



# The Political Philosophy of James Madison (The Political Philosophy of the American Founders)

*Garrett Ward Sheldon*

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Among the founders, James Madison wielded the greatest influence in drafting the Constitution of 1789. In this book, Garrett Ward Sheldon offers a concise synthesis of Madison's political philosophy in the context of the social and political history of his day.

Tracing the history of Madison's thought to his early education in Protestant theology, Sheldon argues that it was a fear of the potential "tyranny of the majority" over individual rights, along with a firmly Calvinist suspicion of the motives of sinful men, that led him to support a constitution creating a strong central government with power over state laws. In this way, Madison aimed to protect individual liberties and provide checks to "spiteful" human interests and selfish parochial prejudices. Among the topics Sheldon covers are Madison's Princeton education, his contributions to the *Federalist Papers*, his arguments in defense of states' rights on behalf of Virginia, his views on federal power during his terms as secretary of state and president, and, in his later years, his defense of the Union against those Southerners who advocated nullification.

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