

The PRINCIPIA

SPEAKER COLLECTION

FALL 2007 • VOL. 07, NO. 1

FALL CONVOCATION ADDRESS by Dr. Tom Fuller

Dr. Tom Fuller received a BA in math from Amherst College, an MS in education from Old Dominion University, and a D.Sc. in computer science from Washington University in St. Louis. He has taught in public schools, worked for a large corporation, and at The Mother Church where he was the Concord Project Manager. He has taught math and computer science at Principia College and has served as faculty senate president. He was appointed Interim Dean of Principia College in April of 2007.

FALL CONVOCATION ADDRESS

PRINCIPIA COLLEGE

SEPTEMBER 13, 2007

I grew up near the Atlantic Ocean — specifically, an estuary of the Chesapeake Bay. It's a perfect life for a young boy: fishing at high tide, crabbing at mid-tide, boat-building, sailing, clam digging at low tide. The tides ruled my young life. At high tide the fiddler crabs were invisible. At low tide they swarmed across the tidal flats. A remarkable experiment transported dozens of fiddler crabs to a location far from the ocean, but they swarmed every day in sync with their briny brethren. Their internal clocks kept perfect pace with the daily advance of the tides.

For educators, September is our high tide of renewal as you students again enrich us with your presence, your ideas, your inspiration, and your energy. Even during the years I wasn't teaching — like the remote fiddler crabs — I always felt September's tug on my heart.

The 21st century is only 7 years old. But it's already clear that it will tug on us and our institutions in ways that we did not foresee — perhaps that we could not have foreseen — in the 20th century. Principia graduates have a long proud history of strong contributions to our needy world — some quite visible in journalism, the arts, corporate leadership, entrepreneurial endeavors, some less visible but no less powerful as guides,

teachers, parents, and quiet supporters. Teachers for America in inner city schools; volunteers helping women gain economic independence in Nepal; diplomats teaching democracy in war-torn Iraq. . . in every venue, we expect our graduates to be thought-leaders — thought-leaders of the 21st century. And never has genuine spiritually-founded leadership been more needed. Just before school started, I spent two full days with our faculty as they studied the demands of this era and thought deeply, selflessly about how to craft an education to meet your individual needs — to best prepare you as thought-leaders of this century.

On another front, I can report that George and Martha Moffett are settling nicely into their Minnesota condo. The bookshelves are painted and stocked, and George finally got his computer working. They send their love. Looking to the future, Principia's Presidential Search continued during the summer. A couple of promising candidates are actively engaged. The leading candidate – Dr. Jonathan Palmer — will visit next week. He's Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at the Mason School of Business at William and Mary. He received his Ph.D. in Management Information Systems at Claremont Graduate University. He has written scholarly articles in many publications including Information Systems Research, and Communications of the ACM. He also has extensive experience as an academic administrator in undergraduate, graduate, and executive education — including three years as Director of the Career Resources Center at Harvard's Business School.

Between presidents, your Interim Dean of the College (iDOC) is honored and humbled to bridge the gap. Similarly in this season of academic renewal, we have undergone the

most substantial change of Trustees in decades. Eight of the present thirteen Trustees were not Trustees when I was elected iDOC Spring Quarter. Moreover, 149 brand new students — transfers and new freshmen — are here. This compares to 131 new students who arrived here Fall 2006. New students, please rise so we can welcome you.

And freshman-to-sophomore retention which had been oddly low for two years (around 78%) has now returned to the more satisfying level of 90%. The problem is that we graduated 143 students last June, the largest Principia graduating class since the mid-90's. The combination of two years of low retention, and a small sophomore class leaves our total around 490 students. If we continue to have recruiting years as good as this year, i.e. freshmen — thank you, and continue to have retention as good as last year — thank you sophomores — we'll grow out of this dip. We are working on several ways — enrollment management, phone contacts, and new literature — to better present faculty stories and student stories to families looking at Principia. You are our best recruiters. So thank you all in advance for the stories you tell and more importantly for the lives you live. We couldn't hope for a better advertisement.

We compete in a sports conference of 10 schools called SLIAC. Each season, they pick in each sport the best athlete of the entire conference. This year, the men's cross country SLIAC runner of the year was a Principia student; so was the women's soccer SLIAC player of the year; so was the volleyball SLIAC player of the year; so was the women's basketball SLIAC player of the year, and so was the women's tennis SLIAC player of the year.

SLIAC also chooses a coach of the year for each sport – four of them last year were Principians: women’s soccer, women’s basketball, women’s tennis, and volleyball. And little Principia was third “winningest” of the ten schools. Enjoy our full array of varsity sports this fall: football, volleyball, men and women’s soccer and cross-country.

And our graduates continue to do the great work mentioned earlier and to attend a distinguished list of graduate schools.

As you have come to expect, we have an inspiring collection of speakers lined up this quarter.

September 28 Our Moral Courage Speaker is Melba Beals
— 8:00 pm here in Cox.

In 1957, while most teenage girls were listening to Buddy Holly, 15-year-old Melba and 8 other black students faced the wrath of segregationists and the Governor of Arkansas to become the first black students to enter Central High School. Her book, *Warriors Don't Cry* chronicles her experiences. After Dr. Beals spoke in 1994, there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

October 19 we have Robert Duvall — one of Principia’s most recognizable alumni. His distinguished filmography includes more than sixty films. He won the best actor Academy Award in Horton Foote’s *Tender Mercies*. He was also nominated for another best actor Academy Award for *The Apostle* — which he also wrote and directed.

We also have Rick Barton of the United Nations Iraq Study Group. His resume includes twelve years of experience in thirty global hot spots.

More talks (like the Pan-African Conference) will be announced during the quarter. The Fall production is the famous Russian comedy “The Government Inspector.”

Our choir and orchestra concert will be on Saturday after 9th week. Remember Music at Davis every Friday at 1pm.

In last week’s Bible Lesson, we read the very short story of the poor wise man who saved a city. As some of you will recall, our Graduation Speaker, Gail Russell Chaddock, reminded us that “city” symbolizes our ability to live and work and play and grow with each other. Her other message was that we — all of us — will never be stronger, more influential, more powerful, more able to change ourselves, our community, and our world than we are right now. That is an extraordinary spiritual power and an extraordinary responsibility. What will we do for our city — our community — with this power?

One characteristic of a community (from the word common) is that the thoughts of each community member bear an influence on other community members.

When I was a new professor here, I took a programming course for credit from my mentor, Peggy DesAutels. One particularly difficult program assignment had frustrated me even after devoting more than 20 hours to its solution. Just then — about 11pm — a student stormed out of the computer lab and into my office announcing her frustration with a freshman programming assignment. She said, “I can’t do this! I’ll never solve this problem! I’m quitting the class. I’m dropping the Computer Science major!” I was feeling about the same myself, but it came to me to say: “I’ll make a deal

with you. I won't touch my computer for 15 minutes. I'll just think about what it means for there to be one infinite Mind and for man to be the reflection of that Mind. I'll do this if you will do the same." She agreed and sat down. After the 15 minutes, she arose silently and returned to the computer lab. I returned to the keyboard. Within a few minutes, a novel solution presented itself and I soon had my problem thoroughly solved. Minutes later, the young programmer came bouncing into the office declaring that she had figured out the solution and her program worked perfectly.

Earlier that evening — before 11 pm — I had walked though the computer lab and had felt the tension and discouragement in the air. Now — near midnight — I walked through the lab again and the atmosphere was buoyant and uplifted.

That incident taught me something about the reach of thought in a community. A member of our larger Principia community, Blair Lindsey at Upper School, gave a great talk years ago about just this subject.

He started by saying:

I used to think that my thoughts were my own business and nobody else's but I have learned differently.

When I was a house pop, one of the boys got very sick. He was unable to sleep and in considerable pain. The only time — day or night — that he slept was from 7:15 to 7:45 am — when the other boys were reading the Bible Lesson. During that interval, he fell into

deep and much-needed sleep. That was vital to him through that trying period and led to his full healing. The quiet devoted thought of those boys studying the Bible Lesson afforded an oasis that refreshed and blessed that struggling boy.

When I was coaching track, our competitors often ran their best times while visiting our track. It was an old cinder track, so it should have been slower than more modern tracks — certainly not faster. This tendency was marked enough that other coaches began to suspect that Prin's track was too short. They recommended that we re-survey the track. We did so only to discover that our track was a yard *longer* than regulation length! Our prayer to recognize man's unlimited nature and natural freedom had created an atmosphere of thought that lifted our visitors to their best results.

The Principia Upper School has for years been a testing center for ETS College Board exams. ETS constantly researches the reliability of its tests. One way to check this is by comparing scores for a student who has taken the same test several times. In so checking, they discovered a surprising number of St. Louis students who had taken the test multiple times at different test centers, but whose highest scores were at Principia. The correlation between Principia and high scores

was far too strong to be explained away by chance. They suspected some compromise of security. An investigative team checked the school processes and interviewed proctors and students. They found no evidence of any irregularity, shrugged their shoulders, and left with no explanation. As Christian Scientists, we are constantly affirming the allness and oneness of Mind and man's limitless right to intelligence and freedom. Should we be surprised that this influence is felt by our neighbors who chose to take tests here?

I used to think that my thoughts were my own business and nobody else's but I have learned differently. (Blair Lindsay — Upper School Chapel early 1990s)

Sue and I arrived to work at the College Fall 1989. That coincided with the second so-called “measles crisis.” Three students had passed on during the first “measles crisis” in 1985 which attracted national media attention.

There was one advantage to arriving here during a “measles crisis.” We were clear right from the start why we were here. And it was not *primarily* to teach math and library skills. God brought us here to heal — to serve on the front-line in Christian warfare — just as He brought you. I remember midnight prayers, dawn prayers, and noon prayers in those critical months. I remember too *feeling* the great strength of unseen others praying with me — like the remote Fiddler crabs — vividly, actively, differing inspirations at different times.

Someone was praying around the clock. Principia came through those trying months stronger than ever.

Once we were through that crisis, I thought with relief that I could settle back and take my ease for a while. NOT! I found that Principia over its century history is never far from a crisis. From 1912 to 1914 there was a crisis of leadership. In the late twenties and thirties, financial crises almost closed the school. During the second World War, Principia again almost shut down as most male students were serving in the armed forces and rations squeezed every logistical task. In the fifties, we came within a hairsbreadth of losing our school to the Air Force academy. The government would have paid for it of course, but imagine trying to re-create this campus at some new location without Maybeck and the Morgans. In the sixties the school was threatened with labor challenges. In the seventies, it was student rebellion. The eighties brought the pair of so-called “measles crises.”

You see what I mean about crises and Principia. Actually the word *crisis* is an apt one. It means to make a separation. A crisis is a time to choose, to decide. We know what decision the Christian Scientist constantly faces. Does matter matter? Or do we mind Mind?!

Your thought *does* matter. You can't help that. But you can choose to be a thought-dreamer — or a thought-leader — in our city.

So how do we best serve and preserve this city?

Mrs. Eddy graphically explains:

Imagine yourselves in a poorly barricaded fort, fiercely besieged by the enemy. Would you rush forth single-handed to combat the foe? Nay, would you not rather strengthen your citadel by every means in your power, and remain within the walls for its defense? Likewise should we do as metaphysicians and Christian Scientists. The real house in which “we live, and move, and have our being” is Spirit, God, the eternal harmony of infinite Soul. The enemy we confront would overthrow this sublime fortress, and it behooves us to defend our heritage. (Pul. 2:16)

When you hear that, don't you hear echoes of Nehemiah? Who said to the forlorn citizens of Jerusalem:

Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. (Neh. 2:17)

The wall of Jerusalem embodies the hopes and prayers of three thousand years of Judaism. The lower section of the modern wall — the roughest section — dates to Nehemiah. He must have handled some of these stones.

Nehemiah continues:

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's

words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? (Neh. 2:18-19)

Recently two of you got me thinking about these names. It turns out that these were not just three random names from the Jerusalem phonebook, or FaceBook.

The name Sanballat is of foreign origin. It is not our native or natural thought. This name stands for the intrusion of unnatural thoughts, pulls, pressures, fears — suggestions that claim to invade or colonize our thinking.

Tobiah means Good is YAH, Jehovah. This sounds nice enough. But this sense of good is limited to a personal, tribal, local God. Tobiah stands for smallness of thought — a namby-pamby helpless “semi-metaphysics” that is the very opposite of clear, vigorous, transparent, triumphant Christian Science.

Gesham (the same name is later translated Gashmu) means “violent rain shower,” drowning out Truth’s encouraging voice with cold discouragement, cynicism — violence intimidating inspiration. Gesham also represents the office of *gossip*. (When Nehemiah’s character is besmirched later in the story, “Gashmu saith it.”)

Against all these hostile enemies, these thought-elements that would undermine city-building, Nehemiah answers with a simple but profound reply.

The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem - no portion [no present claim], nor right [no future claim], nor memorial [no past claim], in Jerusalem [our pathway to peace].” (Neh 2:20)

As you all know, the work continued as each citizen wrought in the work with one hand and in the other held a weapon. Ultimately the wall was finished triumphantly and the city was stronger than ever.

The defense of this heritage unites us — even as we wrestle with the hard issues that would divide us. The current wrestling centers around the concept that Principle, not person, governs. In fact, this concept is fundamental to the remarkable educational experiment that is Principia. It’s virtually our name. And not only is *Principia* wrestling with this concept — that Principle, not person, governs — so is the United States, as you may have noticed; so is Iraq and Sudan and Britain and Russia and North Korea and many others.

Principia has never been afraid of a crisis, of making the separation, of making the decision. That work will bless us; and will bless our weary world. “The ‘still small voice’ of scientific thought reaches over continent and ocean to the globe’s remotest bound. The inaudible voice of Truth is, to the human mind, ‘as when a lion roareth.’ It is heard in the

desert and in dark places of fear.” (S&H 559:8-12)

Mrs. Morgan quoted Mrs. Eddy a lot. But there is one quote that must be her favorite. “The entire purpose of true education is to make one not only know the truth but live it – to make one enjoy doing right, make one not work in the sunshine and run away in the storm, but work midst clouds of wrong, injustice, envy, hate; and wait on God, the strong deliverer, who will reward righteousness and punish iniquity. ‘As thy days, so shall thy strength be.’” (My. 252:10)

The Resolution Committee — convened last Spring to help us wrestle through the issues of governance wrote:

Our most important work is metaphysical, and our goal is healing. This is the responsibility of everyone. The Resolution Committee has appreciated the community’s prayerful support of our work throughout this process, and that prayer needs to continue.

We all felt the strong and continuing prayer of the community. As I prayed during the summer, one phrase recurred time and again: “Pride and fear are unfit to bear the standard of Truth, and God will never place it in such hands.” (S&H 31:1)

Continuing with the committee’s words:

We recommend that in the coming year we focus on the article “The Way” from *Miscellaneous Writings* (pages 355-359) by Mary Baker Eddy. ... to work on self-

knowledge, humility, and love; to hold ourselves and others accountable; to live the values of compassion, fairness, responsibility, respect; to be our brother's keepers; and to "behold in Science the perfect man." (S&H 476:32-1)

As a city, a community, we continue the discussion of best governance; faithful, earnest, broadly-voiced, even vehement discussion as needed; but in the path of the way — without pride and fear. Humility is the antidote to pride. Love is the antidote to fear. The way of self-knowledge, humility, and love is not an optional blessing. It is the only way of safety — individually and collectively.

We are building Principia with every prayer. This will bless our school for years to come, even as the past crises overcome have blessed us. And our work will bless the nations as well.

I'm asking all of us — myself included — to resolve to make the best possible use of Quiet Time this year. Then-President John Boyman emphasized it during the first so-called "measles crisis" in 1985. It's a time to affirm what is true and cast out what is false about Principia. Yes. Of course there will be some exceptions. I trust your judgment on those. I am resolved to do better than I have done in the past and I ask you to join me.

Although you must follow your own inspiration, there are some powerful articles by Mary Baker Eddy that serve as allies in our work: "The Way," "What our Leader Says," "Ways that Are Vain."

Our Leader assures us:

Christian Science shows that there is a way of escape from the latter-day ultimatum of evil, through scientific truth;...Thank God! this evil can be resisted by true Christianity. Divine Love is our hope, strength, and shield. We have nothing to fear when Love is at the helm of thought, but everything to enjoy on earth and in heaven. (Mis. 113:17-27)

At the close of our family's first day at Principia, we walked a sidewalk in front of Upper School. Our nine-year old — holding my hand — stopped me and said, "Dad. Do you feel the love in this place?" Dad said, "Yeah sure, I guess." She continued, "When it's time for me to go to high school, I want to come here." We lived in Detroit at the time, and again Dad being the far-sighted, sensitive guy that he is, said "Now look, you put that thought right out of your head; you don't get to leave home until you're 37 years old." She laughed and walked on.

Fast-forward four years. Barely a month before she went to high school, I got a call inviting me here to teach. Guess where our daughter went to high school. She knew all along. ". . . a little child shall lead them." (Isa. 11:6)

By the way, Dad has grown a bit more sensitive; I do feel it now! So do college visitors of all ages.

In the year 1897, Mrs. Eddy invited her followers to visit her at Pleasant View on Independence Day. ... Among those who took

the journey was a mother, accompanied by her two children.

. . .the small daughter, seven years old, had a very sore spot which protruded from the head and was very much inflamed. All the way to Concord she would not allow her curly head to be combed, crying bitterly whenever the attempt was made. Although the mother tried to meet the condition through prayerful mental work, yet in the morning, when they were to go out to Pleasant View, the swelling had enlarged until it stood out from her head and was more inflamed than ever.

. . .After the speaking was over at Pleasant View, Mrs. Eddy sat upon the porch and greeted the people as they passed through the porte-cochere. The mother was preceded in the line by her children. When these two . . . arrived in front of Mrs. Eddy, they stopped the whole procession and stood looking up into her face smiling joyously. Mrs. Eddy looked at them and then looked at the mother, and smiled back at the children, as someone told them to pass along. This is the mother's account of her illuminating experience:

I wish I could make the world know what I saw when Mrs. Eddy looked at those children. It was a revelation to me. I saw for the first time the real Mother-Love, and I knew that I did not have it. I had a strange, agonized sense

of being absolutely cut off from the children. It is impossible to put into words what the uncovering of my own lack of real Mother-Love meant to me.

As I turned in the procession and walked toward the line of trees in the front of the yard, there was a bird sitting on the limb of a tree, and I saw the same love, poured out on that bird that I had seen flow from Mrs. Eddy to my children. I looked down at the grass and the flowers and there was the same Love resting on them. It is difficult for me to put into words what I saw. This Love was everywhere, like the light, but it was divine, not mere human affection.

I looked at the people milling around on the lawn and I saw it poured out on them. . . .It was not only everywhere present, like the light, but it was an intelligent presence that spoke to me, and I found myself weeping as I walked back and forth under the trees and saying out loud, "Why did I never know you before? Why have I not known you always?"

. . . When we got back to the hotel, there was no boil on my child's head. It was just as flat as the back of her hand. . . . For weeks it had a strange effect on me. I could not bear to hear anyone speak in a cross, ill-tempered tone, or do anything that would cause pain . (*Twelve Years with Mary Baker Eddy* by Irving C.

Thomlinson, 1945, p. 60-62)

An ancient Chinese parable concerns a man with ten sons. In his old age, he calls his sons to his side. He gives the youngest son his walking stick and asks him to break it. He cannot. He passes it to the next older brother. Neither can he break it. None of the sons is able to break the walking stick. The father then unwinds the cord around the walking stick to disclose that it is made of ten rods. In silence, he breaks each separate rod. He asked the sons what they have learned. The eldest replies: "If we let ourselves be divided, we'll be broken. If we remain united, we're invincible."

Mrs. Eddy takes it higher.

I once thought that in unity was human strength; but have grown to know that human strength is weakness, — that unity is divine might, giving to human power, peace. ... whenever they are equal to the march triumphant, God will give to all His soldiers of the cross the proper command, and under the banner of His love, and with the "still, small voice" for the music of our march, we all shall take step and march on in spiritual organization. (Mis. 138:17-29)

At the final orientation dinner last Friday, you new students talked about the love *you* felt in this place — the sense of belonging and home when you are so far from what you call home. One of you even noticed this during the math test — unselfishly acknowledging the presence of Mind in a way

that lifted everyone higher. Despite the swirling thoughts about our school's government – as we all learn that Principle and not person governs – *despite that*, you have seen and felt the genuine Principia — the living reality of the Christ-idea in education. Thank you for that vision, entering class.

What if you don't feel this love, this power, this unity yet? Don't worry. Neither did I at first. But you will. Keep listening. Stay tuned. Keep building and defending what Mrs. Morgan called this “remarkable experiment in education.” It's worth the fight.

Have a wonderful quarter.

Thank you.