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LEADERSHIP AND PARTISANSHIP IN THE THOUGHT OF
WOODROW WILSON AND THE AMERICAN FOUNDERS

presented by

Scot James Zentner

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Major professor

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LEADERSHIP AND PARTISANSHIP IN THE THOUGHT OF
WOODROW WILSON AND THE AMERICAN FOUNDERS

By

Scot James Zentner

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Political Science

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ABSTRACT

LEADERSHIP AND PARTISANSHIP IN THE THOUGHT OF WOODROW WILSON AND THE AMERICAN FOUNDERS

By

Scot James Zentner

I identify two broadly different views of political leadership and partisanship in the American political tradition: the view from the Founding and the view most prevalent since the turn of the century Progressive Era. My principal task is to judge these views within the context of the constitutional republican theory of American governance. This amounts to a discussion of the political theory of the American regime within the framework of the two different ideas of political leadership. This entails a discussion of the philosophic bases of liberalism and political leadership from the perspectives of the American Founding and American Progressivism.

The dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part of the dissertation centers upon The Federalist. The second part of the dissertation centers upon the thought of Woodrow Wilson. In the first three chapters I present an interpretation of Publius's view of liberalism and political leadership, the relationship of the Constitution and political leadership, and the emergence of constitutional partisanship. In the last three chapters I discuss Wilson's view of liberalism and the administrative state, political

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leadership and Wilson's historicism, and modern parties and party theory which I understand in Wilson's terms.

Current political leadership in America is problematic when considered in the light of the requirements of constitutional republicanism. This is so because constitutional republicanism requires the reconciliation of public opinion with the forms of constitutionalism and the rule of law. Contemporary political leadership assumes a conception of human freedom which is contrary to the ordered liberty which constitutionalism requires. This is true for both Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals.

A simple return to the thought of the Founding, however, is not sufficient or possible as a corrective to the current problem of political leadership. The rise of industrialism and the eclipse of an agrarian economy make such a return doubtful. Rather, I suggest that the current view of leadership would benefit from a reassessment of its primary assumptions and a reorientation toward its goals along the lines of the earlier view. The dissertation aims to begin this project.

For My Mother

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Jerry Weinberger, Joseph Schlesinger and Richard Zinman for their assistance and support. I particularly thank Edward Erler for his influence and example.

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