

THE STATESMAN

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Dear Parents
of Future Statesmen,



Youth for America (YFA) is a great way to experience a leadership education. Youth from all over come together for 2-3 days and participate in simulations, colloquium, lectures, discussions, and are mentored by a counselor.

The youth come away from YFA with a sense of mission, a vision of the genius inside, friendships that last a life time, and a deeper understanding of how education impacts every aspect of their lives and a better understanding of their role in their family and community.

In the words of some of the youth, counselors and parents:

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MORAL BEINGS AND THE LAW

Steve Farrell

I am always puzzled by the query, “Why do you Christians insist on legislating morality?”

I suspect those who ask it are equally perplexed by my terse response: “That’s what men do, Christians and non-Christians alike. We are all moral beings.”

Let me explain what I mean by first emphasizing why we have laws and governments in the first place. Celebrated 17th Century English political philosopher John Locke noted:

The great and chief end ... of men’s uniting ... under government, is the preservation of their property. To which in the state of nature there are many things wanting. First, [the establishment of] settled, known law, received and allowed by common consent to be the standard of right and wrong ... (1)

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This is the ABC's of law: Government is instituted to protect property (broadly defined in the 1600's to include besides land and possessions: life, limb, conscience, and family), by consent (fulfilling the moral requirement of 'legitimacy'), under a set of laws that reflect a commonly held standard of right and wrong, or in other words, a common standard of morality.

This is no less true if the lawmaker defends socialism (the morality of "the ends justify the means"), utilitarianism (the morality of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number"), pure democracy (the morality of "the voice of the majority is the voice of God") or any other system or personal crusade that calls itself right or just or merciful or fair or better or best. All such standards, ideals, and comparisons are moral comparisons, and as such are about legislating morality whether their advocates admit it or not.

The connection between morality and law gets even more basic when we dig deeper and ask, "Why it is that men care about life, liberty, conscience, and family in the first place? – the animals, fowls, fish, and insects don't."

A simple response from American founder James Madison is: the beasts, birds, bees, and fish constitute "the irrational creation;" man, "the rational," or what he calls "moral persons" and "moral beings." (2)

Which takes us back to square one. So what is

a moral being? A nearly universal definition from 1888 answers: “Man is a moral being, that is, he has a sense of right and wrong.” (3)

Likewise, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defined “rational” as “endowed with reason,” and then defined “reason,” as “a faculty of the mind by which it distinguishes truth from falsehood, and good from evil, and which enables the possessor to deduce inferences from facts or from propositions.”

“Conscience,” another word typically brought into such founding era discussions was defined by that same Webster’s Dictionary as:

Internal or self-knowledge, or judgment of right and wrong; or the faculty, power or principle within us, which decides on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our own actions and affections, and instantly approves or condemns them. Conscience is called by some writers the ‘moral sense,’ and considered as an original faculty of our nature.

The ability to discern between right and wrong, good and evil, fact and error, endowed from our Maker with these things at birth – this is rational man, a moral being.

Yet a moral being is more than this. Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1832 classic, “Democracy in America,” observed that “Although man has many points of resemblance with the brute creation one characteristic is peculiar to

himself – he improves: they are incapable of improvement.” (4)

De Tocqueville was reflecting on the Christian belief in the perfectibility of man, which he noted was “one of the principle notions the intellect can conceive,” a notion that found its greatest field of play in The United States, where liberty and class mobility put no stops on mankind’s upward reach. (5)

Or to put it a different way, men are called by the Lord through his prophets to strive for perfection, but are also prompted, believer and non-believer alike, by “a sense” – the moral sense – planted within every person at birth to do something positive, something stretching, something splendid with themselves.

All fine and good; but whether men choose to so respond is quite another matter – for moral beings also have free will. Jefferson taught: “Almighty God hath created the mind free.” (6) And in our day President Ronald Reagan seconded: “[T]he Almighty ... gave us free will, the power under God to choose our own destiny.” (7)

In a world filled with opposites (such as good and evil) that beckon us, reason and free will ensure that man’s destiny is either: good or evil, prosperous or poor, free or slavish.

“Men are free to choose,” says one volume of early American scripture, but not free to escape consequences that can range from

“[L]iberty and eternal life” on the one hand to “captivity and death” on the other. (8) No trivial distinction.

In sometimes subtle, sometimes flagrant exhibitions we witness the same in our neighbors, associates, friends, and adversaries. C.S. Lewis warned, “[R]emember, the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which ... you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.” (9)

It is mostly in response to the nightmares of this world, that is, men and women whose devilish choices wreak private and public injury that victims, neighbors, and responsible observers feel a sense of alarm, moral outrage, and duty – and consequently turn to law and government for relief, protection, fair play, and justice.

This, we all do, and have always done, by one approach or another, appealing to one set of laws or another, in defense of one system of morality or another; for we are – every one of us – moral beings endowed by a Common Father with a higher sense that calls us to live a little bit better, a little bit higher, a little bit more civilized than the beast and his brutish law of the jungle.

NewsMax.com pundit Steve Farrell is associate professor of political economy at George Wythe College, the editor of The Liberty

Letters (LibertyLetters.blogspot.com), and the author of the highly praised inspirational novel, “Dark Rose.”

Footnotes:

1. Locke, John. “Second Treatise on Political Government,” chapter 9.
2. Madison, James. “The Federalist Papers,” Number 54. See also, “Writing of James Madison,” Volume IV, 1835, Sovereignty.
3. “Contributor, Volume IX,” March 1888, No. 5.
4. De Tocqueville, Alexis. “Democracy in America,” Volume 2, Chapter 8.
5. Ibid.
6. Jefferson, Thomas. “Writings of Thomas Jefferson,” Volume II, Appendix, No. III, “An Act for Establishing Religious Freedom,” 1786.
7. “The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States,” “Public Papers of Ronald Reagan,” March 6, 1984.
8. 2 Nephi 2:27, “The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. Salt Lake City, Utah, first published in 1830.”
9. Lewis, C.S. “The Weight of Glory,” New York, Macmillan, 1949, pgs. 14-15.

YFA Continued

“YFA really is incredible- I was talking to one of my friends from YFA about how much it had changed both of our lives when I began thinking of all the great friends I have now who happened to be at that first YFA five years ago... Without a doubt, the YFA-ers I know are, as a group, some of the most inspiring people in my life, and my best friends. I just can't even express how much I have learned from it all and the awesome part is that it isn't just learning; it's living. Beginning to discover my mission as a participant, and helping other kids find theirs as a counselor gave me a reason to live, and love every moment of life!”

-Jordan Harmer (participant/counselor)

“YFA and the people who have organized it have changed my life. Like the great centers of old, YFA is a meeting place of wonderful souls. The spirit of greatness permeates where ever great people meet to serve their creator.”

-Robert Burton (participant/counselor)

“I have never felt a greater power or spirit than the one found here at YFA. It's hard to explain what happens to the air- it's a physical change almost. Every time you inhale it- you can't help but to be different...better. I have felt a call, more than ever, to inspire greatness in others. I've been reminded of the greatness and genius inside of myself as well and suddenly the path before me is a little clearer than it was before.”

-Heather Sadleir (participant/counselor)

“YFA was amazing! It changed my life in so many ways. I saw things in myself that I had never seen before. I met amazing people, and I gained a whole new faith in this generation. The world is going to be okay. The simulations were engaging, and I was blown away by the youth. The colloquium brought me to a whole new level and helped me to step out as a leader, as

well as gave me a new way of looking at the books. I became good friends with my kids, and had some good heart to heart talks with them. I also realized much more fully what it truly means to depend on God, and how it is Him, and not I, that makes the difference in peoples lives and changes them forever.”

-Jonathan Dueck (participant/counselor)

“YFA was a fun and life changing experience. I made a lot of friends and I really liked the simulations. The counselors were awesome. I came home and made a commitment to myself about SAY-GO-BE-DO and am still living it!”

-Jacob Earl (participant)

“I don't know if things were different this year at YFA for you who were involved, but WOW! Our kids came back with a totally different experience... it seemed to be so much deeper. My son couldn't stop talking about the book discussions and how he saw how he needed to study more and work on his mission. It was really fantastic... My son was so excited to see and know all these other kids from all over the country who were working just like we are to become statesmen and women.”

-Sheree Gaughan (mother)

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Kami Mitchell
YFA Director

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