

George Wythe College 2006 Commencement Address

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A Renaissance of Kings

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I wonder how many people know that we're at war. In fact, we've been at war for some time now, and many of us are wondering when it will end. For ages now, good men and women have toiled their lives away seeking solutions and drafting battle plans in the hopes of a final and complete victory. Often skirmishes involving bows and bullets and bombs distracted their work, but soon they were back on task—thinking, drafting, teaching, living, serving and making every effort to vanquish the foe.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,” said Paul as he stood on the Ionian Coast almost two thousand years ago, “but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world ...”

I lately embarked upon a study of intellectual elites of the 20th Century. These were men and women, Americans and non-Americans who had supposedly studied really hard and knew a great deal. It troubled me some because so many of them expressed an almost flippant cynicism toward God, Religion, Spirituality, Personal Mission, and the idea of living your life to make a real difference in the world.

One said, “The act of worshipping, as carried on by Christians, seems to me debasing rather than ennobling.” Another said, “Life is a racket...take nothing serious, for nothing is certainly depending on this generation...Don't have an ideal to work for. That's like riding toward a mirage...”

My study wasn't all that bad; I learned quite a bit. But why does it seem that as we gain knowledge we lose hope and faith?

It seems like the smarter we get, the more cynical we become. It seems like the more knowledge we acquire, the less hope we have. On the other hand, it's also true that when hope and faith have been strong, we tend look at the acquisition of knowledge as meaningless and often even unholy.

You could say that Greece taught us to use our minds at the expense of our hearts; and that the Roman Church rescued the heart, but denied the mind. You could look at 14th Century Europe and claim that our minds were once again rescued. But that modern enlightenment—of which we are still a part—while giving us so much, has also taken from us.

I think I know why the writings of many of those intellectuals were filled with such cynicism. I think I understand something that needs to be considered more fully than in times past.

So, consider two reasons and two solutions.

First, there is something deep within each of us that knows we are at war against the darkness of this world. It's not hard to see. It confronts us everyday in the choices we make, in the lives we live. We daily see the darkness around us; we daily take action that we hope will dispel it. Sometimes our actions are successful, and sometimes they make things

worse. Often we get lost in the whole mess and nothing seems to make sense anymore.

We are not the only generation that has fought this darkness. Ancient Greeks sensed the darkness and sought to diminish it by increasing knowledge and seeking for beauty and harmony. Ancient Rome tried to fight it by setting up systems of government that they hoped would reign in the darkness. They forced lesser states into their parental arms; they fought other men who seemed to them to exhibit the traits of this darkness. The Roman church fought against darkness by darkening the mind in hopes of softening the heart. Blind faith was the way. And during the Italian Renaissance, and later throughout Europe, there was a brief effort to combine faith and reason; but that quickly gave way to an enlightenment that almost completely destroyed faith.

One of the graduates sitting with us today articulated it this way: He said, “The people we see as our enemies are not our enemies at all. The people are the prize. They are the ground we must take; they are the victory.”

What this brilliant statesman was saying is that darkness is the enemy--darkness of the mind and of the heart, darkness in ourselves and in others.

Other than the power of knowing that there is a battle raging, and that the winner will claim our very souls, consider what it means to have an army of principles and an arsenal of light. The right kind of education is an essential part of the solution to this war against darkness. An education for a time like this is both biological and biopathical. It is not just understanding life with our minds, but with our hearts also. It is not limited to cells, tissues and organs, but to relationships. An education for a time like this must focus on knowledge AND character, on books AND people, and on relationships that combine life forces not just to get a job—that part is relatively easy—but to combat darkness.

So the first reason for the cynicism we see in the world is that we are at war with darkness. And getting an education that strengthens the mind and the heart helps us to see our fellow man not as the enemy, as some would have us believe, but as the prize. We need an education that helps us see the real wars so that we can fight the real enemy. Do you see the cynicism that can come from misunderstanding the real war and misinterpreting the real enemy? When moving forward with that misunderstanding, we fight, build, kill and destroy, and very little gets better because of it. Although the material well-being of the so-called victors may improve after a war of bullets, much of our lives suffer because we are fighting the wrong enemy.

Consider the second reason for the cynicism in the world being that there is something deep within each of us that calls us to be heroes in the fight. Another way of saying it is that we were meant to be great and to do great things. This is the second root cause of the cynicism. People believe the call to greatness in their youth and then become disillusioned at the realization that they can never really turn the tide; they can never really be the hero. It's too overwhelming. It's too hard.

Do you think the intellectual who said that nothing is depending on this generation **always** believed that?

We were meant to be heroes in this fight against darkness. But we, too, will become cynical if we don't grasp the new battle plan. Every person you know will lose his sense of mission, and will cease to believe that his life will ever really matter unless we all consider the emerging strategy.

The emerging strategy I speak of, is already happening. Like Dante and Petrarch in the early 14th Century, we are part of something that we don't even realize. The winning march is in our hearts but we haven't yet given it a name, and we would be surprised at how many others are feeling it, too. It is the policy that

conquers the cynicism of my intellectual friends, and wins the war that has been fought from the beginning.

Now, I know it is a bold thing to say, but I firmly believe that something is happening. A new Renaissance, only this time it is based, not on the iconic and monarchic model of a single hero making a bold move that changes the world. That may or may not happen. But the model, the strategy, is that for the first time in recorded history the masses come of age, learn of their own virtue, and change the landscape of the world with strength like a herd of mighty buffalo.

The new strategy is that the masses will finally become the heroes that they were always meant to become; their great deeds will be small but significant. And coupled with the small but significant deeds of first hundreds, then thousands, then millions of others, they will change the world.

Here's how I believe it will work. If you consider all of the known history of our human family, all of the injustices, the persecutions, the oppressions, I think you will agree that everyday people like you and me are living in a pocket of time that is relatively safe. Our dangers present themselves in distractions, not inquisitions, in apathy and skepticism, not persecutions. So for a while at least, we are safe to think, say and do what we will.

The real power in world affairs has always been embedded in the everyday, common people. **The masses have always possessed the bulk of the heart, might and strength. Lacking only the mind, they have been ruled over.** Even when the world tried democracy, it wasn't long before we were only virtual participants in government—letting others make decisions for us, listening to the experts who surely knew what was best.

The world is different from past times. We have access to greater libraries than the kings of Europe, and greater opportunities for education than the Greek Nobles of the Golden Age. I predict that we are in the beginnings of what will someday be known as a Renaissance of Kings (and you must understand that the original meaning of king meant a man **and** a woman who gave and protected life). Our virtue dictates that we were born to be kings and queens—not to rule over others, nor to be ruled by others, but to give life and to make life better by the use of our noble minds and hearts. We were born to be noble fathers and mothers who rear their princes to goodness, knowledge, leadership and action. Jesus said that he came not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly. Jesus understood because he is a King.

Remember that the first difference with the coming Renaissance of Kings is that the kings and queens moving the renaissance forward are regular, everyday people who learn what it takes to be who they were created to be.

The second difference is people realize that a life of purpose may or may not yield enormous and iconic impact, but it will always lead to small and significant impact. And since we reject the notion of a single king, or a single hero (at least as seen in anything but God), the masses finally see their power to change the world with millions of noble lives.

It is important that you understand this concept, and so I want to say it again in another way. Most of the people you know, yourself included, will be tempted to stop seeing life as a mission. They will be tempted to give up on living a life of purpose. A paralyzing cynicism will likely infect all of us because we will base our judgments of success on the old model where there is one king and one hero, and realizing that we could never be that one. Or the current model where there are no kings and no heroes—our goal then becomes getting from here to death as painlessly as possible.

The new model is that we were all meant to be kings—not one of us, all of us. We were all meant to engage in a life of purpose, and if we do that, the aggregate will literally change the landscape of the world. Darkness will begin a massive retreat. It is our responsibility, our duty, to dedicate our lives to making a small but significant difference in the world.

You see, for so many years, those with the mind ruled those with the heart, might and strength. The small elite told the bulk of our human family that they were the kings, and that they were the ones who could do great things and make the lives of the masses better. Those small elite made us think of our lives as insignificant and our actions possibly as good, but never great. But for the first time, many of us are getting the mind. We are adding that mind to our hearts, our might and our strength. For the first time we are realizing that if we will simply dedicate our lives to doing great things—small as they may be—we really do have the power to change the world.

In the emerging Renaissance of Kings, everyday people realize that their creator intended them from the very beginning to be kings and queens within the governance of their families, and priests and priestesses in the spiritual realm of their homes. Armed with this understanding, they dedicate their lives to making a small but significant difference in the world. Some are starting schools, some study groups, some children's organizations, and many are no longer working as merely a revenue source, but are now changing businesses for the better from within, or starting and owning businesses of their own, as well as non-profits bent on service.

In this Renaissance of Kings, common people like you and me realize that we are not common at all, but noble. We realize that in addition to seeking and fulfilling our personal missions in life, we must also do everything in our power to help others fulfill theirs. We have seen the annals of the human family with self-centered men seeking to place themselves

above others, and in the new renaissance, this is seen as a huge mistake. The small but significant work we are dedicated to fulfilling must be coupled with the small but significant work of thousands of others to win the war. Sometimes we will work together, sometimes separately, but we must recognize the critical nature of each others' successes.

Right now the masses of this human family of ours feel something, but they don't know what to do. They sense a need, but they feel powerless to fill it. But the secret is getting out. When Daniel, Timothy and John spoke of Jesus Christ as the King of kings, do we really think what they meant was that Jesus was the King of the various leaders of Europe. To Christians, Jews, Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists and American Indians alike, Jesus taught us that we were all born kings and queens. Furthermore, the mission of Jesus Christ could be said to be entirely that—to turn our hearts, our minds, and our hands into those of true kings.

Why is there cynicism in the world? Why are people so despondent? Why do so many hide their feelings of failure in mean amusement or grand opulence? **Because most of us are not yet doing that which we were created to do.** We are not yet becoming the kings and queens our creator intended us to become. We are caught up in the wars of men, and have almost completely forgotten the war for men's souls.

What do the masses begin to do in this Renaissance of Kings? One writes a book, another runs for office, and another builds a charity organization. Some start businesses, employing the young or inexperienced only long enough that they can gather the knowledge and resources needed to start their own. Many decide to get a real education in a subject that matters. Some start book groups that discuss this Renaissance of Kings and awkwardly but steadily work to become the kings and queens they feel called to become. Most seek to get out of debt; some start schools, and others focus on raising a family of princes and

princesses who are equipped to take their place in the battle against darkness.

In the Renaissance of Kings, the common woman is compelled and empowered to compose a symphony, write a poem, or paint a work of art that moves us all to greater nobility. Physical and spiritual sickness presents itself and a common man determines to discover a cure.

Following the lead of the King of kings, Christians, Moslems, Jews, Sikhs and Hindus alike set out with great force to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, liberate the captive, educate the ignorant, and to lift the downtrodden. In our small but significant way, we love, give and serve. And for the first time, the masses are poised to do these things with the heart, might, mind and strength that will change the landscape of the world with thousands, then millions of small but significant lives of greatness.

This is what true kings and queens do. Their lives are dedicated to giving life, protecting it, and making it better. This is the “good life” that so many have tried to find. This is the life of purpose, the life of meaning, the life of the true king and queen.

Ideal? Yes.

Real? Yes.

It is my firm belief that in the next ten to thirty years we will begin to see this renaissance more fully. Many will call it idealistic, and still the masses will move forward. Some, even those amongst our own ranks, will laugh and call us fools, yet, we will continue on. There will be voices in strong opposition to our audacity, but the tide will steadily and nobly prepare the world for its finest hour—a preparation through the small but significant greatness of literally millions of kings and queens.