

IMPRIMIS

970,000 Readers

Because Ideas Have Consequences

Hillsdale and America

Larry P. Arnn

President-elect, Hillsdale College



LARRY P. ARNN is president-elect of Hillsdale College; the outgoing president of The Claremont Institute, a California-based research organization that has led opposition to racial preferences; and the founding chairman of the California Civil Rights Initiative, the voter-approved ballot proposal that abolished racial preferences in state government hiring, contracting, and services. He remains a director of The Claremont Institute, the Henry Salvatori Center of Claremont McKenna College, Americans Against Discrimination and Preferences, the Center for Individual Rights, and St. Mark's Episcopal School. He holds memberships in the American Political Science Association, the Pi Sigma Alpha political science honorary society, the Mont Pelerin Society, the International Churchill Society, and the Philanthropy Roundtable and recently was appointed to the Congressional Policy Advisory Board, which counsels the House Republican Policy Committee. He previously served as director of research for Sir Winston Churchill's official biographer, an editor for *Public*

Research, Syndicated, and a member of the Landmark Legal Foundation's board of advisors and the academic advisory boards of the Free Enterprise Institute and the International Churchill Society. Many national newspapers, magazines, and periodicals have published his articles on public policy and political theory.

A graduate of Arkansas State University with master's and doctoral degrees from The Claremont Graduate School, Dr. Arnn also has studied at the London School of Economics and Worcester College, Oxford University. His academic honors include Rotary International, Richard M. Weaver, Earhart Foundation, and Winston S. Churchill Association Fellowships.

Dr. Arnn delivered the following remarks at Hillsdale College's Shavano Institute for National Leadership Seminar, "Heroes for a New Generation and a New Century," in Dallas, Texas last month.

In this and like communities, public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently he who moulds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.

—Abraham Lincoln, August 21, 1858

Hillsdale College is two things. It is first a small liberal arts college in southern Michigan boasting an old history full of struggle and distinction. It is second a

national institution, known in every corner of the land. It has been both these things for a long time.

The combination of these things is unusual. There are many liberal arts colleges that are the size of Hillsdale or larger. A few are just as old or older. For some reason Hillsdale has become one of the best-known colleges in the nation. Why is that?

The importance and the fame of Hillsdale College are not accidental. The cause is something old, something high and fundamental. It is the mission of Hillsdale. It is the relationship of that mission to the principles and heritage of our country. It is the fact that the mission, those principles, and that heritage have become controversial.

To see why Hillsdale is both famous and important, we need to understand the liberal arts and how they relate to free government. We need to see what has happened to the liberal arts, in most places where

they are studied. We need to see in what way Hillsdale is exceptional in the pursuit of the liberal arts.

What the Liberal Arts Are Not

THE RELATIONSHIP between the liberal arts and government is shown immediately by their current state. Certain new principles have in the last generation become authoritative in our land. First these principles became entrenched in the academy, where the liberal arts are supposed to live. Consequently they became authoritative in the government, and because of this the government is much changed.

Think first of the changes in the study of the liberal arts. Princeton University, one of the great universities of the world, has lately appointed a professor who believes that middle class families in the United States should pay a tax of at least 33 percent of the first \$30,000 they make to help disadvantaged people around the globe. After that, the tax should be 100 percent. So much for the right to property. The *New Yorker* calls this man, Peter Singer, "the most influential living philosopher." Along with his depreciation of the rights of free labor, he argues that certain animals are persons having "the same special claim to be protected as humans." With an eerie consistency, he also argues that euthanasia and infanticide are in some cases morally obligatory. Perhaps then it is not only that cows are to be treated like people; also people are to be treated like cows.

Over at Yale, one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the New World, the college has returned an endowment gift of \$20 million for the study of Western civilization. Yale went more than three years without implementing the program. There was controversy about it on the faculty. When he became aware of the controversy, the donor asked for the authority to approve faculty members appointed to teach in the program. This gave Yale an out, and it returned the money in the name of academic freedom. A brilliant opportunity was thereby squandered. Not long after at Stanford, the chant was heard: "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western Civ has got to go."

At the 1984 convention of the American Political Science Association, a straw poll was taken to see how the assembled doctors of political science would vote in the presidential race between Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale. You may recall that Reagan won that election with almost 60 percent of the vote. Among the political scientists, however, Mondale topped 90 percent of the vote, and much of the remaining 10 percent did

not go to Reagan, but rather to someone to the left even of Mondale. This is the phenomenon we call diversity in the modern academy.

Professor Singer and his many like-minded colleagues epitomize something fundamental and new. His views speak in direct contradiction to the distinctions that underlay the American Revolution, distinctions fundamental to the meaning of "liberal" in both "liberal democracy" and "liberal arts." The Declaration of Independence proclaims that "all men are created equal." Of course the obvious thing about human beings is that they are not equal. Some are tall, and others short. Some are pale, and others dark. Some are male, and others female. Some are active, and others less so.

What can it mean, then, that human beings are "created equal"? In order to fathom the meaning of this principle, we must expand our view. It is in relation to other creatures that the equality of human beings becomes obvious. Up close, the trees in a forest look different from one another; from a distance, or compared to a sand dune, they look alike.

In the *Federalist*, for example, there is the famous statement by James Madison: ". . . what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary."

Human beings are less than angels. This distinction echoes the Declaration itself, in which God appears four times. He is named as the Creator ("endured by their Creator with certain inalienable rights"); as the legislator (the author of the "laws of nature and of nature's God"); as the executive (Divine Providence); and as the judicial officer (the Supreme Judge of the World). The implication is clear: in His hands alone would it be safe to combine all the powers of government. When government is to be run by human beings, then it is important that the powers of government be separated. Both "external and internal controls on government" are nothing less than essential.

If man is below the angels, he is also above the beasts. In the last letter that he ever wrote, Thomas Jefferson addressed with poetic justice one aspect of the meaning of the Declaration of Independence. Writing to Roger Weightman on June 24, 1826, just ten days before he died (on the Fourth of July!) and just eighteen years before the founding of Hillsdale College, Jefferson said: ". . . the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God." If men are not angels, so also are they not horses. They are something else, something in between.

The distinction between men and beasts, on the one hand, and men and God, on the other, gives perspective and definition to the statement that “all men are created equal.” In light of that distinction, the rights of man become clear. No man should be trusted with the power of God. Government must be limited. No man may rule another as any man may rule a cow, a dog, or a horse. We do not ask our horses’ permission before we hitch them to the buggy. We do not ask our dogs’ permission before we put them on the leash. But government of human beings is different; it must be based upon the consent of the governed.

It can be protested that Professor Singer of Princeton is not an owner of slaves, whereas Thomas Jefferson was. That is true. On the other hand, Thomas Jefferson was alive in his every fiber to the distinctions between the human and the animal, and so he agonized over slavery. With his colleagues he brought principles into practice that secured both limited government and, ultimately, the abolition of slavery for the first time in human history. Professor Singer seems less clear on this distinction. He would reduce, by force it is implied, the income of all American families to less than \$30,000 per year. He would do this regardless of how hard they work or how much good they do others by what they produce. The practical consequences of his new principles begin to look quite a bit like slavery.

These changes in the academy have their echo in government as well. Over the past generation both the structure and the scope of the government have been revolutionized. Hillsdale College, like many institutions and many people, has been at odds with the government for much of its recent history because the government intrudes into every corner of private life. Hillsdale accepts no federal government support of any kind, even indirectly through aid to its students. Because of this, it must replace the massive government aid that is available through private contributions, a huge effort requiring the generosity of tens of thousands of people. If Hillsdale did not make this effort, and if these people were not generous, then Hillsdale would be compelled to take race into account in its admissions and hiring policies.

This would be an abomination anywhere, but especially so in a college that is one of the first in American history to admit blacks as students, a college which proudly welcomed the great Frederick Douglass to speak on its campus, a college whose library is built around a massive gift by the anti-slavery statesman Edward Everett, who spoke before Lincoln at Gettysburg. Hillsdale has always boasted

of the high proportion of its sons who gave their lives for the Union cause in the Civil War. From its beginning it has fought for freedom and equality. In its recent history one can see that the battle still rages today. Hillsdale, unlike most places, fights that battle. That is because it believes in the principles of liberty, which are implied in the pursuit of the liberal arts.

Nor is this the only sign of changes in the structure and scope of the government. Because legitimate government must be limited and based on consent, our Constitution was written upon the principle that powers not granted to the federal government explicitly are not available to it. It is a government of “enumerated powers.” For this reason until the 1930s most government spending was accomplished by cities and towns, and they spent mostly money that they had collected within their own boundaries. Today their share of the government pie has eroded to less than 20 percent. Meanwhile the pie itself has expanded massively. At a time when the American economy has reached unprecedented size, still the government deploys nearly half of the gross domestic product of the land.

A State of the Union report by President George Washington would address seven or eight subjects. A modern President will propose several times that many new projects in a typical speech. President Clinton proposed dozens of new programs in his 1995 State of the Union Address, in which he said famously that “the era of big government is over.” In truth, hardly anything appears beyond his purview. He proposes federal programs to supervise children after school; federal programs to hire teachers and policemen; federal programs to subsidize private businesses of wide-ranging description.

Under the force of technology and innovation, the American economy is more productive, and the American people are richer, than they have ever been. For this reason our citizens are not inclined right now to worry over much about the growth of government. But still it is true that unless men have become angels, it is dangerous to concentrate power in the hands of any of them. That fundamental fact will be true long after this economic boom is over and the next one has come and gone, too.

Especially is the situation dangerous if government is animated by principles that undermine the citizen’s claim to rights not given by government, but inherent in his nature. Another Princeton man, Woodrow Wilson, was the first President of the United States to hold the Doctor of Philosophy degree. He, like Professor Singer, was impatient

with the distinctions that underlay the limitation of government and the separation of powers.

In one of his academic writings, an essay entitled “What Is Progress?” Wilson writes:

Jefferson wrote of the “laws of Nature,” –and then by way of afterthought,–“and of Nature’s God.” And they constructed a government as they would have constructed an orrery [a mechanical model of the solar system],–to display the laws of nature. Politics in their thought was a variety of mechanics. The Constitution was founded on the law of gravitation. The government was to exist and move by virtue of the efficacy of checks and balances.

The trouble with the theory is that government is not a machine, but a living thing. It falls, not under the theory of the universe, but under the theory of organic life. It is accountable to Darwin, not to Newton. It is modified by its environment, necessitated by its tasks, shaped to its functions by the sheer pressure of life.

This sentiment did not bode well for the separation of powers, or for the doctrine of limited and enumerated powers of government. This rejection of the ground of American constitutionalism prepared the way for a rejection of the ground of rights, as they were understood in the institutions of America. Never mind that Wilson distorted the basis of those rights, which are grounded not as he said in mechanics, but rather in the natural distinctions that are obvious to the liberally educated. Once his views became established, then the way was prepared for what Franklin Roosevelt would call in a 1944 speech “new self-evident truths” that justify the writing of a “new Bill of Rights.” This new Bill of Rights undermines the old; in particular it replaces natural rights with entitlements. By this means the government of human beings is replaced with the administration of things.

This development constitutes the supreme challenge to the American people in our time. At bottom it calls forth a debate about the meaning of the human being and his status before the law. It is a subject to be taken up most profoundly in the institutions that pursue the liberal arts. That brings us finally to the mission of Hillsdale College.

The Liberal Arts and Free Government

JUST AS our nation was built upon certain principles of government, so it was built with a certain view of the liberal arts. Toward the end of their

lives, when Thomas Jefferson was eighty-two and James Madison was seventy-four, they struck up a correspondence about how to teach the law. These two men were the most distinguished living Americans. A generation before, Jefferson had been the foremost author of the Declaration of Independence, and Madison the foremost author of the Constitution of the United States. Both had been legislators. Both had been President. Together they had founded the dominant political party in the land. Now as the evening came upon them, they were thinking of the preservation of all they had built. This discussion of teaching the law expanded into a discussion of preserving the Republic.

Jefferson proposed that some sort of textbook be created or adopted. Madison replied that this would be difficult. Of course the Declaration of Independence, wrote Madison, says “everything that could be said in the same number of words.” Of course the *Federalist* is the most “authentic exposition of the text of the Constitution.” Locke and Sidney, and the Inaugural and Farewell Addresses of George Washington, are most useful, even essential readings for any student of the law in this free country. And yet, useful though these documents are, still Madison writes that it is hard to define any set of “books that will be both guides & guards for the purpose.”

Madison concludes: “. . . after all, the most effectual safeguard against heretical intrusions into the School of Politics, will be an Able & Orthodox Professor, whose course of instruction will be an example to his successors. . . .”

From discussion about a school of law, a School of Politics is born. From a discussion about which books to read, an institution is born. It is not enough to have a course of study; there must be a place of study. It is not enough to have materials to read; there must be teachers to show the meaning of what is read. The preservation of the political institutions of liberty requires an institution of a different type. This is no merely individual effort. The young cannot be trained by books alone, by documents alone, or by laws alone. They must be trained by teachers, who must themselves be trained by teachers. This is what happens in colleges. Colleges of a certain type are necessary to the preservation of liberty. They are necessary to the making of good laws. Without them the laws will lose the spirit of freedom, and then freedom itself will soon be gone.

It may seem strange that private institutions are seen as vital to the preservation of public institutions, but this is characteristic of the American constitutional system. For example, the founding

of America is replete with statements that neither liberty nor justice can survive without religion; yet religion is not to be controlled by the government. The founding of America is replete with statements that neither liberty nor justice can survive without strong and well-functioning families; yet the family is to remain a private, a sacredly private institution, protected but not controlled by the power of the law.

This is the theme and the paradox of the American Revolution. Public institutions are necessary to the preservation of private rights. And so the government and the people, the public and the private, live in a tight relationship with each other, each dependent upon the other, each benefiting from the other.

Liberal education, like religion and family, has then a sort of public standing in America. In its original sense, in the sense in which it has been practiced at Hillsdale College for over a century and a half, it operates within, it is sanctioned by, the principles of the nation just as much as is the government itself.

Hillsdale College Was Built According to This Understanding

WHAT IS the substance of this liberal education that is necessary to the preservation of freedom? We can find some information about this in the first documents of Hillsdale College.

The Articles of Incorporation of Hillsdale College date from March 1855. Their preamble states:

Whereas the denomination of Christians, Known as Free-Will-Baptists, with other friends of education, grateful to God for the inestimable blessings resulting from the prevalence of civil and religious Liberty and intelligent piety in the land, and believing that the diffusion of sound learning is essential to the perpetuity of these blessings, have founded and endowed a college at Hillsdale. . .

These "Free-Will-Baptists" believed with Thomas Jefferson that "Almighty God hath created the mind free." They saw the human being as responsible for his actions, responsible specifically to a standard established in the divine and natural order of the universe and perceivable by human reason. Because of this, the human being is naturally entitled to "civil and religious liberty."

Because of this, the human being is naturally capable of an "intelligent piety." Because of this, "sound learning" is essential to the perpetuity of human freedom and morality. Because of this, the citizen educated for liberty must explore the meaning of those "laws of nature and of nature's God."

Although these are wonderful doctrines, put into practice for the first time by the birth of the American Republic, they are nothing unusual for an American college in 1855. Similar words can be found in the preamble to the Michigan Constitution today. Similar words can be found in the preambles of 46 of the 50 state constitutions and in the religious freedom clauses of all fifty.

Like the Articles of Incorporation of Hillsdale, all of these documents group together certain things that we today often think are opposed. In the American heritage, reason and revelation go together in support of freedom and morality, which means that freedom and morality go together, too. This is the characteristically American teaching. The Declaration of Independence talks very much of freedom and government by consent, but it justifies these on the ground of the "laws of nature and of nature's God." The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, under which Michigan came into the Union, states in Article III: "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

Hillsdale College was then founded according to the same principles that gave rise to the American Union itself. From the first days it built a faculty of people inspired by these principles and ready to sacrifice for them. It has just such a faculty even today. The College has grown directly from the third of the four fundamental laws of the nation. It set out from the beginning to fulfill the need elaborated by Madison in his letter to Jefferson. It pursues that noble goal still.

Little wonder, with such a beginning, that Hillsdale should be among the first colleges in America to admit blacks into its student body. Little wonder that it should be among the first to give the same benefit to women. Little wonder that the College would be proud of the high percentage of its graduates who would give their lives to the cause of the Union and of liberty in the Civil War. Hillsdale was not, by any means, the only college built before the Civil War with these principles. But it shows from the first day a particular devotion to them. If in later days Hillsdale has demonstrated the spirit of independence to a unique degree, that

(continued on page 7)



Hillsdale Highlights

Campus News
from Hillsdale Academy

Parents, teachers, and educational reformers are taking an interest in Hillsdale Academy, Hillsdale

College's K-12 model school, which has scored in the 97th percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The Academy makes its curriculum and policies available in the two-volume *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide*. Information on the K-8 Grewcock Lower School was made available in 1995, and the volume on the McIntyre Upper School was released in 1998. Sold for \$175 per volume or \$295 as a package, the *Guide* comes with an introductory videotape, which may be purchased separately for \$10. The following table details the response since the time of publication:

	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
K-8 Guides	140	520	802	1,094	1,316	1,440
9-12 Guides					166	191
Videotapes	286	419	607	697	728	737
Inquiries	315	3,500	5,640	7,610	9,785	10,590

The K-8 *Guide* has been purchased by 309 schools and distributed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and 12 foreign countries. Individuals and at least 74 schools from 41 states, the District of Columbia and the Canadian province of Ontario have invested in the Upper School *Guide*.

To request more information on Hillsdale Academy or the College's many other ongoing programs, please fill out the order form on page 7 and return it in the enclosed envelope.



Imprimis Endowment Acknowledgments

Our thanks to Gene and Carol LaSchober of Georgia, the Castle Rock Foundation of Colorado, and the late Mrs. John J. Ide of California for generously supporting *Imprimis*. Their major endowed gifts help us reach thousands of new subscribers each year.



Dr. Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss

Home Office

Name _____ Telephone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

IMPRIMIS ORDER FORM

1-10 copies \$.50 each
25-\$10; 50-\$15; 100-\$25

FREE SHIPPING!

Qty.	Author/Title	Price
Subtotal		
Michigan residents, add 6% sales tax		
Total		

to Hillsdale College for \$ _____

College is enclosed.

- Center for Constructive Alternatives (CCA) on-campus seminars
- Shavano Institute for National Leadership off-campus seminars
- Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide Gift and Estate Planning or Hillsdale Hostel
- Hillsdale College Admissions Freedom Library Catalog (books and tapes)
- Hillsdale College Athletics Dow Leadership Development Center Seminars

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution

My check made payable to Hillsdale

Please charge my:

- VISA
- MC
- Discover



Interested in admission to Hillsdale College? Call 1-800-255-0384 and we'll lend "Hillsdale College Video Visit" to you at no cost!

(Orders only please—not an information line)

Card No.

IMPRIMIS (im-prī-mis), taking its name from the Latin term, "in the first place," is the monthly publication of Hillsdale College. Executive Editor, Ronald L. Trowbridge; Assistant Editor, Jon Corombos; Assistant, Patricia A. DuBois. Illustrations by Tom Curtis. The opinions expressed in IMPRIMIS may be but are not necessarily the views of Hillsdale College. Copyright © 2000. Permission to reprint in whole or part is hereby granted, provided a version of the following credit line is used: "Reprinted by permission from IMPRIMIS, the monthly speech digest of Hillsdale College." **Subscription free upon request.** ISSN 0277-8432. IMPRIMIS trademark registered in U.S. Patent and Trade Office #1563325.

(continued from page 5)

fact is but the flower of a planting made generations before in the first soil of the Republic.

Conclusion

IT IS then no accident that Hillsdale has run afoul of the federal government. That government has today assumed a new form, the form of a modern centralized administrative state, because it is devoted to a new purpose. This new purpose is built upon principles incompatible with the first principles of our nation, to which Hillsdale remains devoted.

We at Hillsdale are not likely to be able perfectly to meet the high standards laid down by the principles of the College, which are also the first and greatest principles of the nation in which we live. But although we will likely fall short, we will hold up those standards, and we will be ready to be

judged by them. In so doing we will prepare our students to live up to them, too, insofar as it is possible for human beings to do so.

In this respect Hillsdale College is unique. It pursues the liberal arts first and foremost as an academic task. It pursues them with rigor, with love, and with devotion. Because of that it is at the same time something more than an academic institution. It is an institution of freedom, of just the kind that our Fathers believed would be necessary to the preservation of freedom. To fulfilling that duty, we at Hillsdale will continue our devotion. In that task we act at once as seekers of the truth, as creatures of the Almighty, and as citizens of the greatest Republic ever built. 🏛️

IMPRIMIS

VOLUME 29 • NUMBER 6

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
Hillsdale College
33 East College Street
Hillsdale, Michigan 49242

600

CHANGING ADDRESS?

Please use the enclosed
postpaid envelope or
telephone 1-800-437-2268
or e-mail <imprimis@hillsdale.edu>.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Hillsdale College