

October 25th, 2011

Dear Friends

I have just had the fortune of visiting the Green Mountains of Vermont and the White Mountains of New Hampshire during 'the fall'. Gentle forests of gold, red and green punctuated by fast flowing rivers mile after mile fill one with a sense of awe. In this context beauty needs no definition.

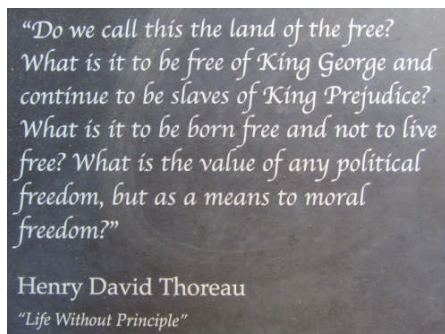


By contrast, I had the opportunity to swat up on the Boston tea party and the story of 'minute-men' whose military preparedness underlies the American argument for every citizen to be armed to defend themselves not just against invaders and miscreants but their own government! While driving, I listened to an audio book on the Civil War in which those guns were used in the slaughter of 650,000 compatriots for whom 'the cause' was of greater import than life itself. America is a country where even the smallest village has several churches representing the variety of unique beliefs.

I recently had lunch with one of our lay committee members and reflected on some of the conflicts in church affairs of the last few years. 'Why are Adventists so angry?' he asked. Not sure say I, but

I suppose that it comes with the conviction of holding 'truth'. Contending for the veracity of our beliefs is what we do.

By contrast: Quakers – the Society of Friends (of truth) have a different approach. For them, worship is a period of silence, time to listen to 'that which is within'. Conflicts are resolved through circles of trust in which propositions may not be made, giving way to carefully worded questions that clarify understanding. In *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Parker J Palmer observes that democracy is not just a mode of political appointment in which majority prejudices prevail, rather an environment in which every citizen participates in cultivating the well being of society.



New England is known for profound scholarship. Howard Gardner famous for his ideas on multiple intelligence has broadened educational value beyond the merits of words and numbers, to include music, art and movement. In his most recent work he examines the role of Truth, Goodness and Beauty in our experience.

Usefully, he differentiates Scientific truth (that which is discovered through repeated observation) from Historic truth, layers of successive contributions by people who view the world from different vantage points at different times with different evidence. He also identifies the value of spiritual

truths which seek to establish meaning and purpose in our lives. He notes, the tension created by our quest to reconcile these perspectives through convergence.

Of greater fascination is the observation that the experience of beauty is divergent, it opens our mind to wider appreciative encounters. He discusses at great length the meaning of beauty, from culture, biological sensors, mathematical symmetry among others. In the end the perception of beauty, he suggests comes down to three things: Does it capture attention? Is it memorable? Does it warrant a return? Which brings me back to my ponderings on the beauty of Creation and Sabbath - awe inspiring, memorable, and scheduled for a weekly repeat.

Truth and Beauty breathe together. Inhale truth, extract some goodness and share some beauty.

Though we are often perplexed in our efforts to reconcile competing narratives, thank you for sharing the beauty of creation's reality and its orientation to goodness and purposeful living.

Best regards

Victor

