

Chapter 6 Outline: The Confederation and the Constitution, 1776-1790

- I. A Revolution of Sentiments
 - A. American revolution “not a revolution in sense of radical or social change.” Rather, “accelerated evolution.”
 - B. Loyalists leave, loss of upper crust elites, space for a new patriot elite
 - C. Move towards equality in laws, culture. Broadened enfranchisement, end of primogeniture in some states
 - D. Increased separation of church and state
 - 1. Congregational faith remains established in some places, but Anglican faith disestablished
 - 2. Jefferson’s Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, 1786
 - E. Increased opposition to slavery
 - 1. First anti-slavery society, 1775
 - 2. Several northern states either abolished slavery or allowed for the gradual freeing of slaves
 - 3. Not abolished nationwide because the fight to do so may have torn apart the still-fragile young republic
 - F. No major lasting increase in women’s rights, but women seen as having a role in cultivating “civic virtue” by educating their young
- II. Constitution making in the States
 - A. Continental Congress of 1776 had called upon states as sovereign entities to draw up constitutions
 - B. Some simply retouched old colonial charters, some made bigger changes
 - C. In 1780, Mass. Introduces the idea of constitutional convention (idea that constitution could only be drafted / changed by constitutional convention, the actions of which must be approved in a popular referendum.)
 - D. Commonalities among constitutions
 - 1. Written, fundamental law of their societies (above ordinary legislation)
 - 2. Many had bills of rights that guaranteed fundamental liberties
 - 3. Many had annually elected legislatures, all had weak executive and judicial branches (think of their experiences under the despotic king)...Sweeping power given to legislatures
 - a. Many legislators from poor, recently enfranchised western districts.
- III. Economic Crosscurrents
 - A. Economic changes after war “not overwhelming”
 - B. Loyalist holdings generally confiscated and eventually cut up into small farms
 - C. Conflict prevented because lots of cheap land was available: “economic democracy, broadly speaking, preceded political democracy.”