a full and free representation of the people, and that the representatives, if they think it necessary, establish such a form of government, as, in their judgment, will best produce the happiness of the people, and most effectually secure peace and good order in the province, during the continuance of the present dispute between G[reat] Britain and the colonies. (pg 319)

Volume IV. 1776 January 1 – June 4

Friday, May 10, 1776

The Congress then resumed the consideration of the report from the committee of the whole, which being read was agreed to as follows:

Resolved, That it be recommended to the respective assemblies and convention of the United Colonies, where no government sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs have been hitherto established, to adopt such government as shall, in the opinion of the representatives of the people, best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular, and America in general. (pg 342)

State Constitution Extracts, pre-1791, with Religious References

Extracts of Colonial Charters and Constitutions are from the following two documents; and page numbers after an article or section indicate page(s) in these documents. Page numbers below 1019 are in Part I. Extracts of the 1818 Connecticut and 1842 Rhode Island Constitutions are included to show the beliefs toward God after operating under Colonial Charters. These extracts may not include all references to God or the Christian faith. Bold and highlighted emphasis are mine.

1. The Federal And State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws Of The United States. Part I. Compiled under an order of The United States Senate by Ben: Perley Poore, Clerk of Printing Records. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877
2. The Federal And State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws Of The United States. Part II: compiled under an order of The United States Senate by Ben: Perley Poore, Clerk of Printing Records. Second Edition. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878.

Connecticut

1662 Charter of Connecticut (pg 252-257)

CHARLES the Second, by the Grace of GOD, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting... whereby 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 Saviour of Mankind, and the Christian Faith, which in Our Royal Intentions, and the adventurers free Possession, is the only and principal End of this Plantation...”

1776 - An Act containing an Abstract and Declaration of the Rights and Privileges of the People of this State, and securing the same. (pg 257-258)

“The People of this State, being by the Providence of God, free and independent, have the sole and exclusive Right of governing themselves as free, sovereign, and independent State; and having from their Ancestors derived free and excellent Constitution of Government whereby the Legislature depends on the free and annual Election of the People, they have the best Security for the Presentation of their civil and religious Rights and Liberties. And forasmuch as the free Fruition of such Liberties and Privileges as Humanity, Civility and Christianity call for, as is due to every Man in his Place and Proportion, without Impeachment and Infringement, hath ever been, and will be the Tranquility and Stability of Churches and Commonwealths; and the Denial thereof, the Disturbance, if not the Ruin of both.

Paragraph 1. Be it enacted and declared by the Governor, and Council, and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, That the ancient Form of Civil Government, contained in the Charter from Charles the Second, King England, and adopted by the People of this State, shall be and remain the Civil Constitution of this State, under the sole authority of the People thereof, independent of any King or Prince whatever. And that this Republic is, and shall

forever be and remain, free, sovereign and independent State, by the Name of the STATE of CONNECTICUT...”

1818 Constitution of Connecticut (adopted by the people October 5, 1818) (pg 258)

Preamble. “The people of Connecticut, acknowledging with gratitude the good providence of God, in having permitted them to enjoy a free government, do, in order more effectually to define, secure, and perpetuate the liberties, rights, and privileges which they have derived from their ancestors, hereby, after careful consideration and revision, ordain and establish the following constitution and form of civil government:”

Article I, Declaration of Rights

“Sec 4. No preference shall be given by law to any Christian sect or mode of worship.” (pg 259)

Article VII, Of Religion (pg 264)

“Section 1. It being the duty of all men to worship the Supreme Being, the great Creator and Preserver of the Universe, and their right to render that worship in the mode most consistent with the dictates of their consciences, no person shall by law be compelled to join or support, nor be classed with, or associated to, any congregation, church, or religious association; but every person now belonging to such congregation, church, or religious association, shall remain member thereof until he shall have separated himself therefrom, in the manner hereinafter provided. And each and every society or denomination of Christians in this State shall have and enjoy the same and equal powers, rights, and privileges; and shall have power and authority to support and maintain the ministers or teachers of their respective denominations, and to build and repair houses for public worship by tax on the members of any such society only, to be laid by major vote of the legal voters assembled at any society meeting, warned and held according to law, or in any other manner.

Sec. 2. If any and person shall choose to separate himself from the society or denomination of Christians to which he may belong, and shall leave written notice thereof with the clerk of such society, he shall thereupon be no longer liable for any future expenses which may be incurred by said society.”

Delaware

September 1776 Delaware Constitution (pg 273)

Art. 22. Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust, before taking his seat, or entering upon the execution of his office, shall take the following oath, or affirmation, if conscientiously scrupulous of taking an oath, to wit: (pg 276)
I, A B, will bear true allegiance to the Delaware State, submit to its constitution...

And also make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit:

I, A B, 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.

And all officers shall also take an oath of office.”

Georgia

February 1777 Georgia Constitution

Art. VI. The representatives shall be chosen out of the residents in each county, who shall have resided at least twelve months in this State, and three months in the county where they shall be elected except the freeholders of the counties of Glynn and Camden, who are in state of alarm, and who shall have the liberty of choosing one member each, as specified in the articles of this constitution, in any other county, until they have residents sufficient to qualify them for more; and they shall be of the Protestant religion, and of the age of twenty-one years, and shall be possessed in their own right of two hundred and fifty acres of land, or some property to the amount of two hundred and fifty pounds. (pg 379)

Oaths to be taken by those entitled to vote (Art. XIV), elected representatives (Art. XV), governor and president of the council (Art. XXIV), affairs that require secrecy laid before the governor and executive council (Art. XXX) included the statement “so help me God.” (pg 380 & 381)

Art. LVI. All persons whatever shall have the free exercise of their religion provided it be not repugnant to the peace and safety of the State and shall not, unless by consent, support any teacher or teachers except those of their own profession. (pg 383)

Maryland

August 14, 1776 Bill of Rights

XXXIII. That, as 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; wherefore no person ought by any law to be molested in his person or estate on account of his religious persuasion or profession, or for his religious practice; unless, under colour of religion, any man shall disturb the good order, peace or safety of the State, or shall infringe the laws of morality, or injure others, in their natural, civil, or religious rights; nor ought any person to be compelled to frequent or maintain, or contribute, unless on contract, to maintain any particular place of worship, or any particular ministry; yet the Legislature may, in their discretion, lay general and equal tax, for the support of the Christian religion; leaving to each individual the power of appointing the payment over of the money, collected from him, to the support of any particular place of worship or minister, or for the benefit of the poor of his own denomination, or the poor in general of any particular county but the churches, chapels, glebes, and all other property now belonging to the church of England, ought to remain to the church of England forever. And all acts of Assembly, lately passed, for collecting monies for building or repairing particular churches or chapels of ease, shall continue in force, and be executed, unless the Legislature shall, by act, supersede or repeal the same: but no county court shall assess any quantity of tobacco, or sum of money, hereafter, on the application of any vestry-men or church-wardens; and every incumbent of the church of England, who hath remained in his parish, and performed his duty, shall be entitled to receive the provision and support established by the act, entitled "An act for the support of the clergy of the church of England, in this Province," till the November court of this present year, to be held for the county in which his parish shall lie, or partly lie, or for such time as he hath remained in his parish, and performed his duty. (pg 819 & 820)

XXXIV. That every gift, sale, or devise of lands, to any minister, public teacher, or preacher of the gospel, as such, or to any religious sect, order or denomination, or to or for the support, use or benefit of, or in trust for, any minister, public teacher, or preacher of the gospel, as such, or any religious sect order or denomination and every gift or sale of goods, or chattels, to go in succession, or to take place after the death of the seller or donor, or to or for such support, use or benefit and also every devise of goods or chattels to or for the support, use or benefit of any minister, public, teacher, or preacher of the gospel, as such, or any religious sect, order, or denomination, without the leave of the Legislature, shall be void; except always any sale, gift, lease or devise of any quantity of land, not exceeding two acres, for a church, meeting, or other house of worship, and for burying-ground, which shall be improved, enjoyed or used only for such purpose or such sale, gift, lease, or devise, shall be void. (pg 820)

XXXV. That no other test or qualification ought to be required, on admission to any office of trust or profit, than such oath of support and fidelity to this State, and such oath of office, as shall be directed by this Convention, or the Legislature of this State, and a declaration of a belief in the Christian religion. (pg 820)

XXXVI. That the manner of administering an oath to any person, ought to be such, as those of the religious persuasion, profession, or denomination, of which such person is one, generally esteem the most effectual confirmation, by the attestation of the Divine Being. And that the people called Quakers, those called Dunkers, and those called Menonists, holding it unlawful to take an oath on any occasion, ought to be allowed to make their solemn affirmation, in the manner that Quakers have been heretofore allowed to affirm and to be of the same avail as an oath, in all such cases, as the affirmation of Quakers hath been allowed and accepted within this State, instead of an oath. And further, on such affirmation, warrants to search for stolen goods, or for the apprehension or commitment of offenders, ought to be granted, or security for the peace awarded, and Quakers, Dunkers or Menonists ought also, on their solemn affirmation as aforesaid, to be admitted as witnesses, in all criminal cases not capital. (pg 820)

Constitution or Form of Government

LV. That every person, appointed to any office of profit or trust, shall, before he enters on the execution thereof, 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.

1851 Maryland Constitution Oath

Art 34. That no other test or qualification ought to be required, on admission to any office of trust or profit, than such oath of office as may be prescribed by this constitution, or by the laws of the State, and declaration of belief 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. (1851 Maryland Constitution, ratified by people June 4, 1851 page 837)

Massachusetts

March 2, 1780 Preamble, Part the First and Part the Second

Last Paragraph of Preamble

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, deliberately and peaceably, without fraud, violence, or surprise, of entering into an original, explicit, and solemn compact with each other, and of forming new constitution of civil government for ourselves and posterity; and devoutly imploring His direction in so interesting

design, do agree upon, ordain, and establish the following declaration of rights and frame of government as the constitution of the commonwealth of Massachusetts. (pg 957)

Part the First

Article II. 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. And no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience, or for his religious profession or sentiments, provided he doth not disturb the public peace or obstruct others in their religious worship. (pg 957)

Art. III. As the happiness of a people and the good order and preservation of civil government essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality, and as these cannot be generally diffused through community but by the institution of the public worship of God and of public instructions in piety, religion, and morality Therefore, To promote their happiness and to secure the good order and preservation of their government, the people of this commonwealth have right to invest their legislature with power to authorize and require, and the legislature shall, from time to time, authorize and require, the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies-politic or religious societies to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the institution of the public worship of God and for the support and maintenance of public Protestant teachers of piety, religion, and morality in all cases where such provision shall not be made voluntarily.

And the people of this commonwealth have also a right to, and do, invest their legislature with authority to enjoin upon all the subjects an attendance upon the instructions of the public teachers aforesaid, at stated times and seasons, if there be any on whose instructions they can conscientiously and conveniently attend.

Provided, notwithstanding, That the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies-politic, or religious societies, shall at all times have the exclusive right of electing their public teachers and of contracting with them for their support and maintenance.

And all moneys paid by the subject to the support of public worship and of the public teachers aforesaid shall, if he require it, be uniformly applied to the support of the public teacher or teachers of his own religious sect or denomination, provided there be any on whose instructions he attends otherwise it may be paid toward the support of the teacher or teachers of the parish or precinct in which the said moneys are raised.

And every denomination of Christians, demeaning themselves peaceably and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law; and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law. (pg 957 & 958)

Part the Second

Chapter II Executive Power

Section 1. Governor

Art. II. The governor shall be chosen annually; and no person shall be eligible to this office, unless, at the time of his election, he shall have been an inhabitant of this commonwealth for seven years next preceding; and unless he shall, at the same time, be seized, in his own right, of freehold, within the commonwealth, of the value of one thousand pounds; and unless he shall declare himself to be of the Christian religion. (pg 964)

Section 2. Lieutenant-Governor

Article I. There shall be annually elected a lieutenant-governor of the commonwealth of Massachusetts, whose title shall be "His Honor;" and who shall be qualified, in point of religion, property, and residence in the commonwealth, in the same manner with the governor; and the day and manner of his election, and the qualifications of the electors, shall be the same as are required in the election of governor. The return of the votes for this officer, and the declaration of his election, shall be in the same manner; and if no one person shall be found to have majority of all the votes returned, the vacancy shall be filled by the senate and house of representatives, in the same manner as the governor is to be elected, in case no one person shall have a majority of the votes of the people to be governor. (pg 967)

Chapter V The University At Cambridge, and Encouragement of Literature, ETC

Section 1. The University

Article I. Whereas our wise and pious ancestors, so early as the year one thousand six hundred and thirty-six, laid the foundation of Harvard College, in which university many persons of great eminence have, by the blessing of God, been initiated in those arts and sciences which qualified them for public employments, both in church and State; and whereas the encouragement of arts and sciences, and all good literature, tends to the honor of God, the advantage of the Christian religion, and the great benefit of this and the other United States of America, it is declared, that the president and fellows of Harvard College, in their corporate capacity, and their successors in that capacity, their officers and servants, shall have, hold, use, exercise, and enjoy all the powers,

authorities, rights, liberties, privileges, immunities, and franchises which they now have, or are entitled to have, hold, use, exercise, and enjoy; and the same are hereby ratified and confirmed unto them, the said president and fellows of Harvard College, and to their successors, and to their officers and servants, respectively, forever. (pg 969)

Chapter VI

Oaths and Subscriptions

Article I. Any person chosen governor, lieutenant-governor, councilor, senator, or representative, and accepting the trust, shall, before he proceed to execute the duties of his place or office, make and subscribe the following declaration, viz:

“I, A.B., do declare that I believe the Christian religion, and have a firm persuasion of its truth; and that I am seized and possessed, in my own right, of the property required by the constitution, as one qualification for the office or place to which am elected.” (pg 970)

New Hampshire

January 5, 1776 Again, being petitioned for advice in local governance in October, 1775, the members of the Continental Congress recommended to the colony of New Hampshire (November, 1775) to “...call a full and free representation of the people...establish such a form of government, as, in their judgement, will best produce the happiness of the people, and most effectually secure peace and good order in the province...”

In response to that advice, the Congress of New Hampshire met and crafted a constitution to form a temporary government, completing its labors on January 5, 1776. It is clear, by their words “...we shall rejoice if such a reconciliation between us and our parent State can be effected...”, that the members of New Hampshire’s Congress believe that there remained a possibility of reconciliation.

POORE’S NOTES: on New Hampshire’s 1784 Constitution - A convention met at Concord, June 10, 1778, and framed constitution, which was submitted to the people at their town-meetings in 1779, and rejected. new convention was called, which met at Exeter, June 12, 1781 and framed another constitution, which was submitted to the people at their town-meetings for approval or amendments. So numerous were the amendments suggested, and so difficult was it to reconcile conflicting opinions, that the convention did not complete its labors until October 31, 1783. The constitution, thus discussed, amended, and approved in detail by the people of New Hampshire in their town-meetings assembled under the supervision of the convention, was inaugurated June 2, 1784.

1784 Constitution of New Hampshire

Part I – The Bill of Rights

Article V. Every individual has a natural and unalienable right to worship GOD according to the dictates of his own conscience, and reason; and no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained in his person, liberty or estate for worshipping GOD, in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience, or for his religious profession, sentiments or persuasion provided he doth not disturb the public peace, or disturb others, in their religious worship. (pg 1281)

VI. As morality and piety, rightly grounded on evangelical principles, will give the best and greatest security to government, and will lay in the hearts of men the strongest obligations to due subjection; and as the knowledge of these, is most likely to be propagated through society by the institution of the public worship of the DEITY, and of public instruction in morality and religion therefore, to promote those important purposes, the people of this state have right to empower, and do hereby fully empower the legislature to authorize from time to time, the several towns, parishes, bodies-corporate, or religious societies within this state, to make adequate provision at their own expence, for the support and maintenance of public protestant teachers of piety, religion and morality:

Provided notwithstanding, That the several towns, parishes, bodies-corporate, or religious societies, shall at all times have the exclusive right of electing their own public teachers, and of contracting with them for their support and maintenance. And no person of any one particular religious sect or denomination, shall ever be compelled to pay towards the support of the teacher or teachers of another persuasion, sect or denomination.

And every denomination of Christians demeaning themselves quietly, and as good subjects of the state, shall be equally under the protection of the law: and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another, shall ever be established by law.

And nothing herein shall be understood to affect any former contracts made of the support of the ministry; but all such contracts shall remain, and be in the same state as if this constitution had not been made. (pg 1281)

New Jersey

July 3, 1776

XVIII. That no person shall ever, within this Colony, be deprived of the inestimable privilege of worshipping Almighty God in manner agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; nor, under any pretence whatever, be compelled to attend any place of worship, contrary to his own faith and judgment nor shall any person, within this Colony, ever be obliged to pay tithes, taxes, or any other rates, for the purpose of building or repairing any other church or churches, place or places of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry, contrary to what he believes to be right, or has deliberately or voluntarily engaged himself to perform. (pg 1313)

XIX. That there shall be no establishment of any one religious sect in this Province, in preference to another; and that no Protestant inhabitant of this Colony shall be denied the enjoyment of any civil right, merely on account of his religious principles; but that all persons, professing belief in the faith of any Protestant sect, who shall demean themselves peaceably under the government, as hereby established, shall be capable of being elected into any office of profit or trust, or being member of either branch of the Legislature, and shall fully and freely enjoy every privilege and immunity, enjoyed by others their fellow subjects. (pg 1313)

New York

April 20, 1777

XXXVIII. And whereas we are required, by the benevolent principles of rational liberty, not only to expel civil tyranny, but also to guard against that spiritual oppression and intolerance wherewith the bigotry and ambition of weak and wicked priests and princes have scourged mankind, this convention doth further, in the name and by the authority of the good people of this State, ordain, determine, and 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, or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this State. (pg 1338)

XXXIX. And whereas the ministers of the gospel are, by their profession, dedicated to the service of God and the care of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their function; therefore, no minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination whatsoever, shall, at any time hereafter, under any pretence or description whatever, be eligible to, or capable of holding, any civil or military office or place within this State. (pg 1338 & 1339)

North Carolina

December 18, 1776

A Declaration of Rights

XIX. That all men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences. (pg 1410)

XXXI. That no clergyman, or preacher of the gospel, of any denomination, shall be capable of being a member of either the Senate, House of Commons, or Council of State, while he continues in the exercise of the pastoral function. (pg 1413)

XXXII. 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 or place of trust or profit in the civil department within this State. (pg 1413)

XXXIV. That there shall be no establishment of any one religious church or denomination in this State, in preference to any other; neither shall any person, on any pretence whatsoever, be compelled to attend any place of worship contrary to his own faith or judgment, nor be obliged to pay, for the purchase of any glebe, or the building of any house of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry, contrary to what he believes right, or has voluntarily and personally engaged to perform; but all persons shall be at liberty to exercise their own mode of worship: Provided, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to exempt preachers of treasonable or seditious discourses, from legal trial and punishment. (pg 1413 & 1414)

Pennsylvania

September 28, 1776

A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the State of Pennsylvania

II. That all men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences and understanding: And that no man ought or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, or erect or support any place of worship, or maintain any ministry, contrary to, or against, his own free will and consent: Nor can any man, who acknowledges the being of God, be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right as citizen, on account of his religious sentiments or peculiar mode of religious worship: And that no authority can or ought to be vested in, or assumed by any power whatever, that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner controul, the right of conscience in the free exercise of religious worship. (pg 1541)

Plan or Frame of Government

Sect. 10. A quorum of the house of representatives shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of members elected; and having met and chosen their speaker, shall each of them before they proceed to business take and subscribe, as well the oath or affirmation of fidelity and allegiance hereinafter directed, as the following oath or affirmation, vis:

I _____ do swear (or affirm) that as a member of this assembly, I will not propose or assent to any bill, vote, or resolution, which shall appear to me injurious to the people; nor do or consent to any act or thing whatever, that shall have tendency to lessen or abridge their rights and privileges, as declared in the constitution of this state; but will in all things conduct myself as faithful honest representative and guardian of the people, according to the best of my judgement and abilities.

And each member, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe 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 no further or other religious test shall ever hereafter be required of any civil officer or magistrate in this State. (pg 1543)

Sect. 45. Laws for the encouragement of virtue, and prevention of vice and immorality, shall be made and constantly kept in force, and provision shall be made for their due execution: And all religious societies or bodies of men heretofore united or incorporated for the advancement of religion or learning, or for other pious and charitable purposes, shall be encouraged and protected in the enjoyment of the privileges, immunities and estates which they were accustomed to enjoy, or could of right have enjoyed, under the laws and former constitution of this state. (pg 1547 & 1548)

Rhode Island

1663 Charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation

CHARLES THE SECOND, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith..., that they, pursueing, with peaceable and loyall minds, their sober, serious and religious intentions, of godlie edifying themselves, and one another, in the holie Christian ffaith and worship as they were perswaded;... Now know yee, that wee beinge willinge to encourage the hopefull undertakeinge of oure sayd loyall and loveinge subjects, and to secure them in the free exercise and enjoyment of all their civill and religious rights, appertaining to

them, as our loveing subjects; and to preserve unto them that libertye, in the true Christian ffaith and worshipp of God, which they have sought with soe much travaill, and with peaceable myndes, and loyall subjectione to our royall progenitors and ourselves, to enjoye; and because some of the people and inhabitants of the same colonie cannot, in their private opinions, conforme to the publique exercise of religion, according to the litturgy, formes and ceremonyes of the Church of England, or take or subscribe the oaths and articles made and established in that behalfe; and for that the same, by reason of the remote distances of those places, will (as wee hope) bee noe breach of the unitie and unifformitie established in this nation: Have therefore thought ffit, and doe hereby publish, graunt, ordeyne and declare, That our royall will and pleasure is, that noe person within the sayd colonye, at any tyme hereafter, shall bee any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinione in matters of religion, and doe not actually disturb the civill peace of our sayd colony; but that all and everye person and persons may, from tyme to tyme, and at all tymes hereafter, freelye and fullye have and enjoye his and their owne judgments and consciences, in matters of religious concernments, throughout the tract of lande hereafter mentioned; they behaving themselves peaceable and quietlie, and not using this libertie to lycentiousnesse and profanenesse, nor to the civill injurys or outward disturbance of others; any lawe, statute, or clause, therein contayned, or to bee contayned, usage or custome of this realme, to the contrary hereof, in any wise, notwithstanding. And that they may bee in the better capacity to defend themselves, in their just rights and libertyes against all the enemies of the Christian ffaith, and others, in all respects, wee have further thought fit, and at the humble petition of the persons aforesayd are gratusly pleased to declare... (pg 1595 – 1603, misspelling is consistent with the spelling within the Charter)

1842 Constitution of Rhode Island

Preamble

We the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which he hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for blessing upon our endeavors to secure and to transmit the same, unimpaired, to succeeding generations, do ordain and establish this constitution of government. (pg 1603)

Article I. Declaration of Certain Constitutional Rights and Principles.

In order to effectually to secure the religious and political freedom established by our venerated ancestors, and to preserve the same for our posterity, we do declare that the essential and unquestionable rights and principles hereinafter mentioned shall be established, maintained, and preserved, and shall be of paramount obligation in all legislative, judicial, and executive proceedings. (pg 1603 & 1604)

Sec. 3. Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free, and all attempts to influence it by temporal punishment, or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness; and whereas principal object of our venerated ancestors, in their migration to this country and their settlement of this State, was, as they expressed it, to hold forth lively experiment that flourishing civil state may stand and be best maintained with full liberty in religious concerns; we therefore declare, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or to support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatever, except in fulfilment of his own voluntary contract; nor enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods; nor disqualified from holding any office nor otherwise suffer on account of his religious belief; and that every man shall be free to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and to profess, and by argument to maintain, his opinion in matters of religion and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect his civil capacity. (pg 1604)

South Carolina

March 19, 1778

XII. “That each parish and district throughout this State...elect by ballot one member of the senate... and that no person shall be eligible to seat in the said senate unless he be of the Protestant religion, and hath attained the age of thirty years, and hath been resident in this State at least five years.” (pg 1622)

XIII. “That... Each parish and district within this State shall send members to the general assembly... No person shall be eligible to sit in the house of representatives unless he be of the Protestant religion, and hath been resident in this State for three years previous to his election...” (pg 1622 & 1623)

XXXVIII. That all persons and religious societies who acknowledge that there is one God, and future state of rewards and punishments, and that God is publicly to be worshipped, shall be freely tolerated. **The Christian Protestant religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be, the established religion of this State.** That all denominations of Christian Protestants in this State, demeaning themselves peaceably and faithfully, shall enjoy equal religious and civil privileges. To accomplish this desirable purpose without injury to the religious property of those societies of Christians which are by law already incorporated for the purpose of religious worship, and to put it fully into the power of every other society of Christian Protestants, either already formed or hereafter to be formed, to obtain the like incorporation, it is hereby constituted, appointed, and declared that the respective societies of the Church of England that are already formed in this State for the purpose of religious worship shall still continue incorporate and hold the religious property now in their possession. And that whenever

fifteen or more male persons, not under twenty-one years of age, professing the Christian Protestant religion, and agreeing to unite themselves in society for the purposes of religious worship, they shall, (on complying with the terms hereinafter mentioned,) be, and be constituted, a church, and be esteemed and regarded in law as of the established religion of the State, and on petition to the legislature shall be entitled to be incorporated and to enjoy equal privileges. That every society of Christians so formed shall give themselves name or denomination by which they shall be called and known in law, and all that associate with them for the purposes of worship shall be esteemed as belonging to the society so called. But that previous to the establishment and incorporation of the respective societies of every denomination as aforesaid, and in order to entitle them thereto, each society so petitioning shall have agreed to and subscribed in book the following five articles, without which no agreement or union of men upon pretence of religion shall entitle them to be incorporated and esteemed as church of the established religion of this State:

- 1st. That there is one eternal God, and a future state of rewards and punishments.
- 2nd. That God is publicly to be worshipped.
- 3rd. That the Christian religion is the true religion.
- 4th. That the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are of divine inspiration, and are the rule of faith and practice.
- 5th. That it is lawful and the duty of every man being thereunto called by those that govern, to bear witness to the truth.

And that every inhabitant of this State, when called to make an appeal to God as a witness to truth, shall be permitted to do it in that way which is most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience. And that the people of this State may forever enjoy the right of electing their own pastors or clergy, and at the same time that the State may have sufficient security for the due discharge of the pastoral office, by those who shall be admitted to be clergymen, no person shall officiate as minister of any established church who shall not have been chosen by majority of the society to which he shall minister, or by persons appointed by the said majority, to choose and procure minister for them; nor until the minister so chosen and appointed shall have made and subscribed to the following declaration, over and above the aforesaid five articles, viz: "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 holy scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge 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 that he will maintain and set forwards, as much as he can, quietness, peace, and love

among all people, and especially among those that are or shall be committed to his charge. No person shall disturb or molest any religious assembly; nor shall use any reproachful, reviling, or abusive language against any church, that being the certain way of disturbing the peace, and of hindering the conversion of any to the truth, by engaging them in quarrels and animosities, to the hatred of the professors, and that profession which otherwise they might be brought to assent to. No person whatsoever shall speak anything in their religious assembly irreverently or seditiously of the government of this State. No person shall, by law, be obliged to pay towards the maintenance and support of religious worship that he does not freely join in, or has not voluntarily engaged to support. But the churches, chapels, parsonages, glebes, and all other property now belonging to any societies of the Church of England, or any other religious societies, shall remain and be secured to them forever. The poor shall be supported, and elections managed in the accustomed manner, until laws shall be provided to adjust those matters in the most equitable way. (pg 1626 & 1627)

Vermont

July 8, 1777

Chapter I. A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the State of Vermont

III. 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 and that no man ought, or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, or erect, or support any place of worship, or maintain any minister, contrary to the dictates of his conscience; nor can any man who professes the protestant religion, be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right, as citizen, on account of his religious sentiment, or peculiar mode of religious worship, and that no authority can, or ought to be vested in, or assumed by, any power whatsoever, that shall, in any case, interfere with, or in any manner controul, the rights of conscience, in the free exercise of religious worship: 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. (pg 1859)

Chapter II. Plan or Frame of Government

Section VI. Every man of the full age of twenty-one years, having resided in this State for the space of one whole year, next before the election of representatives, and who is of quiet and peaceable behaviour, and will take the following oath (or affirmation) shall be entitled to all the privileges of a freeman of this State.

I _____ solemnly swear, by the ever living God, (or affirm, in the presence of Almighty God,) that whenever I am called to give my vote or suffrage, touching any matter that concerns the State of Vermont, I will do it so, as in my conscience, I shall judge will most conduce to the best good of the same, as established by the constitution, without fear or favor of any man. (pg 1861)

Section IX. A quorum of the house of representatives shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of members elected; and having met and chosen their speaker, shall, each of them, before they proceed to business, take and subscribe, as well the oath of fidelity and allegiance herein after directed, as the following oath or affirmation, viz.

I _____ do solemnly swear, by the ever living God, (or, do solemnly affirm in the presence of Almighty God) that as member of this assembly, will not propose or assent to any bill, vote, or resolution, which shall appear to me injurious to the people; nor do or consent to any act or thing whatever, that shall have tendency to lessen or abridge their rights and privileges, as declared in the Constitution of this State; but will, in all things, conduct myself as faithful, honest representative and guardian of the people, according to the best of my judgement and abilities.

And each member, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe 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 to given by divine inspiration, and own and profess the protestant religion.

And no further or other religious test shall ever, hereafter, be required of any civil officer or magistrate in this State. (pg 1861)

Section XXXVI. Every officer, whether judicial, executive or military, in authority under this State, shall take the following oath or affirmation of allegiance, and general oath of office, before he enter on the execution of his of his office.

The Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance.

“I _____ do solemnly swear by the ever living God, (or affirm in presence of Almighty God,) that I will be true and faithful to the State of Vermont; and that I will not, directly or indirectly, do any act or thing, prejudicial or injurious, to the constitution or government thereof, as established by Convention.”

The Oath or Affirmation of Office.

“I _____ do solemnly swear by the ever living God, (or affirm in presence of Almighty God) that I will faithfully execute the office of _____ for the _____ of _____; and will do equal right and justice to all men, to the best of my judgement and abilities, according to law.” (pg 1864)

Section XLI. Laws for the encouragement of virtue and prevention of vice and immorality, shall be made and constantly kept in force; and provision shall be made for their due execution; and all religious societies or bodies of men, that have or may be hereafter united and incorporated, for the advancement of religion and learning, or for other pious and charitable purposes, shall be encouraged and protected in the enjoyment of the privileges, immunities and estates which they, in justice, ought to enjoy, under such regulations, as the General Assembly of this State shall direct. (pg 1865)

1786 Constitution of Vermont

Chapter I. A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the State of Vermont.

III. That all men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences and understandings, as in their opinion shall be regulated by the word of God; and that no man ought, or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, or erect or support any place of worship, or maintain any minister, contrary to the dictates of his conscience; nor can any man be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right as citizen, on account of his religious sentiments, or peculiar mode of religious worship; and that no authority can, or ought to be vested in, or assumed by any power whatsoever, that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner control the rights of conscience, in the free exercise of religious worship: Nevertheless, every sect or denomination of Christians ought to observe the Sabbath or Lord's day, and keep up some sort of religious worship, which to them shall seem most agreeable to the revealed will of God. (pg 1868)

Chapter II. Plan or Frame of Government.

XII. The representatives, having met, and chosen their speaker and clerk, shall each of them, before they proceed to business, take and subscribe, as well the oath or affirmation of allegiance herein after directed (except where they shall produce certificates of their having heretofore taken and subscribed the same) as the following oath or affirmation, viz.

You _____ do solemnly swear, (or affirm) that, as a member of this Assembly, you will not propose or assent to any bill, vote, or resolution, which shall appear to you injurious to the

people; nor do nor consent to any act or thing whatever, that shall have tendency to lessen or abridge their rights and privileges as declared by the Constitution of this State; but will, in all things, conduct yourself as faithful, honest representative and guardian of the people, according to the best of your judgment and abilities. (In case of an oath) So help you God. (And in case of an affirmation) Under the pain and penalties of perjury.

And each member, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, vis.

You do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the Universe, the rewarded of the good, and punisher of the wicked. And you do acknowledge and scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration; and own and profess the Protestant religion. And no further or other religious test shall ever hereafter be required of any civil officer or magistrate, in this State. (pg 1871)

XXXVIII. Laws for the encouragement of virtue, and prevention of vice and immorality, ought to be constantly kept in force, and duly executed; and a competent number of schools ought to be maintained in each town for the convenient instruction of youth and one or more grammar schools be incorporated, and properly supported in each county in this State. And all religious societies, or bodies of men, that may be hereafter united or incorporated, for the advancement of religion and learning, or for other pious and charitable purposes, shall be encouraged and protected in the enjoyment of the privileges, immunities, and estates, which they in justice ought to enjoy, under such regulations as the General Assembly of State shall direct. (pg 1874)

Virginia

June 12, 1776 Bill of Rights

Sec. 16. 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.