

America: the Unfolding Discovery

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If "America" is to have meaning it ultimately must be by Michael Warder discovered by its people. We are taught that America is a land that was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Yet it is also true that Leif Erickson, an adventurous Viking, made a prior visitation. Even the Indians could be looked upon as discoverers from the East who had journeyed through Alaska.

America's founding fathers also must be given credit for its discovery. They articulated a Declaration of Independence and a Constitution that gave Americans a voice and a legal sanction to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The question as to who and when America was discovered must be seen in the historical context of the Age. Each great adventurer and explorer of the past revealed new aspects and significance to America. Today there is still much to discover. The place of America in the world is in a continual process of unfoldment. Who can discover America's position in this Age?

America's Place

America's place refers to her people and resources in relation to the rest of the world. A nation that is distant, foreign and inaccessible consists of people with no basis to understand the situation of other nations. A question of spirit and purpose determines a country's place in the world. From that point of view, we all must be contemporary discoverers.

Heritage

The Pilgrims came to America to establish a new world of freedom and democracy in accordance with Divine Providence. Many suffered hardship and died, but the American spirit was forged through such bitter experience. These people feared God and knew the value of hard work and clear conscience. Under such circumstances, sacrifice was expected and was made.

In the Declaration of Independence and in the Revolutionary War, we see a people who kept their trust in God and broke politically from Europe to build a new world order.

Theirs was an attempt to build a better way of life and a higher moral order based on justice and equality. Against overwhelming odds those early settlers endured and earned independence and freedom. They pledged their lives and sacred honor and set the tradition and spirit of America for posterity. Their suffering made clear the price of freedom and, despite differences of custom, currency and interest, they bound together to form "a more perfect union" for the greater benefit of the whole.

Observing these humble beginnings, it can be said today that the fundamental issues of life and of this country still must be met. Conflicting beliefs and moneyed interests still prevent the fulfillment of the American ideal. America today has need of practical men of good character and ability who know how to work with the existing order, who measure their lives by the highest ethical standards and strive toward them. There remains a need for discoverers who will pioneer a new world order.

New Frontier

The late President John F. Kennedy drew from a rich heritage of pioneering when he spoke of a new frontier that remained yet unknown. He referred not to a physical frontier, but to the frontier of man's standard of living. He challenged all Americans to rise to a greatness that would surpass anything they had done. Kennedy wanted an America that would be able to beat down the thickets of ignorance and self-interest which have choked mankind so long. If necessary, he wanted Americans who would sacrifice their lives for their country so that it might contribute to the world and be governed properly.

Since the United States has tremendous economic, scientific and military power, the need for such men is more urgent than ever. This is especially true today because many lives stand to be affected by those great powers in such profound ways.

The Perpetual American Dream

America is composed of many people from diverse cultural backgrounds. "E Pluribus Unum" and "In God We Trust" are mottos which have taught that all people can unite together and live under liberty, equality and justice. Each American carries this universal dream hidden within himself and it waits to be manifested in this age.

Today, many people tend to worry about the position of their country in the world. Being "first" seems to be the important thing and usually this status is defined in terms of economic, political, and military power. Whether America is first, second or third in those fields is of no consequence if its purpose is bad. The nation's primary concern should be whether or not its people have maximized their full capabilities for their country toward the benefit of the just, peace-loving people of the world. Even if America remains the most powerful nation in terms of physical forces, it will be despised if judged "selfish" by other countries.

A nation that produces over \$1 trillion worth of goods and services annually could do much for the world if its human resources were channeled properly. America has the moral responsibility to share its knowledge with other countries while respecting the basic values and worth of world peoples.

Such a goal would make the United States the first nation in the world in terms of moral power. This means that other countries could look to America with respect and trust. They would depend on her in time of need to give them moral and physical strength which would bring long-term prosperity instead of immediate satisfaction. America must mobilize good will. This is her challenge.

Conflicting Ideologies

Communism as a test to America's world leadership need not be feared if our purpose is true. The falsity of Communistic belief can be measured by results. Atheistic concept rooted in contradiction and struggle have profound effects upon the inner man. They result in a colder, more violent and oppressive lifestyle with no toleration of differing beliefs. The conquest of the opposition by deceit, struggle and violence is easily justifiable in terms of Communistic belief. America can defeat international Communism by using its resources for the peoples of the world. If the nation's democratic system can show itself superior by its example, it will be victorious over Communist propaganda and calculation.

Attitudes of Youth

While young people in America do not actually subscribe to Marxism, feelings of frustration and rebellion have invaded the thinking of many. Their attitudes of negativity and cynicism have been skillfully cultivated by professionals. Young Americans are in most cases theoretically and practically ignorant of the reality of Communism. However, many are searching for alternatives that are authentic and practical.

Young people are aware of the power man has over his destiny, especially today. Their response to America often is a mixture of extreme idealism and cynicism followed by hypocrisy or half-hearted efforts to participate in society. Because of World War II and the subsequent existential atmosphere, youth seriously questions and even maligns the value of belief and conviction. Despair and purposelessness have infected many.

While partial or unscientific belief must be discarded, a faith in God and directive of the true conscience is a common ground on which all people can constructively relate as members of a human family. The destiny of America depends on its youth. If they give up the quest of finding the true American spirit, this country is doomed and the world will quickly follow it to the grave.

Moral Goal

While a moral goal is the highest standard to work toward, it involves overcoming many obstacles placed in our path by a history marred with self-interest and cross-purposes. Nonetheless, the obstacles must be overcome to win a final victory for the cause of justice.

Those reluctant to participate in America's decision making process need to change their attitude and live for a good purpose. To those reluctant to become involved with money, power and the responsibilities they entail, there is no other means by which to work for a better America and a better world. Monetary resources, organization, time, sweat and headaches, must be used toward the development of human resources.

Basic Changes

If America is to be changed so as to manifest understanding, trust and justice among the peoples of the world, the change must begin within the individual and within the basic family unit. If adultery, separation, mistrust, divorce and the hostility that accompany these do not cease within the American family structure, the society as a whole will continue to reflect those ills. Faith and unity under God should characterize the American family if the latter qualities are to live in society. A new America must have a foundation in the basic family unit. Change cannot be manifested in any other way.

How can the President speak of world peace so confidently if in his homeland, Americans are at war with each other? Alienation and mental illness characterize American social life when compared to the standards demanded by its citizenry. Crime rates increase at a time when the material standard of America has never been greater. While this nation has increased crime fighting facilities, the individual has forgotten how to govern his thoughts and feelings. When we can truly govern ourselves, America will have a free society. As long as selfishness controls the direction, police and stringent law enforcement remain necessary. External forces may help, but they can never substitute for a self-governing citizenry.

Social Responsibility

Free enterprise demands social conscience. If profit margins are too great, markets disappear. Those with business aptitudes and skills should lend their talents to those who provide the markets to business and society. These methods increase buying power, remove mistrust, render good service and show that those with wealth are not motivated by selfishness.

It is necessary that labor and management in America see their common purpose and support each other. Each by itself is useless. While developing self-discipline, Americans should think in terms of what is good for the whole and not just the individual. In race relations the same principle applies.

In order to gain wealth and social respect, Americans need to work in terms common to the whole society. Society cannot respect; a minority that continually demands rights for its own group without fulfilling the obligations it has to its nation of good citizenship. Character should be the basis for judgement and not race.

American Welfare

The American welfare system can never function if those on the receiving end think only of themselves. If, as American citizens, we receive the rights and benefits of citizenship, we should seek to return these to society for its replenishment.

Society must be educated to see it is working for a common purpose. Many young people now on welfare are inconsiderate of others' needs and are capable candidates for public works programs.

Crisis

America today faces a crisis. Once known as a land of opportunity where dreams and promises could be fulfilled, the nation now suffers from a sickness of the spirit. At a time when the world needs a powerful and radiant example of humanity, America must respond to the need. If the United States cannot pick itself up from its moral and spiritual lethargy, the world will continue to follow its example. This country has a great role to play in the destiny of the world. Each person has the responsibility of discovering, sharing and building it. The measure of American's success will be found in the clarity of its conscience and in the purity of an unconquerable spirit in service to humanity. This is America.