

*Fatal Sequence*

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*"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship."*

*"The average age of the world's greatest civilization has been two hundred years. These nations have progressed through this sequence: From bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from courage to liberty; from liberty to abundance; from abundance to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependency; from dependence back again into bondage."*

Who penned the above words? If one were to put one's faith in the reliability of the internet, the obvious answer would be Alexander Tytler, or Alexander Tyler, or Arnold Toynbee, or Lord Thomas Macaulay, or . . .

The truth is that despite their frequent use, the author or authors of the above quotes are unknown. With regard to the first quoted paragraph, the Library of Congress Respectfully Quoted writes, "Attributed to Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee. Unverified." The quote, however, appears in no published work of Tytler's.

The Scottish historian and scholar is attributed with this quote in his book on the fall of the Athenian Republic over 2000 years ago. No book can be found written by Tytler on the fall of the Athenian Republic. Tytler was supposed to have written this book in 1787, about the time our original 13 states were being formed.

Yet despite the factual uncertainty, these quotes are not only frequently attributed to Tytler, but just as frequently employ his antiquity as a means of enhancing their reliability. This quote seems to be a compilation of many ideas of many historians.

Tytler was attributed with the following quote: "It is not, perhaps unreasonable to conclude, that a pure and perfect democracy is a thing not attainable by man, constituted as he is of contending elements of vice and virtue, and ever mainly influenced by the predominant principle of self-interest. It may, indeed, be confidently asserted that there never was that government called a republic, which was not ultimately noted by a single will, and therefore, (however bold may seem the paradox,) virtually and substantially a monarchy."

Who is credited with these quotes is not as important as the impact it has made on many political pundits. Some politicians and historians have used these quotes as absolute truth. We have had over 200 years since they first appeared to evaluate their validity. History has a powerful emotional pull on people, which, as you know, makes it a nice building block to support an ideology, movement, or national identity.

So many people <sup>FOAM</sup> ~~from~~ their sense of self and justify their actions and politics through what they believe to be history. Can it really be that citing an 18<sup>th</sup> century professor is enough to convince some people of an argument's validity?

Obviously many noted people, such as presidents, have referred to this quote for the last 50 years to shape American's ideas of democracy.

The quote was used in a September 27, 1961 speech by John E. Swearingen and was attributed to a much more famous historian, the French author, Alexis de Tocqueville. He was credited with stating "A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover they can vote themselves largess out of the public treasury."

Professor Tytler was first credited with the quote by Ronald Reagan on March 5, 1964. A taped speech by Reagan was played for the crowd at a Barry Goldwater rally in Manchester, New Hampshire. The quote was printed on the first page of the next day's Manchester Union Leader, under the article title "Roar approval of Barry." The article states that Reagan attributed the quoted to "Fraser <sup>Tytler</sup> Tytler." Reagan used the quote again on June 8, 1965, at a testimonial dinner for Rep. John M. Ashbrook in Granville, Ohio.

In addition to providing perhaps the earliest connection to Tytler, Reagan's words also offer the earliest reference to a particular inspiration for the quote, namely, the 'Athenian Republic' allegory which today is almost always attached to the quote. In a letter to the editor in the April 10, 1987 Seattle Times, where the writer said the quote was from Alexander Fraser Tytler's book "The Decline and Fall of the Athenian Republic," is the earliest mention of a source material for the quote. Today this book is the most common source for the quote. Unfortunately, according to both World Cat and the Library of Congress' catalog. Tytler never wrote a book by ~~the~~ <sup>THAT</sup> title.

The first part of the quote is referred to as; "Why Democracies Fail", and tries to explain how people vote themselves money from the public treasury. The second part of the quote is called the "Fatal Sequence", and explains the progression of a democracy from bondage back into bondage.

The first reference to the "Fatal Sequence" is attributed to a speech by Strom Thurmond to the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce in Aberdeen, South Dakota, on January 9, 1965. Thurmond <sup>MONO</sup> states, "I am reminded that the <sup>WOOD</sup> studies of R.G. LeTourneau show that the average age of the world's great governments has <sup>BEEN</sup> 200 years, and that the general steps through which they progressed and regressed were from bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance; from abundance to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependency, and from dependency back again to bondage."

The "Fatal Sequence" is the second part of the quote and has been credited to Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) Ezra Taft Benson (1899-1994), Davis Paschall (1911-2001), Bernard Weatherill (1920-present) and Robert Mentzel. Both quotes: "Fatal Sequence" and "Why Democracies Fail" can be traced back to the 1950's but the first use together can be found in April 1979. The queries column of "American Notes & Queries" includes the earliest <sup>FORM</sup> ~~from~~ of all these quotes, with the submitting librarian saying that it was attributed to Alexander Fraser Tytler, but they had been unable to verify that.

The "Fatal Sequence" leads many people to believe we are in the final days. The Athenians and Romans probably felt the same way as they watched their traditional civilizations crumble around them. We may well be in the final days. But are they the final days before the second coming of Christ? Or, are they just the final days of a 200 year old democracy?

There is no <sup>DOUBT</sup> ~~double~~ that most of the Americans who settled our nations were running from servitude to various European royal houses. From the records kept of the abiding faith of our

found<sup>doubt</sup>ing fathers, there is no ~~double~~ they moved from bondage to spiritual faith and from there to great courage. Those without courage do not attack the greatest army of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

There is also no doubt we progressed from courage to liberty and from liberty came abundance.

According to a new book titled, "Understanding Poverty in America", by Robert F. Rector and Kirk A Johnson, Ph.D., even our poor are, for the most part, far better off than average citizens in other countries. They point out that: "46% of all poor households actually own their own homes. The average house owned by persons classified as poor by the Census Bureau is a three-bedroom house with one-1/2 baths, a garage, and a porch or patio. 76% of poor household have air conditioning. By contrast, 30 years ago, only 36% percent of the entire U.S. population enjoyed air conditioning. Only 6% of poor households are overcrowded. More than two-thirds have more than two incomes per person. The average poor American has more living space than the average individual living in Paris, London, Vienna, Athens and other cities throughout Europe. Nearly three-quarters of poor households own a car, 30% own two or more cars. 97% of poor households have a color television, over half own two or more color televisions. 78% have a VCR or DVD player; 63% have a cable or satellite TV reception. 73% own microwave ovens, more than half have a stereo, and a third have an automatic dishwasher."

The above statistics are not quoted to in anyway demean the poor. They are used to simply say we in America have abundance. It has raised the standard of living of our poor above that of average, not poor, people in the rest of the developed, modernized world. You are better off being poor in America than average in Europe.

It can be argued that we are in the abundant cycle. Are we in the selfish cycle? If the American poor are better off than the average European, one wonders how well off are the middle class and upper class are in a wonderful nation.

Is it all about us? Many countries in the Middle East and elsewhere hate the self-centered Americans. Do we have to have our won way in world economics and politics? We have to have cheap oil and high wages.

What about selfishness to complacency? Are we complacent when we allow our government to grow to a record size? The U.S. has giant corporations and giant government. Have we allowed those institutions to grow because of our own complacency?

The number of people who do not vote, or just do not want to be bothered with the process of choosing candidates who serve the people rather than their party is evidence of the move from complacency to apathy. People become apathetic when they experience changes they do not want imposed by a government they cannot control.

We only need to look at government – controlled programs and the number of people dependent upon them, Social Security, welfare, Medicare, National Health care, a government school system; to know we are dependent on government for our daily lives.

This statement is not meant to demean these programs, only the dependence we have on them. As Tytler predicted we would, in our 227 year old democracy, have gone from apathy to dependency?

Arnold Toynbee, who is also credited with the quote which is the topic of ~~this~~<sup>THIS</sup> paper, once said, "The release of initiative and enterprise made possible by self-government ultimately generates disintegrating forces from within again and again. After freedom brings opportunity and some degree of plenty, the competent become selfish, luxury loving and complacent; the incompetent and unfortunate grow envious and covetous and all these groups turn aside from the hard road of freedom to worship the golden calf of economic security. Toynbee then quotes the aforementioned "fatal sequence" as inevitable.

Let's now consider the evidence of ~~past~~<sup>PAST</sup> civilizations having suffered this "fatal sequence". Athens fell because a plague swept the empire. Typhoid fever caused the epidemic. The plague began in Ethiopia and passed through Egypt and Libya to Greece in 430-428 B.C. It changed the balance of power between Athens and Sparta, ending the Golden Age of Pericles and Athenian dominance in the ancient world. An estimated one-third of Athenians died, including Pericles, their leader.

Edward Gibbon, in his 1788 book "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", sets forth five basic reasons why great civilizations wither and die:

1. The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis for human society.
2. Higher and higher taxes and the spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populace.
3. The mad craze for pleasure – sports becoming every year more exciting, more brutal, more immoral.
4. The building of great armaments when the real enemy is within – the decay of individual responsibility.
5. The decay of religion – with faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life, losing power to guide people.

Tytler, Toynbee, and Gibbon seem to have similar conclusions. If Professor Tytler's thesis is correct, we are in the dependence stage and our next step is back to bondage.

Are there enough examples of the inevitability of the "fatal sequence"? Is the United States headed down the road to bondage? What do you think?