

had to be decided by the new nation, as the next four documents illustrate. Document 2 is a petition from Cato, “a poor negro,” to the Pennsylvania Assembly, urging it to reject conservative attempts to repeal a law that set in motion an end to slavery. Slaveholders in Virginia sought to protect slavery in document 3. With petitions, they urged the retention of slavery. Document 4 is a proposal authored by Thomas Jefferson that provides for the formal protection of religious freedom in Virginia. Documents 5 and 6 describe Shays’s Rebellion in 1787 when the militia was called out to put down an uprising of farmers. The next two documents explore the debates surrounding the Constitution. Document 7 includes excerpts from *The Federalist Papers*, a series of eighty-five essays written by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay in 1787 and 1788 to explain and defend the Constitution. In contrast, Patrick Henry, in document 8, condemns the Constitution as creating a government that is too centralized. Finally, George Washington, in document 9, commits his nation to religious freedom in his letter to a Jewish congregation in Rhode Island. This is the first public declaration that Jews in the United States would be guaranteed religious freedom.

1. The Articles of Confederation Stress the Rights of States, 1781

Preamble

To all to whom these Presents shall come, we the undersigned Delegates of the States affixed to our Names send greeting.

Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union between the States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Article I. The Stile of this Confederacy shall be “The United States of America.”

Article II. Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Article III. 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 offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.

Article V. For the most convenient management of the general interests of the United States, delegates shall be annually appointed in such manner as the legislatures of each State shall direct, to meet in Congress on the first Monday

The Articles of Confederation (1777, ratified and in force 1781).

in November, in every year, with a power reserved to each State to recall its delegates, or any of them, at any time within the year, and to send others in their stead for the remainder of the year....

In determining questions in the United States in Congress assembled, each State shall have one vote....

Article VIII. All charges of war, and all other expenses that shall be incurred for the common defense or general welfare, and allowed by the United States in Congress assembled, shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several States in proportion to the value of all land within each State, granted or surveyed for any person, as such land and the buildings and improvements thereon shall be estimated according to such mode as the United States in Congress assembled, shall from time to time direct and appoint.

The taxes for paying that proportion shall be laid and levied by the authority and direction of the legislatures of the several States within the time agreed upon by the United States in Congress assembled.

Article IX....The United States in Congress assembled shall never engage in a war, nor grant letters of marque or reprisal in time of peace, nor enter into any treaties or alliances, nor coin money, nor regulate the value thereof, nor ascertain the sums and expenses necessary for the defense and welfare of the United States, or any of them, nor emit bills, nor borrow money on the credit of the United States, nor appropriate money, nor agree upon the number of vessels of war, to be built or purchased, or the number of land or sea forces to be raised, nor appoint a commander in chief of the army or navy, unless nine States assent to the same: nor shall a question on any other point, except for adjourning from day to day be determined, unless by the votes of the majority of the United States in Congress assembled.

2. Cato, an African American, Pleads for the Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania, 1781

Mr. PRINTER.

I AM a poor negro, who with myself and children have had the good fortune to get my freedom, by means of an act of assembly passed on the first of March 1780, and should now with my family be as happy a set of people as any on the face of the earth; but I am told the assembly are going to pass a law to send us all back to our masters. Why dear Mr. Printer, this would be the cruellest act that ever a sett of worthy good gentlemen could be guilty of. To make a law to hang us all, would be *merciful*, when compared with this law.... I have read the act which made me free, and I always read it with joy—and I always dwell with particular pleasure on the following words, spoken by the assembly in the top of the said law. “We esteem it a particular blessing granted to us, that we are enabled this day to add one more step to universal civilization, by removing as much as possible the sorrows of those, who have lived in