

THE STATESMAN

Volume 9 Issue 01 January 2005

Announcements:

We are happy to announce that George Wythe College is now holding classes in its new campus in the Providence Center at 970 South Sage Drive.

The Foothills of GREATNESS

The Transposition of Leadership in America

Erin Reynolds

On Campus Seminars:

- Mar 4-5 [How to Read a Book](#)
- Mar 7-8 [A Grand Strategy for the 21st Century](#)
- May 2-27 [Psychology II](#)
- May 30-31 [The Federalist Papers](#)
- July 15-16 [Transition to Scholar](#)
- July 4-Aug 3 [Youth for America \(6 seminars!\)](#)
- Aug 1-2 [The Bible on Politics](#)

For a Face to Face with Greatness seminar in your area, [click here.](#)

For a Statesmanship Seminar in your area, [click here.](#)

There are hills that nature or God demands we climb or become forever the less for having been carried over them.

John Taylor Gatto

June 15, 1215—Runnymede, Windsor Castle, London, England

Pavilions and tents dot the meadow; flags and banners wave in the summer air; General Fitzwalter is commander. There is no hostile army near at hand, nor will there be any clashing of arms on this [day] . . . and yet before the sun goes down the Army of God will win a great victory over the King of England, John Lackland, who is in the Windsor Castle, which overlooks the meadow from the south side of the river Thames, which comes down from the north-west and sweeps on to London . . . As this story goes on, it will be seen that the assembling of the Army of God in the meadow of Runnymede was the beginning of the liberty which we now enjoy.

Excerpt, The Story of Liberty, Charles C. Coffin, pp. 1-3

America's history is rich and complex. Her roots are varied and deep. What America has come to symbolize to herself and to the world is something greater than

can be expressed in a sentence, paragraph or book. What America becomes, and how she responds to a world as varied as she is, will be determined by how her people develop the legacy of leadership they have inherited.

As America led the world in establishing freedom for all, so her people now stand at a critical watershed moment. Those now at her helm have matured during a season of leadership fully disparate with the principles of America's foundation. The "leadership" they now know is most often at odds with the challenges they will come to know. Because of this, the task before these leaders is great: they face a time when individual identity never meant more and yet was never less understood; they greet a period where the idea of justice was never more powerful, and never more abused; and they must answer to a point in the history of the world where internal and external terrorist threats have never been greater.

The crises of economic, political and moral upheaval that rise to the forefront of American minds demand leadership that will vanquish the fears of the masses and focus their efforts on something of significance. As demands for national security become second only to the expectations of personal prosperity, many different methods will be used by these leaders in an effort to react to and reform a nation uncertain of her heritage and ignorant of her future. Regardless of how these leaders respond – to both the realized and imagined fears of the populace – their responses will differ from each other in the two following ways.

The first group of America's leaders – economic, civil, religious and entertainment – will continue to divest responsibility from themselves and spend their efforts reforming and reacting to a populace they appreciate only because of the position these people allow them to receive; all this in an effort to maintain their own position, wealth, power and prestige. At the same time, another, smaller group of leaders will begin to sense, as did the founders of America, the duty that the crises have borne upon them, the necessity of their effectual action, and the need to preserve morality and justice in their families, cities, nation and world.

Leaders of the latter mind set will not act in

response to a world threatened by evil and greed. Theirs will not be a reaction to a terrorist's threat or an economic crisis. Theirs will be the realization of a vision formed at their birth and framed before their conception. Theirs will be the fighting at the conclusion of a battle whose outcome is already determined and in a war that is already won. Most significantly, theirs will be the task of realizing service, of disenchanting evil, and of redirecting leadership in a time when only the foothills of greatness have been reached. Ahead of this nation a mountain lies, starker, straighter, and steeper than any mountain yet ascended by the human race. This mountain demands the ascent of millions. How will these leaders lead millions beyond currently perceived borders? How will they ascend higher than man ever has before? How will they realize a vision that is greater than they can now conceive, and will require more than they now possess? These leaders will do this, and more, by recognizing the transposition leadership has experienced in America, and by returning to the true roots of leadership upon which America was founded. The power to meet these challenges is inherent in the test that called them forth.

A brief examination of history shows that the order of leadership we now experience has been misunderstood and misapplied, and a new understanding of leadership and all that it implies must be achieved if we are to move beyond the foothills, and scale the peak that lies ahead. The cycle of leadership is exhibited again and again throughout history, on both a broad and a small scale. A brief overview of leadership in world history quickly shows the "cycle of leadership" played out on a broad scale.

Early leadership combined lineal heritage and "good works" as the proper foundation for good government and a successful life. For the first two thousand centuries of recorded history we find evidence that leadership was developed or determined largely in relation to these two things. Will Durant revealed one aspect of this when he wrote,

When Hecataeus of Miletus boasted to the Egyptian priests that he could trace his ancestry through fifteen generations to a god, they quietly showed him, in their sanctuaries, the statues of 345 high priests, each the son of

the preceding, making 345 generations since the gods had reigned on earth. (The Life of Greece, 68)

Plato's *Republic* also evinces the fact that these two things were critical in the utopian society he outlined. Strong blood-lines (though not necessarily "royal" ones) and virtuous habits were the foundation of the Republic; without these the validity of the Philosopher Kings, on whom this society depended, would crumble.

Leadership in the early Middle Ages consisted not so much in the hereditary legitimacy of one's rulers, but more so in the physical supremacy of one's leaders – this is evidenced during the age of the German conquerors and the native conquered (The Age of Faith, 646). Later in the 11th Century, a form of the middle class arose, and leadership was vested in, "the nobles, who fought." Beneath them were "the clergy, who prayed; and the peasants, who worked"(Ibid.) Nobility, or lineal legitimacy, was gaining influence. By the end of that same century we find that nobility and papal authority have overshadowed the idea of virtue legitimizing leadership, and the philosopher kings that Plato once envisioned were replaced by the ideal of a King who could conquer any foe and who achieved economic prosperity through war and rapine, thereby providing his subjects a degree of security and sense of gratitude that, if nothing else, at least they had been spared the fate of "the conquered."

By the 1700's the legitimacy of government estranged from virtue had been threatened, and by the end of the century replaced in America by leadership based entirely on morality and virtue, knowledge and wisdom. Reason demanded that man acknowledge "all men are created equal," and revelation inspired man to establish a state where man's inalienable rights would be protected.

History thus reveals an important principle in the cycle of leadership: we cease to lead as soon as we compel to follow. Leadership, then, springs from persuasion or convincing of the soul. As soon as force is used, leadership ceases and the structure of power is changed (as shown in the previous historical examples.) Ludwig von Mises once stated that individuals will seek to increase satisfaction by acting

to change any situation that is forced upon them. If this is true, it has great significance in understanding leadership. True leadership has a self-supporting, internal structure. The results of true leadership are evidence not only of great leaders, but also of great people. Herein lies the essence of the "cycle of leadership" – to the extent force is used upon a people, to that same extent leadership is forfeited and whatever that force is directed to, be it good or bad, will be opposed. This does not discount the power, place or use of force; it clarifies the importance of choice and the role of leadership. Principles of leadership are essential to good government, and the length and strength of a government are proportional to the presence of leadership versus force.

The Founders established leadership as the basis of government in America – leadership which necessarily supposed virtue, morality and justice. This sense of leadership was subsequently altered, first in the revolutionary war. This alteration is seen most clearly at the conclusion of that war, when the federal government began to be viewed as an entity instituted to fix the world's problems, instead of an entity designed to protect the institutions that ought to fix the world's problems. This altered view of leadership on the Federal level was preceded by the same view on a local level. Then during the First and Second World Wars American's understanding of leadership and government was further altered; a marked change can be seen in literature, music, education and entertainment by the conclusion of the Second World War.

During this time Communism, Fascism and Socialism each claimed to offer answers to societal problems and individual failings, but as the American experiment continued "democracy" won out, although with a different emphasis than had been advocated by America's founders. This democracy focused on self, versus society or service, and impacted America's view of leadership in relation to self. Education, religion and governmental programs evolved into a focus around the individual, his needs, his weaknesses, his yearnings and, above all, his rights. This focus on individualism at its worst was summarized by Nietzsche's statements, "God is dead," and, "Man is god." Christianity reacted in opposition to these statements, but it often did so in increasingly anti-

progressive ways.

To a great extent, religions legitimized the concerns of their congregations, but failed to provide a legitimate foundation of understanding to combat the effects of these concerns. The result of this was an increase in self-help and self-actualization books, resulting in a focus on self-achievement and the belief that the greatest leader was one who was “true to himself” – but a self that was bounded, ironically, by no self-restraint, and influenced by no force higher than, of course, himself.

This idea of self-help became more and more popular, and today it is neither surprising nor offensive to find a number of books on our own bookshelves on how to obtain the most out of life, and how to get the most from our jobs, relationships and religion. We yearn for and sense the truths that these books often contain, yet somehow fail to see the obvious gulf they do not fill, and the chasm they may easily cause us to develop in our own lives by assuming a foundation that does not exist, and implying a foundation that never can exist, thereby over rides the natural path of leadership. These books and courses almost invariably assume that a solid foundation of “self-confidence” will come from focusing on the self, or through a life focused on “getting,” and skip over the principle that giving and receiving are completely interconnected; these theories and methods eliminate, even before it is begun, an investigation into the realm of where an individual’s greatest joy is to be found – in giving.

Such a leap of logic directly impacts how society answers the perpetual questions of ownership, production and population growth. A nation that does not understand the foundation of its beliefs must, in order to continue to act in accordance with those beliefs, have *faith* that their foundations are true. What a society has faith in will determine how they will respond to perplexing societal questions, and will determine what that society values in life and in death. Turning again to an account written by Durant, we see the significance of this. Considering the history of the Catholic Church and its members Durant wrote, “To millions of souls the Church brought a faith and a hope that inspired and canceled death. That faith became their most precious possession, for which they would die or kill; and on that rock of hope the Church was

built” (The Age of Faith, 44).

Here we see that how a people die, or what they base their faith on, will largely determine how they will live. By considering Sparta, Rome, the early Christians, the pilgrims, etc. we find that although traditionally a relatively small amount of time was focused on death itself, yet when, where and how that event typically occurred in society played a huge role in shaping the lives and religion of the people of those societies. By examining societies throughout the history of the world we find that those most focused on material or political gain end inevitably in the dissolution of themselves. Ironically, when our lives, or societies, are most focused on getting without regard to giving, it is then that our ability to *receive* is most severely affected, and fatally influenced. When the leadership of a nation is focused on receiving at the expense of giving, that nation stands at the precipice of ignorance and the threshold of defeat.

In 1981 Joseph Jaworski, after years of sensing the lack of “servant leadership” in America and throughout the world, founded the American Leadership Forum. In doing so he brought together a significant group of influential leaders. In 1982 a group of these leaders identified eight propositions, each one specifying a considerable problem with American leadership. Their proposition number seven reads, “The trouble with American leaders is an insufficient appreciation of the relevance of stakeholders; of the implications of pluralism; and of the fact that nobody is in charge, and therefore each leader is partly in charge of situation as a whole.” (Synchronicity, 96)

Perhaps what these leaders were actually seeing was the presence of the view of leadership as a position, and the lack of understanding that leadership is in reality a relationship – it is a gift we give to ourselves and those around us. From this understanding we begin to see that because leadership is a gift, so it is bestowed *as* a gift, and this is most often in the family. The problems of leadership that exist in the home extend to the community, the nation, the world, and beyond. The significance of the presence of leadership in a nation is incalculable. True leadership implies individual and group responsibility – we are “each partly in charge of the situation as a whole.” This concurrent collective and individual

responsibility allows for growth that could not take place in the absence of either. Responsibility allows for progression – and digression – that is gained in no other way.

Another aspect of this “true” leadership is the principle that if something needs to change that change can always begin with us – a truth that is often forgotten or denied by today’s leaders. The fact that we recognize the need for change is evidence of the reality that we have the ability to influence that change, its direction, its speed, and its influence. That leadership was understood to be a gift and not a position in the founding of America is evidenced in the story of Abraham Clark. As a signer of the Declaration of Independence he risked his “life, fortune, and sacred honor” as a gift to his fellow countrymen. When his sons were captured by the British, threatened with death, and then promised release on the condition of their father’s recant of his signature of that document, Clark refused.

Had his leadership been a matter of position he could readily have withdrawn his signature from the Declaration, and stated that familial livelihood demanded he do so. But because he, and others, recognized leadership to be relationship, Clark evidenced that any withdrawal of his word would be a denial of more than his own sacred honor, and would involve the virtue of each of his fellow countrymen. His responsibility was not limited to receiving the benefits of leadership, but extended to giving of self with greater regard to duty than to reward. His actions were a gift to his fellow countrymen, and were a tacit request that they respond to the call of leadership with the same conviction he had shown. Although this is but one example of the role leadership played in early America, many instances exist throughout the history of the world that evidence this principle of leadership as a gift, rather than a receipt. It is not a coincidence that the greatest leaders our world has known, from Socrates to Joan of Arc, from Lincoln to the greatest leader of all, Jesus Christ, each gave their all, ending with their lives, for their fellow men.

The sooner we understand leadership to be a relationship and not a position, the sooner it is understood that this life cannot be about what we have obtained, but is in fact about what we have

finally given. What we have in the end obtained, in fact, will be the truest reflection of what we have given. Too often we measure what a person has received as indications of his success; we do so only because we are inherently short-sighted, and it is much easier for us to measure the stature of a man, than the dimensions of a soul. We know the causal relationship of value, because we have witnessed it in our own lives. But as our lives progress we easily lose the remembrance that the worth of all we possess is directly proportional to what we have given for it.

As significant as those battles that scarred the earth, severed the lives of thousands, and desolated the land, are those battles that did not take place – the battles that were never fought due to preparation, wisdom and sacrifice of virtuous leaders. And greater than those leaders who led thousands of men and elephants over the Alps, who conquered the pagans and captured the barbarians, greater than those who commanded at Gettysburg and Valley Forge, is the Leader who conquered, though he commanded no earthly army, and who gave all, though he received but little from his fellowmen. The battle of Runnymede may mark the beginning of American liberty – but if it does so, it is because that event symbolizes the supremacy of virtue over vice, and the power of service over selfishness. An army greater than that “Army of God” must arise; it will be composed of those leaders whose vision of the future is greater than their present fears. They will know themselves better than have any other leaders before – because that is how they will know their God.

America is great because she is good, and America is good because of what was given at her founding. The legacy of leadership inherited from her forefathers will continue to demand virtue, wisdom, diplomacy and courage, and all of these in greater abundance than have ever before been exhibited. Though still at the foothills of greatness, we must exhibit virtuous leadership and be ready and willing to give all that will be required.

Works Cited

Coffin, Charles C., *The Story of Liberty* (Gainesville, Florida: Maranatha, 1987).

Durant, Will, *The Age of Faith* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1950).

Durant, Will, *The Life of Greece* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1939).

Jaworski, Joseph, *Synchronicity: The inner path of leadership* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1998).

For more newsletters, [click here.](#)