

# Data on the Framers of the Constitution

Note: the "?" column is an answer to the question, did this person sign the Constitution?

Name	State	Place of Birth	Birth Date	Death Date	Occupation	Religion	?
Baldwin, Abraham	Georgia	Guilford, CT	11/23/1754	3/4/1807	Minister/Lawyer	CO	Y
Bassett, Richard	Delaware	Cecil County, MD	4/2/1745	8/15/1815	Lawyer	ME	Y
Bedford, Gunning, Jr.	Delaware	Philadelphia, PA	1747	3/30/1812	Lawyer	PB	Y
Blair, John	Virginia	Williamsburg, VA	1732	8/31/1800	Lawyer	EP	Y
Blount, William	North Carolina	Windsor, NC	4/6/1749	3/21/1800	Politician	PB	Y
Brearily, David	New Jersey	Spring Grove, NJ	6/11/1745	8/16/1790	Lawyer	EP	Y
Broom, Jacob	Delaware	Wilmington, DE	1752	1810	Merchant	LU	Y
Butler, Pierce	South Carolina	County Carlow, Ireland	7/11/1744	2/15/1822	Soldier/Politician	EP	Y
Carroll, Daniel	Maryland	Upper Marlboro, MD	7/22/1730	7/5/1796	Farmer	RC	Y
Clymer, George	Pennsylvania	Philadelphia, PA	3/16/1740	1/23/1813	Merchant	QU/EP	Y
Davie, William R.	North Carolina	Egremont, England	6/20/1756	11/29/1820	Lawyer	PB	N
Dayton, Jonathan	New Jersey	Elizabethtown, NJ	10/16/1760	10/9/1824	Lawyer	EP	Y
Dickinson, John	Delaware	Trappe, MD	11/19/1732	2/14/1808	Lawyer	QU/EP	Y
Ellsworth, Oliver	Connecticut	Windsor, CT	4/29/1745	11/26/1807	Lawyer	CO	N
Few, William	Georgia	Baltimore, MD	6/8/1748	7/16/1828	Lawyer	ME	Y
Fitzsimons, Thomas	Pennsylvania	Ireland	1741	8/26/1811	Merchant	RC	Y
Franklin, Benjamin	Pennsylvania	Boston, MA	1/17/1706	4/17/1790	Inventor	DE	Y
Gerry, Elbridge	Massachusetts	Marblehead, MA	7/17/1744	11/23/1814	Merchant	EP	N
Gilman, Nicholas	New Hampshire	Exeter, NH	8/3/1755	5/2/1814	Merchant	CO	Y
Gorham, Nathaniel	Massachusetts	Charlestown, MA	5/27/1738	6/11/1796	Merchant	CO	Y
Hamilton, Alexander	New York	Nevis, British West Indies	1/11/1757	7/12/1804	Lawyer	EP	Y
Houston, William C.	New Jersey	Sumter, SC	1746	8/12/1788	Teacher	PB	N
Houstoun, William	Georgia	Savannah, GA	1755	3/17/1813	Lawyer	EP	N
Ingersoll, Jared	Pennsylvania	New Haven, CT	10/27/1749	10/31/1822	Lawyer	PB	Y
Jenifer, Daniel of St. Thomas	Maryland	Port Tobacco, MD	1723	11/16/1790	Lawyer	EP	Y
Johnson, William S.	Connecticut	Stratford, CT	10/7/1727	11/14/1819	Lawyer	EP	Y
King, Rufus	Massachusetts	Scarborough, ME	3/24/1755	4/29/1827	Lawyer	EP	Y
Langdon, John	New Hampshire	Portsmouth, NH	6/26/1741	9/18/1819	Merchant	CO	Y
Lansing, John, Jr.	New York	Albany, NY	1/30/1754	1829	Lawyer	DR	N
Livingston, William	New Jersey	Albany, NY	11/30/1723	7/25/1790	Lawyer	PB	Y

Madison, James	Virginia	Port Conway, VA	3/16/1751	6/28/1836	Politician	EP	Y
Martin, Alexander	North Carolina	Hunterdon County, NJ	1740	11/2/1807	Politician	PB/EP	N
Martin, Luther	Maryland	Brunswick, NJ	2/9/1744	7/10/1826	Lawyer	EP	N
Mason, George	Virginia	Fairfax County, VA	12/11/1725	10/7/1792	Politician	EP	N
McClurg, James	Virginia	Hampton, VA	1746	7/9/1823	Doctor	PB?	N
McHenry, James	Maryland	Ballymena, Ireland	11/16/1753	5/3/1816	Doctor	PB	Y
Mercer, John F.	Maryland	Stafford County, VA	5/17/1759	8/30/1821	Lawyer	EP	N
Mifflin, Thomas	Pennsylvania	Philadelphia, PA	1/10/1744	1/20/1800	Merchant	QU/LU	Y
Morris, Gouverneur	Pennsylvania	Bronx, NY	1/31/1752	11/6/1816	Lawyer	EP	Y
Morris, Robert	Pennsylvania	Liverpool, England	1/31/1734	5/8/1806	Merchant	EP	Y
Paterson, William	New Jersey	County Antrim, Ireland	12/24/1745	9/9/1806	Lawyer	PB	Y
Pierce, William L.	Georgia	Georgia	1740	12/10/1789	Merchant	EP	N
Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth	South Carolina	Charleston, SC	2/25/1746	8/16/1825	Lawyer	EP	Y
Pinckney, Charles	South Carolina	Charleston, SC	10/26/1757	10/29/1824	Lawyer	EP	Y
Randolph, Edmund J.	Virginia	Williamsburg, VA	8/10/1753	1813	Lawyer	EP	N
Read, George	Delaware	Cecil County, MD	9/18/1733	9/21/1798	Lawyer	EP	Y
Rutledge, John	South Carolina	Charleston, SC	9/1739	6/18/1800	Lawyer	EP	Y
Sherman, Roger	Connecticut	Newton, MA	4/19/1721	7/23/1793	Lawyer/Merchant	CO	Y
Spaight, Richard D.	North Carolina	New Bern, NC	3/25/1758	9/6/1802	Politician	EP	Y
Strong, Caleb	Massachusetts	Northampton, MA	1/9/1745	11/7/1819	Lawyer	CO	N
Washington, George	Virginia	Wakefield Plantation, VA	2/22/1732	12/14/1799	Soldier	EP	Y
Williamson, Hugh	North Carolina	Nottingham, PA	12/5/1735	5/22/1819	Educator	PB/DE	Y
Wilson, James	Pennsylvania	St. Andrews, Scotland	9/14/1741	8/21/1797	Lawyer	EP/DE	Y
Wythe, George	Virginia	Elizabeth City County, VA	1726	6/8/1806	Lawyer	EP	N
Yates, Robert	New York	Schenectady, NY	1/27/1738	9/9/1801	Lawyer	DR	N

Religion key:

CO = Congregationalist DE = Deist DR = Dutch Reformed EP = Episcopal LU = Lutheran ME = Methodist PB = Presbyterian QU = Quaker RC = Roman Catholic

Sources: Birth places, birth and death dates, and occupations: [The Founding Fathers](#) from NARA, and [Soldier-Statesmen of the Constitution](#). Religion: [Errant Skeptics](#) (see also [The American Colonist's Library](#) and [The Separation of Church and State Home Page](#)).

Note on religion: Pinning down the religion of some people on this list is notoriously difficult. The "Deist" label, in particular, is a difficult one to assign. The best attempt has been made to assign labels accurately - the assignment can be debated, and this fact is readily acknowledged.

<http://www.usconstitution.net/>

# The Framers of the Constitution

William Pierce, of Georgia, spoke very little at the Constitutional Convention, but his contributions to what we know of the other delegates to the Convention are invaluable. He wrote short character sketches of each of the delegates; he himself had to leave the Convention early for business reasons. He died two years later; his sketches were published in the Savannah Georgian in 1828. Pierce wrote his sketches in order of state; they are reproduced here in alphabetical order. The Library of Congress has the sketches in their original order as reported in Farrand's Records, Volume 3. Note that Pierce misspelled some names - these misspellings are retained here.

This site also has a page with basic demographic data about each of the Framers.

In addition to Pierce's sketches, the reader may wish to refer to the brief biographies (most with accompanying reproductions of portraits painted of the biographies) that can be found on the Founding Fathers Page on the NARA Web site. NARA also has a page with provides an Overview of the entire body of delegates. The Colonial Hall Site also has biographies of many of the founding fathers.

**William Pierce** My own character I shall not attempt to draw, but leave those who may chose to speculate on it, to consider it in any light that their fancy or imagination may depict. I am conscious of having discharged my duty as a Soldier through the course of the late revolution with honor and propriety; and my services in Congress and the Convention were bestowed with the best intention towards the interest of Georgia, and towards the general welfare of the Confederacy. I possess ambition, and it was that, and the flattering opinion which some of my Friends had of me, that gave me a seat in the wisest Council in the World, and furnished me with an opportunity of giving these short Sketches of the Characters who composed it.

**Abraham Baldwin** Mr. Baldwin is a Gentleman of superior abilities, and joins in a public debate with great art and eloquence. Having laid the foundation of a complete classical education at Harvard College, he pursues every other study with ease. Mr. Baldwin is about 38 years of age.

**Richard Bassett** Mr. Bassett is a religious enthusiast, lately turned Methodist, and serves his Country because it is the will of the people that he should do so. He is a Man of plain sense, and has modesty enough to hold his Tongue. He is a Gentlemanly Man, and is in high estimation among the Methodists. Mr. Bassett is about 36 years old.

**Gunning Bedford** Mr. Bedford was educated for the Bar, and in his profession, I am told, has merit. He is a bold and nervous Speaker, and has a very commanding and striking manner; -but he is warm and impetuous in his temper, and precipitate in his judgment. Mr. Bedford is about 32 years old, and very corpulent.

**John Blair** Mr. Blair is one of the most respectable Men in Virginia, both on account of his Family as well as fortune. He is one of the Judges of the Supreme Court in Virginia, and acknowledged to have a very extensive knowledge of the Laws. Mr. Blair is, however, no Orator, but his good sense, and most excellent principles, compensate for other deficiencies. He is about 50 years of age.

**William Blount** Mr. Blount is a character strongly marked for integrity and honor. He has been twice a Member of Congress, and in that office discharged his duty with ability and faithfulness. He is no Speaker, nor does he possess any of those talents that make Men shine; -he is plain, honest, and sincere. Mr. Blount is about 36 years of age.

**David Brearly** Mr. Brearly is a man of good, rather than of brilliant parts. He is a Judge of the Supreme Court of New Jersey and is very much in the esteem of the people. As an Orator he has little to boast of, but as a Man he has every virtue to recommend him. Mr. Brearly is about 40 years of age.

**Jacob Broom** Mr. Broom is a plain good Man, with some abilities but nothing to render him conspicuous. He is silent in public, but cheerful and conversable in private. He is about 35 years old.

**Pierce Butler** Mr. Butler is a character much respected for the many excellent virtues which he possesses. But as a politician or an Orator, he has no pretensions to either. He is a Gentleman of fortune, and takes rank among the first in South Carolina. He has been appointed to Congress, and is now a Member of the Legislature of South Carolina. Mr. Butler is about 40 years of age; an Irishman by birth.

**Daniel Carroll** Mr. Carroll is a Man of large fortune, and influence in his State. He possesses plain good sense, and is in the full confidence of his Countrymen. This Gentleman is about [blank] years of age.

**George Clymer** Mr. Clymer is a Lawyer of some abilities; -he is a respectable man, and much esteemed. Mr. Clymer is about 40 years old.

**William Richardson Davie** Mr. Davey is a Lawyer of some eminence in his State. He is said to have a good classical education, and is a Gentleman of considerable literary talents. He was silent in the Convention, but his opinion was always respected. Mr. Davey is about 30 years of age.

**Jonathan Dayton** Capt. Dayton is a young Gentleman of talents, with an ambition to exert them. He possesses a good education and reading; he speaks well, and seems desirous of improving himself in Oratory. There is an impetuosity in his temper that is injurious to him; but there is an honest rectitude about him that makes him a valuable Member of Society, and secures to him the esteem of all good Men. He is about 30 years old, served with me as a Brother Aid to General Sullivan in the Western expedition of '79.

**John Dickinson** Mr. Dickinson has been famed through all America, for his Farmers Letters; he is a Scholar, and said to be a Man of very extensive information. When I saw him in the Convention, I was induced to pay the greatest attention to him whenever he spoke. I had often heard that he was a great Orator, but I found him an indifferent Speaker. With an affected air of wisdom, he labors to produce a trifle, -his language is irregular and incorrect, -his flourishes (for he sometimes attempts them), are like expiring flames, they just shew themselves and go out; -no traces of them are left on the mind to clear or animate it. He is, however, a good writer and will ever be considered one of the most important characters in the United States. He is about 55 years old, and was bred a Quaker.

**Oliver Ellsworth** Mr. Ellsworth is a Judge of the Supreme Court in Connecticut, -he is a Gentleman of a clear, deep, and copious understanding; eloquent, and connected in public debate; and always attentive to his duty. He is very happy in a reply, and choice in selecting such parts of his adversary's arguments as he finds make the strongest impressions, -in order to take off the force of them, so as to admit the power of his own. Mr. Ellsworth is about 37 years of age, a Man much respected for his integrity, and venerated for his abilities.

**William Few** Mr. Few possesses a strong natural Genius, and from application has acquired some knowledge of legal matters; -he practices at the bar of Georgia, and speaks tolerably well in the Legislature. He has been twice a Member of Congress, and served in that capacity with fidelity to his State, and honor to himself. Mr. Few is about 35 years of age.

**Thomas Fitzsimmons** Mr. Fitzsimmons is a Merchant of considerable talents, and speaks very well I am told, in the Legislature of Pennsylvania. He is about 40 years old.

**Benjamin Franklin** Dr. Franklin is well known to be the greatest philosopher of the present age;-all the operation of nature he seems to understand - the very heavens obey him, and the Clouds yield up their Lightning to be imprisoned in his rod. But what claim he has to the politician, posterity must determine. It is certain that he does not shine much in public Council, -he is no Speaker, nor does he seem to let politics engage his attention. He is, however, a most extraordinary Man, and tells a story in a style more engaging than anything I ever heard. Let his Biographer finish his character. He is 82 years old, and possesses an activity of mind equal to a youth of 25 years of age.

**Elbridge Gerry** Mr. Gerry's character is marked for integrity and perseverance. He is a hesitating and laborious speaker; -possesses a great degree of confidence and goes extensively into all subjects that he speaks on, without respect to elegance or flower of diction. He is connected and sometimes clear in his arguments, conceives well, and cherishes as his first virtue, a love for his Country. Mr. Gerry is very much of a Gentleman in his principles and manners; -he has been engaged in the mercantile line and is a Man of property. He is about 37 years of age.

**Nicholas Gilman** Mr. Gilman is modest, genteel, and sensible. There is nothing brilliant or striking in his character, but there is something respectable and worthy in the Man. — about 30 years of age. From Massachusetts.

**Nathaniel Gorham** Mr. Gorham is a Merchant in Boston, high in reputation, and much in the esteem of his Country-men. He is a Man of very good sense, but not much improved in his education. He is eloquent and easy in public debate, but has nothing fashionable or elegant in his style; -all he aims at is to convince, and where he fails it never is from his auditors not understanding him, for no Man is more perspicuous and full. He has been President of Congress, and three years a Member of that Body. Mr. Gorham is about 46 years of age, rather lusty, and has an agreeable and pleasing manner.

**Alexander Hamilton** Colo. Hamilton is deservedly celebrated for his talents. He is a practitioner of the Law, and reputed to be a finished Scholar. To a clear and strong judgment, he unites the ornaments of fancy, and whilst he is able, convincing, and engaging in his eloquence the Heart and Head sympathize in approving him. Yet there is something too feeble in his voice to be equal to the strains of oratory; -it is my opinion that he is rather a convincing Speaker, than a blazing Orator. Colo. Hamilton requires time to think, -he enquires into every part of his subject with the searching of philosophy, and when he comes forward, he comes highly charged with interesting matter, there is no skimming over the surface of a subject with him, he must sink to the bottom to see what foundation it rests on. -His language is not always equal, sometimes didactic like Bolingbroke's and at others light and tripping like Stern's. His eloquence is not so diffusive as to trifle with the senses, but he rambles just enough to strike and keep up the attention. He is about 33 years old, of small stature, and lean. His manners are tinctured with stiffness, and sometimes with a degree of vanity that is highly disagreeable.

**William Churchill Houston** Mr. Houston is an Attorney at Law, and has been a Member of Congress for the State of Georgia. He is a Gentleman of Family, and was educated in England. As to his legal or political knowledge he has very little to boast of. Nature seems to have done more for his corporeal than mental powers. His Person is striking, but his mind very little improved with useful or elegant knowledge. He has none of the talent's requisite for the Orator, but in public debate is confused and irregular. Mr. Houston is about 30 years of age of an amiable and sweet temper, and of good and honorable principles.

**Jared Ingersoll** Mr. Ingersoll is a very able Attorney, and possesses a clear legal understanding. He is well educated in the Classic's, and is a Man of very extensive reading. Mr. Ingersoll speaks well, and comprehends his subject fully. There is a modesty in his character that keeps him back. He is about 36 years old.

**Daniel Jenifer of St Thomas** Mr. Jenifer is a Gentleman of fortune in Maryland; -he is always in good humor, and never fails to make his company pleased with him. He sits silent in the Senate, and seems to be conscious that he is no politician. From his long continuance in single life, no doubt but he has made the vow of celibacy. He speaks warmly of the Ladies notwithstanding. Mr. Jenifer is about 55 years of Age, and once served as an Aid de Camp to Major Genl. Lee.

**William Samuel Johnson** Dr. Johnson is a character much celebrated for his legal knowledge; he is said to be one of the first classics in America, and certainly possesses a very strong and enlightened understanding. As an Orator in my opinion, there is nothing in him that warrants the high reputation which he has for public speaking. There is something in the tone of his voice not pleasing to the Ear, - but he is eloquent and clear, - always abounding with information and instruction. He was once employed as an Agent for the State of Connecticut to state her claims to certain landed territory before the British House of Commons; this Office he discharged with so much dignity, and made such an ingenious display of his powers, that he laid the foundation of a reputation which will probably last much longer than his own life. Dr. Johnson is about sixty years of age, possesses the manners of a Gentleman, and engages the Hearts of Men by the sweetness of his temper, and that affectionate style of address with which he accosts his acquaintance.

**Rufus King** Mr. King is a Man much distinguished for his eloquence and great parliamentary talents. He was educated in Massachusetts, and is said to have good classical as well as legal knowledge. He has served for three years in the Congress of the United States with great and deserved applause, and is at this time high in the confidence and approbation of his Country-men. This Gentleman is about thirty-three years of age, about five feet ten Inches high, well formed, an handsome face, with a strong expressive Eye, and a sweet high toned voice. In his public speaking there is something peculiarly strong and rich in his expression, clear and convincing in his arguments, rapid and irresistible at times in his eloquence but he is not always equal. His action is natural, swimming, and graceful, but there is a rudeness of manner sometimes accompanying it. But take him tout en semble, he may with propriety be ranked among the Luminaries of the present Age.

**John Langdon** Mr. Langdon is a Man of considerable fortune, possesses a liberal mind, and a good plain understanding. — about 40 years old.

**John Lansing** Mr. Lansing is a practicing Attorney at Albany, and Mayor of that Corporation. He has a hesitation in his speech, that will prevent his being an Orator of any eminence; -his legal knowledge I am told is not extensive, nor his education a good one. He is however a Man of good sense, plain in his manners, and sincere in his friendships. He is about 32 years of age.

**William Livingston** Governor Livingston is confessedly a Man of the first-rate talents, but he appears to me rather to indulge a sportiveness of wit, than a strength of thinking. He is however equal to anything, from the extensiveness of his education and genius. His writings teem with satyr and a neatness of style. But he is no Orator, and seems little acquainted with the guiles of policy. He is about 60 years old, and remarkably healthy.

**James Madison** Mr. Maddison is a character who has long been in public life; and what is very remarkable every Person seems to acknowledge his greatness. He blends together the profound politician, with the Scholar. In the management of every great question, he evidently took the lead in the Convention, and tho' he cannot be called an Orator, he is a most agreeable, eloquent, and convincing Speaker. From a spirit of industry and application which he possesses in a most eminent degree, he always comes forward the best-informed Man of any point in debate. The affairs of the United States, he perhaps, has the most correct knowledge of, of any Man in the Union. He has been twice a Member of Congress, and was always thought one of the ablest Members that ever sat in that Council. Mr. Maddison is about 37 years of age, a Gentleman of great modesty, — with a remarkable sweet temper. He is easy and unreserved among his acquaintance, and has a most agreeable style of conversation.

**Alexander Martin** Mr. Martin was lately Governor of North Carolina, which office he filled with credit. He is a Man of sense, and undoubtedly is a good politician, but he is not formed to shine in public debate, being no Speaker. Mr. Martin was once a Colonel in the American Army, but proved unfit for the field. He is about 40 years of age.

**Luther Martin** Mr. Martin was educated for the Bar, and is Attorney general for the State of Maryland. This Gentleman possesses a good deal of information, but he has a very bad delivery, and so extremely prolix, that he never speaks without tiring the patience of all who hear him. He is about 34 years of age.

**George Mason** Mr. Mason is a Gentleman of remarkable strong powers, and possesses a clear and copious understanding. He is able and convincing in debate, steady and firm in his principles, and undoubtedly one of the best politicians in America. Mr. Mason is about 60 years old, with a fine strong constitution.

**James McClurg** Mr. McClurg is a learned physician, but having never appeared before in public life his character as a politician is not sufficiently known. He attempted once or twice to speak, but with no great success. It is certain that he has a foundation of learning, on which, if he pleases, he may erect a character of high renown. The Doctor is about 38 years of age, a Gentleman of great respectability, and of a fair and unblemished character.

**James McHenry** Mr. McHenry was bred a physician, but he afterwards turned Soldier and acted as Aid to Genl. Washington and the Marquis de la Fayette. He is a Man of specious talents, with nothing of genius to improve them. As a politician there is nothing remarkable in him, nor has he any of the graces of the Orator. He is however, a very respectable young Gentleman, and deserves the honor which his Country has bestowed on him. Mr. McHenry is about 32 years of age.

**Thomas Mifflin** General Mifflin is well known for the activity of his mind, and the brilliancy of his parts. He is well informed and a graceful Speaker. The General is about 40 years of age, and a very handsome man.

**Gouverneur Morris** Mr. Gouverneur Morris is one of those Genius's in whom every species of talents combine to render him conspicuous and flourishing in public debate: -He winds through all the mazes of rhetoric, and throws around him such a glare that he charms, captivates, and leads away the senses of all who hear him. With an infinite stretch of fancy, he brings to view things when he is engaged in deep argumentation, that render all the labor of reasoning easy and pleasing. But with all these powers he is fickle and inconstant, -never pursuing one train of thinking - nor ever regular. He has gone through a very extensive course of reading, and is acquainted with all the sciences. No Man has more wit, -nor can anyone engage the attention more than Mr. Morris. He was bred to the Law, but I am told he disliked the profession, and turned merchant. He is engaged in some great mercantile matters with his namesake Mr. Robt. Morris. This Gentleman is about 38 years old, he has been unfortunate in losing one of his Legs, and getting all the flesh taken off his right arm by a scald, when a youth.

**Robert Morris** Robert Morris is a merchant of great eminence and wealth; an able Financier, and a worthy Patriot. He has an understanding equal to any public object, and possesses an energy of mind that few Men can boast of. Although he is not learned, yet he is as great as those who are. I am told that when he speaks in the Assembly of Pennsylvania, that he bears down all before him. What could have been his reason for not Speaking in the Convention I know not - but he never once spoke on any point. This Gentleman is about 50 years old.

**William Paterson** Mr. Patterson is one of those kinds of Men whose powers break in upon you, and create wonder and astonishment. He is a Man of great modesty, with looks that bespeak talents of no great extent-but he is a

Classic, a Lawyer, and an Orator; -and of a disposition so favorable to his advancement that everyone seemed ready to exalt him with their praises. He is very happy in the choice of time and manner of engaging in a debate, and never speaks but when he understands his subject well. This Gentleman is about 34 ys. of age, of a very low stature.

**Charles Pinckney** Mr. Charles Pinckney is a young Gentleman of the most promising talents. He is, also only 24 ys. of age, in possession of a very great variety of knowledge. Government, Law, History and Philosophy are his favorite studies, but he is intimately acquainted with every species of polite learning, and has a spirit of application and industry beyond most Men. He speaks with great neatness and perspicuity, and treats every subject as fully, without running into prolixity, as it requires. He has been a Member of Congress, and served in that Body with ability and eclat.

**Charles Cotesworth Pinckney** Mr. Chs Cotesworth Pinckney is a Gentleman of Family and fortune in his own State. He has received the advantage of a liberal education, and possesses a very extensive degree of legal knowledge. When warm in a debate he sometimes speaks well, -but he is generally considered an indifferent Orator. Mr. Pinckney was an Officer of high rank in the American army, and served with great reputation through the War. He is now about 40 years of age.

**Edmund Randolph** Mr. Randolph is Governor of Virginia, -a young Gentleman in whom unite all the accomplishments of the Scholar, and the States-man. He came forward with the postulate, or first principles, on which the Convention acted, and he supported them with a force of eloquence and reasoning that did him great honor. He has a most harmonious voice, a fine person and striking manner. Mr. Randolph is about 32 years of age.

**George Read** Mr. Read is a Lawyer and a Judge: -his legal abilities are said to be very great, but his powers of Oratory are fatiguing and tiresome to the last degree; -his voice is feeble, and his articulation so bad that few can have patience to attend to him. He is a very good Man, and bears an amiable character with those who know him. Mr. Read is about 50, of a low stature, and a weak constitution.

**John Rutledge** Mr. Rutledge is one of those characters who was highly mounted at the commencement of the late revolution; -his reputation in the first Congress gave him a distinguished rank among the American Worthies. He was bred to the Law, and now acts as one of the Chancellors of South Carolina. This Gentleman is much famed in his own State as an Orator, but in my opinion, he is too rapid in his public speaking to be denominated an agreeable Orator. He is undoubtedly a man of abilities, and a Gentleman of distinction and fortune. Mr. Rutledge was once Governor of South Carolina. He is about 48 years of age.

**Roger Sherman** Mr. Sherman exhibits the oddest shaped character I ever remember to have met with. He is awkward, unmeaning, and unaccountably strange in his manner. But in his train of thinking there is something regular, deep and comprehensive; yet the oddity of his address, the vulgarisms that accompany his public speaking, and that strange New England can't which runs through his public as well as his private speaking make everything that is connected with him grotesque and laughable: -and yet he deserves infinite praise -no Man has a better Heart or a clearer Head. If he cannot embellish, he can furnish thoughts that are wise and useful. He is an able politician, and extremely artful in accomplishing any particular object; -it is remarked that he seldom fails. I am told he sits on the Bench in Connecticut, and is very correct in the discharge of his Judicial functions. In the early part of his life he was a Shoe-maker; -but despising the lowness of his condition, he turned Almanack maker, and so progressed upwards to a Judge. He has been several years a Member of Congress, and discharged the duties of Office with honor and credit to himself, and advantage to the State he represented. He is about 60.

**Richard Dobbs Spaight** Mr. Spaight is a worthy Man, of some abilities, and fortune: Without possessing a Genius to render him brilliant, he is able to discharge any public trust that his Country may repose in him. He is about 31 years of age.

**Caleb Strong** Mr. Strong is a lawyer of some eminence, -he has received a liberal education, and has good connections to recommend him. As a speaker he is feeble, and without confidence. This Gentleman is about thirty-five years of age, and greatly in the esteem of his Colleagues.

**George Washington** Genl. Washington is well known as the Commander in chief of the late American Army. Having conducted these states to independence and peace, he now appears to assist in framing a government to make the People happy. Like Gustavus Vasa, he may be said to be the deliverer of his Country; -like Peter the Great he appears as the politician and the States-man; and like Cincinnatus he returned to his farm perfectly contented with being only a plain Citizen, after enjoying the highest honor of the Confederacy, -and now only seeks for the approbation of his Country-men by being virtuous and useful. The General was conducted to the Chair as President

of the Convention by the unanimous voice of its members. He is in the 52d. year of his age.

**Hugh Williamson** Mr. Williamson is a Gentleman of education and talents. He enters freely into public debate from his close attention to most subjects, but he is no Orator. There is a great degree of good humor and pleasantry in his character; and in his manners there is a strong trait of the Gentleman. He is about 48 years of age.

**James Wilson** Mr. Wilson ranks among the foremost in legal and political knowledge. He has joined to a fine genius all that can set him off and show him to advantage. He is well acquainted with Man, and understands all the passions that influence him. Government seems to have been his peculiar Study, all the political institutions of the World he knows in detail, and can trace the causes and effects of every revolution from the earliest stages of the Grecian commonwealth down to the present time. No man is more clear, copious, and comprehensive than Mr. Wilson, yet he is no great Orator. He draws the attention not by the charm of his eloquence, but by the force of his reasoning. He is about 45 years old.

**George Wythe** Mr. Wythe is the famous Professor of Law at the University of William and Mary. He is confessedly one of the most learned legal Characters of the present age. From his close attention to the study of general learning he has acquired a complete knowledge of the dead languages and all the sciences. He is remarked for his exemplary life, and universally esteemed for his good principles. No Man it is said understands the history of Government better than Mr. Wythe, -nor any one who understands the fluctuating conditions to which all societies are liable better than he does, yet from his too favorable opinion of Men, he is no great politician. He is a neat and pleasing Speaker, and a most correct and able Writer. Mr. Wythe is about 55 years of age.

**Robert Yates** Mr. Yates is said to be an able Judge. He is a Man of great legal abilities, but not distinguished as an Orator. Some of his Enemies say he is an anti-federal Man, but I discovered no such disposition in him. He is about 45 years old, and enjoys a great share of health.

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## How Does Jeremiah 17:9 Relate to the Constitutional Separation of Powers?

In their public presentations, our **WallBuilders** speakers frequently provide historical examples of how specific Bible verses impacted particular aspects of American culture. For example, the story of Matthew Maury and his geographical discoveries involves Psalm 8 and Ecclesiastes 1:6; Samuel Kent (“A Father of American Jurisprudence”) cites 1 Samuel 7:15-16 with the formation of circuit courts; Isaiah 33:22 is associated with the three branches of government; and other such examples.<sup>1</sup> Many audience members, intrigued by how specific Bible verses directly shaped American practices, look up the Bible references that we routinely mention and are immediately impressed with their specificity and obvious applicability. But almost universally when they check John Adams’ mention of Jeremiah 17:9<sup>2</sup> as the basis of the constitutional separation of powers, they are perplexed and often conclude that our speaker must have used the wrong reference. It doesn’t seem that Jeremiah 17:9 relates to constitutional separation of powers, but it actually does. Allow us to explain, but first let’s lay some groundwork.

When Progressives grasped the reins of common education in the early 1900s, they introduced profound systemic changes, including age-graded education (previously, students were grouped according to knowledge level rather than age level), compulsory education (school attendance had been generally voluntary), extended school years (school was often three months a year, but Progressives made it most of the year), and twelve years of government education (prior to the Progressives, virtually no one went past eight-grade learning levels, after which they would enter college or some trade or profession).<sup>3</sup> These changes were not because previous educational practices had been unsuccessful, for it had been just the opposite. In fact, few college graduates today can master the eighth-grade exit exam given in the early 1900s by most states,<sup>4</sup> when school only lasted for a few months a year and for only eight years.

Perhaps the most significant transformation imposed by Progressives was that students were no longer taught how to think, but rather how to learn. Instead of being trained to reason sequentially and study and confirm independent sources, students were now required to listen to what the teacher said and then repeat it back. Thus, true/false, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank tests were introduced,<sup>5</sup> for they did not require a mastery of subject-matter knowledge but rather only a mastery of whatever the teacher had said. By this change, the teacher became the small end of the funnel of knowledge – everything flowed through the teacher to the student. To invoke an old proverb, no longer did the student learn how to fish, but rather the teacher now gave them the fish. Because students were no longer trained in critical thinking, widespread indoctrination became the result – whatever the teacher believed was what was communicated to students, which they also came to believe. The warning by Jesus in Luke 6:40 had become reality: “Every student, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher.” Progressivism, liberalism, secularism, relativism, socialism, and other isms were now freely communicated to students by academia, and these beliefs have now thoroughly permeated the culture as those students’ become adults and filled various professions.

One teaching common among Progressives (and now widely believed even by many Christians) is that man is innately good but sometimes does bad things.<sup>6</sup> But the Bible teaches just the opposite – that man is innately bad but sometimes does good things; and that is only when man’s wicked heart is remade by God.

Under the Progressive belief, if man shoots someone, the problem is with the gun; since man is instinctively good, it can’t be his fault that something bad happened, so we need to regulate the gun, not the man. Or if someone gets drunk and abuses his spouse, it is because man has a medical disease beyond his control – it’s not his fault, for he is inherently good. Or if someone fathers a dozen children out of wedlock, it is because he was not given enough condoms in school. In short,

under Progressivism, if man does something bad, there was some outside cause for it, for man is inherently good.

But the Bible says just the opposite. Notice a few verses on this:

- Mark 7:21-23 – For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within. (Matthew 5:19)
- Genesis 6:5 & 8:21 – The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
- Romans 3:9 – It is written: “None is righteous, no, not one.” (c.f. Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3)
- Ecclesiastes 9:3 – The hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts.
- Galatians 5:19-21 – Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.
- Psalm 5:9 – For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

According to the Bible, man will only begin to do what is good when God changes his heart (see, for example Romans 6:6,16-17,19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:17, etc.). Without a life changed by God, mankind is naturally inclined to do what is wrong.

The Founders firmly held this Biblical view. They therefore constructed government fully expecting the worst – expecting that the people leading all three branches would become corrupt. Fifty-five hundred years of recorded history prior to the Founding Fathers had

demonstrated that as the pattern of every human government that had ever existed. Understanding this, the Founders made specific plans to help limit the inherent corruption of man and they sought ways to prevent all three branches from becoming wicked at the same time. They wanted a fail-safe so that if one did, then perhaps the other branches could restrain it or drag it back to its limited function. The result was the various clauses providing and enforcing Separation of Powers.

The following excerpt is from the Founders’ Bible and it explains how the truth inherent in Jeremiah 17:9 helped produce the constitutional separation of powers.

### **Jeremiah 17:9 – The Constitutional Separation of Powers**

*“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?”*

The separation of powers and reciprocal checks and balances incorporated throughout the Constitution has been heralded as one of the most important features of American government, enabling it not only to survive but to thrive for over two centuries. History was filled with examples showing that when government power was centralized in one body or leader, that government always became a danger to the rights of individuals and brought that nation to ruin. But the Founding Fathers had not only the examples of history to guide them but especially the teachings of the Bible.

A well-known verse addressing this subject was Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?” This verse encapsulated what Calvinistic ministers and theologians termed the “depravity of man” or “total depravity”<sup>7</sup> (that the natural heart of man easily embraced moral and civil degradation), and it was a frequent topic for sermons in the Founding Era. The Founding Fathers understood the import of this verse and openly cited it – as when John Adams reminded Americans:

“Let me conclude by advising all men to look into their own hearts, which they will find to be ‘deceitful above all things and desperately wicked’ [Jeremiah 17:9].”<sup>8</sup>

The Biblically illiterate believe in the innate goodness of man – that man will naturally do what is right, but experience regularly affirms the opposite: without a heart regenerated by the power of God, man will routinely do what is wrong. Adams specifically rejected any notion of the innate goodness of man, especially when it came to government:

“To expect self-denial from men when they have a majority in their favor, and consequently power to gratify themselves, is to disbelieve all history and universal experience – it is to disbelieve revelation and the Word of God, which informs us ‘the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked’ [Jeremiah 17:9]. . . . There is no man so blind as not to see that to talk of founding a government upon a supposition that nations and great bodies of men left to themselves will practice a course of self-denial is either to babble like a newborn infant or to deceive like an unprincipled impostor.”<sup>9</sup>

And even those who had experienced a regenerated heart through the power of God in Christ and who did not embrace Calvinism nevertheless knew enough about the truth of this verse and the tendencies of the heart to not even fully trust themselves to be above its corrupting influence. As John Quincy Adams explained:

“I believe myself sincere; but the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked [Jeremiah 17:9]. I do not believe the total depravity of man, but I am deeply conscious of the frailty of my own nature.”<sup>10</sup>

Understanding this principle from Jeremiah 17 – a principle that was accepted by all sides of the theological spectrum – the Founders knew that government would be much safer if all power did not repose in the same authority. Making practical application of this Biblical truth, they therefore divided and checked power between branches so that if one leader or branch went wicked, the other two might still check and stop it. As George Washington explained:

“A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power by dividing and distributing it into different depositories . . . has been evinced [demonstrated] by experiments ancient and modern, some of them in our country and under our own eyes.”<sup>11</sup>

This remarkable feature of American government – the separation of powers and reciprocal checks and balances – can be attributed to the Founders’ understanding of Jeremiah 17:9.

## Endnotes

1. For more information, see *The Founders' Bible* (Shiloh Road Publishers, 2012).
2. John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Charles Francis Adams, editor* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), Vol. III, p. 443, "On Private Revenge III," published in the *Boston Gazette*, September 5, 1763; John Adams, *A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* (London: John Stockdale, 1794), Vol. III, p. 289, "Letter VI. The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth, examined."
3. For more information, see "A Short History of United States' Education 1900 to 2006," [historyliteracy.org](http://historyliteracy.org) (accessed on September 7, 2016); "10 Things You Should Know About the American Founding," *The Catholic World Report*, July 3, 2012; "A campus shared by the College, the Academy and the Charity School," *Penn University Archives & Records Center* (accessed on September 7, 2016); "John Dewey," *Biography* (accessed on September 7, 2016).
4. See some examples of 8th grade exit exams in: B. A. Hathaway, *1001 Test Examples in Arithmetic with Answers* (Cleveland, OH: Burrows Brothers Company, 1890); *Warp's Review Books* (Minden, NE: Warp Publishing Company, 1928), on various subjects; *Colorado State Eighth Grade Examination Question Book* (Lincoln, NE: Lincoln Supply Co., 1927).
5. See, for example, *Colorado State Eighth Grade Examination Question Book* (Nebraska: 1927), pp. 4, 10, 12, questions from a 1927 Agriculture, Arithmetic, and Civics test; "true-false test," *Merriam-Webster* (accessed on September 7, 2016); "multiple-choice," *Merriam-Webster* (accessed on September 7, 2016).
6. See an example of this philosophy in Theodore Roosevelt, "Who is a Progressive?" *Teaching American History*, April 1912.
7. See, for example, "total depravity," *Merriam-Webster* (accessed on September 6, 2016); Herman Hanko, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (1976), "Chapter 1: Total Depravity."
8. John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Charles Francis Adams, editor* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), Vol. III, p. 443, "On Private Revenge III," published in the *Boston Gazette*, September 5, 1763.
9. John Adams, *A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* (London: John Stockdale, 1794), Vol. III, p. 289, "Letter VI. The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth, examined."
10. John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Charles Francis Adams, editor* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co, 1876), Vol. XI, p. 270, November 16, 1842.
11. George Washington, *Address of George Washington, President of the United States, and Late Commander in Chief of the American Army, to the People of the United States, Preparatory to His Declination* (Baltimore: Christopher Jackson, 1796), p. 22.

### Biblical References associated with the US Constitution

Biblical Reference	KJV	Constitution
Jeremiah 17:9	The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?	Separation of powers
Leviticus 19:34	But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.	Uniform immigration Laws – A1, S8, P4 <i>To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, ...</i>
Deuteronomy 17:15	Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.	President must be a natural-born citizen – A2, S1, P5. <i>No Person except a natural born Citizen ... shall be eligible to the Office of President</i>
Deuteronomy 17:6	At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.	Witnesses and capital punishment – A3, S3. P1. <i>No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.</i>
Ezekiel 18:20	The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.	Provision against attainder – A3, S3, P2 ... <i>but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.</i>
Isaiah 33:22	For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.	Three branches of government
Ezra 7:24	Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.	Tax exemptions for churches – 1 <sup>st</sup> Amendment <i>Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;</i> (Also the 16 <sup>th</sup> Amendment)
Exodus 18:21	Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:	Republicanism (elections at local, county, state, and federal levels) – A4, S4 – <i>The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government.</i> The Republican Form of government is one in which the powers of sovereignty are vested in the people and are exercised by the people, either directly, or through representatives chosen by the people, to whom those powers are specially delegated.
Exodus 18:21	Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; ...	A1, S8, P8 - <i>No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.</i>

**Sunday Exception Clause** – A1, S7, P2 - If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted)...

**Common Law Clause** – Amendment 7 - In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

**Oath Clauses** – A2, S1, P8 – Article 6, Amendment 4, Amendment 14

**Year of our Lord Clause** – done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Twelfth In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,