



## Principium Imprimis -- First Principles

*"Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties, and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of people, it shall be the duty of legislators and magistrates...to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them." --John Adams*

It's back to business this week, having just returned from two weeks of traveling with my family. This was our fifth road trip to explore America in as many years, and the time we spend together in close quarters, discovering new sites and sharing new adventures, is priceless.

This fortnight is one of respite for me, only in the sense that I refrain from taking a laptop and avoid all sources of news for its duration. This allows me to break away from the rigors of current events and policy analysis to focus on my family and those along the road. The pace we keep on these trips, however, defies any notion of rest and relaxation.

This was the last of our "Discover America" excursions, our having visited every other part of our great nation except Hawaii's beautiful beaches -- and top secret birth certificate repositories. This summer's expedition included Alaska for the first week and Left Coast states for the second.

In Alaska, we flew the summit of Denali and dined at the Talkeetna Roadhouse made famous by that quintessential Alaskan bush pilot, Don Sheldon. I even cracked a few ribs on the ice of Godwin Glacier, having been deposited there during a sharp turn of a dogsled. Adding insult to injury, the musher, my oh-so-funny 10-year-old son, waved good-bye as he and the team sped away. On a more pleasant note, we ran into Sarah Palin's daughters and infant grandson in a Wasilla discount store (I guess they really are just plain folks). We were also hosted by F-22 guys Dave and Mike at Elmendorf AFB.

We flew down to Washington, where the sunset on Mt. Rainier was spectacular. The Oregon coastal water was COLD, and California's redwoods were even more majestic than I remembered them. We spent two days in San Francisco, including a visit to one of the nation's most liberal antique news outlets, The San Francisco Chronicle, where -- I am not making this up -- the reception desk staff had Fox News on the big screen. My 15-year-old son concluded that he saw enough strange people in San Fran to last a lifetime so, after washing thoroughly, we departed for Yosemite. On the last leg of our trip, we drove from 10,000 feet above sea level in the High Sierra to elevation -282 feet at Badwater, Death Valley, a geographic transition that amazed our kids.

I am pleased to report that we all returned home intact, with the exception of a couple of ribs.

As with our previous trips around the nation, we were heartened to find strong contingents of Patriots everywhere we went -- yes, even in San Francisco. However, my concern about our country's heritage of liberty being squandered by future generations was certainly reaffirmed.

The urban centers of America, and to a lesser extent the rural areas, are littered with young people who are, genuinely, adrift. Many seem to be seeking a mooring they didn't receive during childhood, and they're finding it in destructive personal habits and contemporaneous identity movements, including political movements that are an affront to liberty.

This sad state of affairs, for so many young people, can be attributed to the failure of three institutions -- marriage, church and government education.

There is no question that the most significant contributing factor undermining the social stability of our nation is the dissolution of marriages and consequently, traditional family structure.

The malignant culture of divorce is, in my opinion, the greatest national security threat that we face, and it places in peril the legacy of Liberty, bequeathed to

us by our Founders and purchased by them with their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. Indeed, the effluent of divorce is manifest in the election of politicians like Barack Obama and the cult-like minions who worship him.

The failure of our religious and academic institutions, however, is also a dire threat.

Like millions of young people across the nation, our children, our legacy, will be returning to school this month. Sadly, though most of those young people will return to institutions that are mere shadows of what they are intended to be, especially since God has been expelled from the academy.

As I reflect on John Adam's observation about "wisdom and knowledge ... being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties," I am reminded that there was no erroneous "separation of church and state" doctrine in his time.

The nation's oldest academic institution, Harvard University, was established in 1636 and named for Puritan minister John Harvard. The university claims that it was "never formally affiliated with a specific religious denomination," though all its presidents were Puritan ministers until 1708. A 1643 college brochure identified Harvard's purpose: "To advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches." The university's Charter of 1650 calls for "the education of the English and Indian youth of this Country in knowledge and godliness."

Harvard alumnus John Adams, Class of 1755, wrote in 1776, "It is the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the SUPREME BEING, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe."

For its part, Yale University was established in 1701 by royal charter as The Collegiate School. This was through the efforts of colonial Congregationalist ministers, who had sought since the 1640s to establish a college in New Haven. The charter was granted for an institution "wherein Youth may be instructed in the Arts and Sciences [and] through the blessing of Almighty God may be fitted for Publick employment both in Church and Civil State."

Yale alumnus Noah Webster, Class of 1778, a devout Christian and outspoken Federalist, considered "education useless without the Bible." In the for-

ward of the 1828 Webster's American Dictionary, he wrote, "In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government ought to be instructed.... No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people."

Princeton University was originally founded in 1746 as the College of New Jersey, and established by royal charter for "the Education of Youth in the Learned Languages and in the Liberal Arts and Sciences." It was unique in that the charter allowed the attendance of "any Person of any religious Denomination whatsoever." The absence of official denominational affiliation or criteria for attendance did not, however, connote the absence of strong denominational ties. To the contrary, Princeton was founded by "New Light" Presbyterians of the Great Awakening for the purpose of training Presbyterian ministers. Jonathan Dickinson, a Presbyterian minister and leader of the Great Awakening of the 1730s, was the school's co-founder and first president.

Princeton alumnus James Madison, Class of 1771, observed, "The belief in a God All Powerful wise and good, is so essential to the moral order of the world and to the happiness of man, that arguments which enforce it cannot be drawn from too many sources nor adapted with too much solicitude to the different characters and capacities impressed with it."

In regard to the exclusion of religious instruction from academia, George Washington said in his Farewell Address (1796): "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness - these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation deserts the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in the Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the opposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Short of another American Revolution to remove by force the dictators of tyranny who now occupy the thrones of the once proud Party of Jefferson, our nation's liberty cannot long endure the prevailing culture of self-idolatry unless we, as a people, return to our First Principle -- putting God first.

We are sorely in need of a Great Awakening to the Light and Truth, which is the only eternal assurance of Liberty. Indeed, *Veritas vos Liberabit* -- "The Truth will set you free."

As Thomas Jefferson warned, "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?" That conviction is enumerated in the preambles of every state constitution of our Union.

As I think back over the last two weeks, I'm reminded of the immutable examples along my family's "Discover America" path of how God has changed the lives of even the most destitute. The most memorable of these was a young waitress in the small town of Trinidad, California. When she heard we were from Tennessee, she happily proclaimed she was from Alabama. My wife asked what had brought her to California and she said that between the ages of 12 and 18 she had been addicted to methamphetamines and other drugs, but that a family member enrolled her in a faith-based drug treatment service in Eureka, California. There, she met and married her husband, a former gang banger from South Central LA.

"We have been drug-free for more than three years," she told us, "and are now youth pastors in our local church."

Traveling through these United States in recent years, and meeting fellow patriots and citizens from all walks of life, affirms my conviction that if there is to be a peaceful transfer of Liberty to our posterity, then we must return to First Principles. The primacy of constitutional authority must be restored to ensure Liberty, opportunity, prosperity and civil society; the primacy of traditional families and timeless values must be restored as the foundation of our culture; and the primacy of faith must be restored in order to retain the conviction that, as Jefferson put it, our "liberties are the gift of God."

Semper Vigilo, Fortis, Paratus et Fidelis!

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(Please pray for our Armed Forces standing in harm's way around the world, and for their families -- especially families of those fallen Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, who granted their lives in defense of American liberty.)