

THE STATESMAN

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Pride

By Melanie Ballard

I see, feel and hear.

The thoughts flow.

I'm better.

I'm worse.

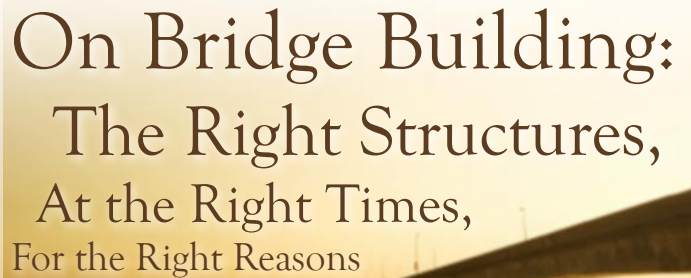
I'm right.

He worships T.V.

She spent too much.

I stop. . . and try to think again.

[Full Poem on Page 5](#)



**On Bridge Building:
The Right Structures,
At the Right Times,
For the Right Reasons**

By Steve Palmer

The purpose of a statesman or stateswoman is to build bridges—bridges between what is and what should be, between estranged individuals, between conflicting cultures, between opposing classes and races, between clashing historical forces. An education designed for statesmanship, then, will give the student the requisite tools and knowledge that will allow her to be an effective bridge builder. But as we teach aspiring statesmen and stateswomen, we must always remember that the single most important distance that any of us can bridge—ininitely more important than any other—is the distance between heaven and earth.

A prospective statesman's relationship with God is infinitely more critical than his relationship with Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, Washington, Churchill, or even a live mentor. In fact, it is his relationship with God that determines the quality, impact, and longevity of all his other relationships. A student with a strong and active relationship with God will be more in tune with her mission, will study longer and harder, and will have much more impact than the student who shirks in her duties to God. A student with a deep and broad classical liberal arts education, but without a relationship with God, is ineffectual at the least, and dangerous at the worst. It would be like a person being given an expensive sports car without keys, or handing the keys to that sports car to a 10



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On Campus Seminars:

Apr 16-21	<u>Statesmanship Invitational 2007</u>
Apr 23-28	<u>Hebrew</u>
May 1-26	<u>Psychology</u>
May 2-25	<u>The Founders' Constitution</u>
May 10-12	<u>Statesmen Retreat – Rethinking Leadership</u>
May 18-19	<u>Thomas Jefferson Education Convention</u>
May 21-22	<u>The Anti-Federalist</u>
Jun 7-8	<u>Core & Love of Learning</u>
Jun 7-16	<u>Youth For America</u>
Jun 11-12	<u>The Love of Learning Transition To Scholar</u>
Jun 14-15	<u>Scholar Phase</u>
Jul 27-28	<u>How to Read a Book</u>
Jul 9-28	<u>The Mountain Seminar</u>
Jul 19-Aug 3	<u>Archimedes Seminar</u>
Jul 9-Aug 3	<u>Freshman Prep</u>
Aug 13-29	<u>War</u>

For the complete list of all GWC on campus Seminars [click here](#).

Other Events:

Apr	<u>First Annual Thomas Jefferson Education Forum - In Southern California</u>
Jun	<u>European Field Experience</u>
Jul 16-17	<u>Liber League Summit</u>

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year-old child; the one doesn't have the ability to drive the car, and the other may be able to drive it but will kill people in the process.

The purpose of acquiring a world-class, statesman's education is *not* primarily to amass large amounts of so-called knowledge; those who believe this invariably end up, as Plato wrote in *Apology*, "...thinking that they are something when they are really nothing." The purpose of gaining a superlative education is to earn the right to approach God in our moments of greatest need, and with complete honesty be able to figuratively look Him in the eye and without reservation say, "I've done *everything* that I know how to do—You must do the rest." It is to demonstrate that we have paid the price, taken utmost responsibility, and then have been humble enough to admit that we can't do it alone, without our humility degenerating into escapism. It is to earn the right and develop the ability to bridge the gap between heaven and earth.

The Dangers of False Allegiances

Those who develop the ability to merge heaven and earth will create generational legacies impacting millions. But for those who do not, the cost is high. They will build half-bridges with half-truths. They may half-heartedly reach toward heaven in an hour of extreme need, but will find that heaven does not reciprocate because they were not worthy of it. They will leave gaps that no mortal can fill. Their legacy will be "almost, but not quite," which is a deeper tragedy than not trying at all. Can you imagine how that would feel? To come so close to saving the world through sheer personal effort, and then watch with an unforgivable disappointment as it disintegrates because we thought we could do it alone?

The ranks of those would-be statesmen who fail in fulfilling their duties to God include pedantic academics, narrow-minded businessmen, compromising politicians, "benevolent" tyrants, and unprincipled, sacrificial social workers.

Academics certainly have their place, and I don't want to be guilty of undervaluing education. However, there is a danger when we are not able to place education in context. The academics I speak of are the prideful and arrogant members of the so-called intelligentsia

who rarely offer solutions themselves, but are quick to point out when the men and women of action are doing something wrong in the eyes of the intellectuals. They are those who cower into the supposed security of intellectualism as a way to escape the responsibility of acting. They want to be the saviors offering advice without being accountable for the implementation of their advice. They look at people and situations in an objective, idealized, and sterile environment detached from the messiness of practical affairs. They may be practiced visionaries, yet they lack the fortitude and ability to bring their vision to pass through sustained effort in the trenches of practical daily action.

Statesmen and women must be both thinkers and doers. As Theodore Roosevelt said, “It is not the critic that counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again—because there is not effort without error and shortcomings—but he who does actually strive to do the deed, who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause. Who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

Having said this, however, it must also be stressed that there is an opposite danger to the academic critic, and that is the uneducated man or woman of action. To possess knowledge without taking corresponding action is irresponsible, yet to act without knowledge is foolish and dangerous. The world is full of uneducated entrepreneurs, for example, who are great at taking action, but are impatient with obtaining a valuable education which would greatly enhance their ability to act. Theirs is the school of hard knocks—which has its merit—but is limited by its very nature. They are limited by their own experience, and don’t take time to learn from the experience of others who have gone before. And if they do, it is usually from a narrow spectrum of people who have achieved success in business, but who are not great examples of statesmanship. They may be able to run a profitable

business, but they don’t know how to use business as a tool to deeply improve society.

As limited as uneducated businessmen are, they are not nearly as harmful as the compromising politicians. Politicians are anxious for positions and titles without developing the ability to handle them. Their focus is on the glory, not the cause. They are about gaining and maintaining personal power, not on making an impact. When any proposal arises, they ask, “What’s in it for me?” not “Is it right?” Politicians are about looking good, not doing good. Their allegiance is usually themselves and/or other people, and not God.

Politicians are deceptively ingratiating weasels whose harm is generally indirect; benevolent tyrants are wolves in sheep’s clothing who cause direct and immediate harm. Benevolent tyrants oppress people in the name of helping them. Alexander Hamilton displayed his understanding of this when he wrote in *The Federalist Papers*, “...a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people, commencing demagogues and ending tyrants.”

Unprincipled social workers seem relatively harmless on the surface, yet when an entire culture embraces a false sense of government-sponsored philanthropy, the long-term consequences are an irresponsible society operating under a crippling sense of entitlement. The desire to lift and serve others is good, but the danger from the group I speak of comes from using government force to impose their sense of morality upon the populace. This degenerates into a moral cannibalism that ultimately destroys the society. When the true sense of public virtue is distorted and counterfeited to become forced wealth distribution, the virtue is lost and replaced with resentment and anger by those forced to give, and the loss of dignity and self-reliance of those who depend on the givers. False charity destroys those who know how to fish at the expense of those waiting for fish to be given

to them. The cruel irony is that the people who are hurt the most by forced welfare schemes are the same people that misplaced charity is precisely designed to help. People who set out to “serve society” and who do not operate under moral principles inevitably seek to “lift” the bottom by forcefully taking from the top. The result is a miserable mediocrity for all.

All of the above counterfeits result from good-intentioned people not having the proper allegiance—God—and therefore not being able to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. Heaven only speaks to those who listen, and those with allegiances to self and/or others only heed the voice in their head or the voices of the crowd. Without the ability to merge heaven with earth, a world-class statesman’s education ultimately damns the person receiving it and damages everyone with whom they associate.

A person who gains an education for the purpose of self-aggrandizement is better off—and so is the world at large—not pursuing it at all. They are like the people who, in Christ’s parable of the sower in the book of Matthew, receive the word amongst thorns and, in the words of Christ, “...heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” After all, continued Christ, “...what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

The purpose of a statesman’s education is—or should be—to develop the ability and earn the right to seek and acquire the help of God in any endeavor. Understanding what de Tocqueville says about democracy, or what Tolstoy teaches of aristocracy must be subordinate to what God says about His laws and your mission. As deep and impactful as they are, *Democracy in America* or *War and Peace* are poor substitutes for direct revelation from the Source of all classics, who is able to put the classics in context. Without God as a foundation and guide, our education will mirror the efforts of the builders of the Tower of Babel—reaching for heaven with the wrong structures and for the wrong purposes, and our “wisdom of men” being scattered to the winds of popular opinion.

Conclusion

In three years at George Wythe College I have

read over 150 classic books with topics including philosophy, theology, history, government, economics, politics, business, personal finance, psychology, self-improvement, literature, biography, and family relations. But aside from the relatively decent amount of knowledge I have gained, there is one experience that stands out above all else.

The single most powerful experience that I have had at George Wythe College occurred in the Constitutional Convention of 2006. For days, over 150 people waded and fought through confusion, frustration, insecurity, and the hostility that comes from thinking that we knew everything, that if only we could convince the group that **our** idea, **our** plan, **our** solution would save the world. We tried so hard—but of course in vain—when we labored under the lie that we knew anything. We debated heatedly, we quoted assiduously from our favorite classics, and we reasoned and argued until we were blue in the face.

Then, in the middle of the contention, backbiting, and politicking, the awful moment arrived when we were collectively overcome with the deep and intensely humbling recognition that **we knew nothing. We knew nothing and we knew that we knew nothing as deeply as anyone can know anything.** The debating quieted, the long-held and fiercely contended beliefs surrendered impotently to the realization of our ignorance, and our pathetic arguments were revealed for the naked egoisms that they were.

And then, in the depths of our abject humility, we collectively bowed and knelt before the Source of all Truth, all Knowledge, and all Wisdom and pled our case before Him. We fully understood what Abraham Lincoln meant when he said, “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.”

The answers came quickly and unmistakably. The confusion, anger, and frustration vanished and were instantly replaced with peace, harmony, and inspiration. Calm faith replaced anxious desperation. Never in my entire life have I witnessed a scene where over 150 people were on the same page, striving toward a common goal with nothing but love and humility in the ranks. The Cause moved forward, the delegates were united, the solutions were Divine. The

Constitution was no longer “my” document or “her” idea, but His and ours. Not only was there synergy between the delegates, but there was also synergy between heaven and earth.

This didn’t happen because of our knowledge of Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Montesquieu, Madison, Toffler, and Bobbitt. It happened because we collectively bridged the gap between heaven and earth. Studying the classics was but one small step toward being worthy of a bridge being extended to us from heaven. And as we bridged that most important gap, we could tangibly see the other governmental and societal bridges being built, almost in spite of us. It happened because we, through our diligent study, deep pondering, and pure hard work, were able to approach our Father and say with all honesty and sincerity, “We’ve done *everything* we are able. It’s Your turn now. You must fill in the gaps of our weaknesses.” Heaven touched earth, even if briefly, and the result was nothing short of miraculous. We may have paid a small price through our study of the classics, but the classics were not, in the end, what gave us the answers we so desperately needed.

An aspiring statesman who knows the classics but who is a stranger to God is not a statesman at all—he is an ineffective politician, a dangerous tyrant, or both. Students of the classics who do not seek the mind and will of God will get surface-level understandings of the classics at best. Acquiring a world-class education is not so much to fill our heads with knowledge, as it is to earn the right to call on heaven in our hour of greatest need. We can’t know—and aren’t expected to know—everything, but God does expect us to prove to Him that we are worthy of His help by our diligence in seeking answers.

Let us remember the wisdom of Winston Churchill who said, “To every man there comes...that special moment when he is figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered the chance to do a special thing unique to him and fitted to his talent. What a tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared or unqualified for the work which would be his finest hour.” Let us never forget that the most critical preparation for an aspiring statesman is to learn how to bridge the gap between heaven and earth.

Pride - Full Poem

Pride

By Melanie Ballard

I see, feel and hear.

The thoughts flow.

I’m better.

I’m worse.

I’m right.

He worships T.V.

She spent too much.

I stop. . . and try to think again.

He’s doing well.

Don’t compare yourself to her.

They may be right--let me reconsider.

He is a potential god.

I want to help her smile.

But still they come.

My kids are better than yours.

He’s not following the handbook.

Don’t they know my family is

more important than that,

and their families should be too?

She isn’t . . .

I am . . .

. . .

Please, Lord, help me.