

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## John Harvard, Calvinist

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John Harvard (1607-1638), whose generosity is reflected in the University which bears his name, was an elder of the church at Charlestown, Massachusetts, near Boston. Born in England, he came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1637. Living only one year in the new world, he left his library and half his estate to the college at Cambridge, which gratefully took his name in 1639.

There is a memorial to John Harvard in the chapel of his alma mater, Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, placed there by graduates of Harvard University: "In memory of John Harvard, A. M., a member of Emmanuel College who emigrated to Massachusetts Bay and there dying in 1638 bequeathed to a college newly established by the General Court his library and one-half his estate. Wherefore his name is borne by Harvard College, that eldest of the seminaries which advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity throughout America."

### *A Love of God and Learning*

John Harvard was an American for only 14 months, yet few other names are so closely identified with early America. His fame is a century and a half older than that of George Washington's or Thomas Jefferson's, yet little is known of him. He left no books, essays, or letters; even his will was oral. In the nineteenth century one writer called him "the 'Melchizedek' of the first age of the Colony of Massachusetts. He is known to us only as a 'priest

of the Most High God,' and as one who 'gave gifts.' So far as any certified facts concerning his lineage or circumstances have been presented to us, he is 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days,' nor a known resting place for his mortal dust." That lack of information about John Harvard has been partially filled by more recent scholarship, but he still remains one of the more shadowy figures of early America.

The anonymous author of the pamphlet "New England's First Fruits," the first account of Harvard College, wrote of Harvard:

After God had carried us safe to New England and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government: One of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning, and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust. And as we were thinking and consulting how to effect this great work, it pleased God to stir up the heart of one Mr. Harvard (a godly gentleman and a lover of learning, there living amongst us) to give one-half of his estate (it being in all about L1700) toward the erecting of a college, and all his library: After him another gave

L300, others after them cast in more, and the State added the rest.....

The early Harvard College reflected the theological views of John Harvard. Harvard was a Calvinist, a believer of those doctrines that the unsympathetic historian J. A. Froude has described in these words:

When all else has failed -- when patriotism has covered its face, and human courage has broken down -- when intellect has yielded, as Gibbon says, "with a smile or a sigh," content to philosophize in the closet, and abroad worship with the vulgar -- when emotion and sentiment and tender imaginative piety have become the handmaids of superstition, and have dreamt themselves into forgetfulness that there is any difference between lies and truth -- the slavish form of belief called Calvinism, in one or other of its many forms, has borne ever an inflexible front to illusion and mendacity, and has preferred rather to be ground to powder like flint than to bend before violence, or melt under enervating temptation.

John Harvard came to America at age 29. He left England for religious, not economic, reasons. He died 14 months after his arrival of "consumption," and left a young widow and no children. Nearly all his family had died of disease in England several years before he and his wife emigrated.

The College he helped found was dedicated to the glory of Christ (*In Christi Gloriam*) and later dedicated to Christ and the Church (*Christo et Ecclesiae*). "Truth," (*Veritas*), from the Gospel of *John*, is emblazoned upon its seal. Samuel Eliot Morison, the College's historian, reported that "Her presidents and tutors insisted that there could be no true knowledge or wisdom without Christ."

## *Emmanuel College*

John Harvard was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge University. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, was so named because it would be the site of the College.) Emmanuel was founded by the Puritans for the purpose of providing the church with a

learned ministry. Among the graduates of Emmanuel were William Blackstone, Nathaniel Ward, John Cotton, and Thomas Hooker. Of Emmanuel College, Morison wrote: "The robust Christianity of [Laurence] Chaderton, the first Master of Emmanuel and the tutor of William Perkins, was diffused throughout the College; and his disciples gave the English puritan movement a stout morale. Emmanuel bred stiff-backed Christians who had the moral courage to withstand social pressure, and the physical courage to brave ocean and wilderness for the faith that was in them."

One of Harvard College's first graduates, William Hubbard (1642), wrote: "It was [a] matter of great encouragement to those who had laid out their estates and hazarded their lives to make a settled plantation here, to see one of the schools of the prophets set up; that from thence they might be supplied with persons fit to manage the affairs both of church and state...." "The ideal of learning through Christ," wrote Morison, "this purpose of attaining a more perfect knowledge of God by the discipline of the mind, dominated Harvard College at least until the American Revolution. Only a burning desire to serve God, and to provide posterity with means to a greater knowledge of God, could have inspired the devotion and sacrifice that went into this 'poor college in a wilderness.' And John Harvard, in the words imputed to him by Wilson, declared that ambition to serve the commonwealth, and loving-kindness toward future generations of youth, were inferior motives, in his mind, to enhancing the glory of his risen Lord."

## *The College Laws*

The way in which this purpose was to be executed reflects John Harvard's love of learning: Nothing second-rate would please God. The College Laws during the 1640s included the following:

1. When any scholar is able to read Tully or such like classical Latin author *ex tempore* and make and speak true Latin in verse and prose *suo (ut aiunt) Marte*, and decline perfectly the paradigms of nouns and verbs in the Greek tongue, then may

he be admitted into the college, nor shall any claim admission before such qualification.

2. Every one shall consider the main end of his life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (*John 17:3*) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottome as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.

3. Seeing the Lord giveth wisdom, every one shall seriously by prayer in secret seek wisdom of him (*Proverbs 2:2-3*).

4. Every one shall so exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day that they be ready to give an account of their proficiency therein, both in theoretical observations of language and logic and in practical and spiritual truths, as their tutor shall require according to their several abilities respectively, seeing the entrance of the word giveth light (*Psalms 119:130*).

5. In the public church assembly they shall carefully shun all gestures that show any contempt or neglect of God's ordinances and be ready to give an account to their tutors of their profiting and to use the helps of storing themselves with knowledge, as their tutors shall direct them.

6. They shall eschew all profanations of God's holy name, attributes, word, ordinances, and times of worship, and study with reverence and love carefully to retain God and his truth in their minds; else let them know that notwithstanding the learning, God may give them up to strong delusions and in the end to a reprobate mind (*2 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Romans 1:28*).

7. They shall honor as their parents magistrates, elders, tutors, and aged persons....

8. They shall be slow to speak and eschew not only oaths, lies, and uncertain rumors, but likewise all idle, foolish, bitter scoffing, frothy wanton words, and offensive gestures.

9. None shall pragmatically intrude or intermeddle in other men's affairs.

10. During their residence, they shall studiously redeem their time, observe the general hours appointed for all the scholars, and the special hour for their own lecture, and then diligently attend the lectures without any disturbance by word or gesture....

11. None shall under any pretence whatsoever frequent the company and society of such men as lead an ungirt and dissolute life. Neither shall any without the license of the overseers of the College be of the artillery or train-band [militia]. Nor shall any without the license of the overseers of the College, his tutor's leave, or in his absence the call of parents or guardians go out to another town.

12. No scholar shall buy, sell, or exchange any thing to the value of six pence without the allowance of his parents, guardians or tutors. And whoever is found to have sold or bought any such thing without acquainting their tutor or parents shall forfeit the value of the commodity, or the restoring of it, according to the discretion of the president.

13. The scholars shall never use their mother tongue, except that in public exercises of oratory or such like they be called to make them in English.

14. If any scholar being in health shall be absent from prayer or lectures, except in case of urgent necessity or by the leave of his tutor, he shall be liable to admonition (or such punishment as the president shall think meet) if he offend above once a week.

15. Every scholar shall be called by his surname only till he be invested with his first degree; except he be a fellow commoner or a knight's eldest son, or of superior nobility.

16. No scholar shall under any pretence of recreation or other cause whatever (unless foreshowed and allowed by the president or his tutor) be absent from his studies or appointed exercises above an hour at morning bever [breakfast], half an hour at afternoon bever [snack]; an hour and a half at dinner [noon] and so long at supper.

17. If any scholar shall transgress any of the laws of God or the House [College] out of perverseness or apparent negligence, after twice admonition he shall be liable if not adult to correction; if adult his name shall be given up to the overseers of the College that he may be publicly dealt with after the desert of his fault, but in grosser offenses such gradual proceeding shall not be expected.

18. Every scholar that on proof is found able to read the original of the Old and New Testament into the Latin tongue, and to resolve them logically, with all being of honest life and conversation, and at any public act has the approbation of the overseers and Master of the College, may be invested with his first degree.

19. Every scholar that giveth up in writing a synopsis or summa of logic, natural and moral philosophy, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, and is ready to defend his theses or positions, with all skilled in the originals as aforesaid and still continues honest and studious, at any public act after trial he shall be capable of the second degree of Master of Arts.

## *Curriculum and Schedule*

The curriculum and daily schedule at Harvard College were rigorous. Classes were held six days a week, from 8 in the morning to 5 in the afternoon,

with breaks for "bevers," dinner, and supper. "New England's First Fruits," an anonymous pamphlet published in London in 1643, details the daily schedule:

The second and third day [Monday and Tuesday] of the week, read lectures, as follows: "To the first year at eighth of the clock in the morning Logic, the first three quarters; Physics the last quarter.

"To the second year, at the ninth hour, Ethics and Politics, at convenient distances of time.

"To the third year at the tenth [hour], Arithmetic and Geometry, the first three quarters; Astronomy the last.

### **Afternoon**

"The first year disputes at the second hour.

"The second year at the third hour.

"The third year at the fourth every one in his art.

"The fourth day [Wednesday] read Greek.

"To the first year the Etymology and Syntax at the eighth hour.

"To the second at the ninth hour, Prosodia and Dialects.

### **Afternoon**

"The first year at second hour practice the precepts of Grammar in such authors as have variety of words.

"The second year at third hour practice in Poesy, Nonnus, Duport, or the like.

"The third year perfect their Theory before noon, and exercise Style, Composition, Imitation, Epitome, both in Prose and Verse, afternoon.

"The fifth day [Thursday] reads Hebrew and the Eastern tongues. Grammar to the first year, hour the eighth.

"To the second year, Chaldee at the ninth hour.

"To the third year, Syriac at the tenth hour.

#### **Afternoon**

"The first year practice in the Bible at the second hour.

"The second in Ezra and Daniel at the third hour.

"The third at the fourth hour in Trostius New Testament.

"The sixth day [Friday] reads Rhetoric to all at the eighth hour.

"Declamations at the ninth [hour] so ordered that every scholar may declaim once a month. The rest of the day *vacat Rhetoricis studiis*.

"The seventh day [Saturday] reads Divinity Catechetical at the eighth hour, Commonplaces at the ninth hour.

#### **Afternoon**

"The first hour reads History in the winter; the nature of plants in the summer.

"The sum of every lecture shall be examined before the new lecture be read."

### *John Harvard's Library*

Harvard sailed to America when he was 29 and died in America at 30. Despite his youth, the library he left Harvard College -- over 400 volumes, 329 titles -- bespeaks a man with breadth of learning. Three-quarters of his books were theological: Chrysostom, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Philip Melancthon, Theodore Beza, Robert Bellarmine, William Ames, Jerome Zanchius, and Henry Ainsworth, among others. There were also many Greek and Roman writers in the originals as well as translations. In comparison with English libraries, the Harvard library was not insignificant. Emmanuel College library, for example, had 600

books in 1637. Samuel Eliot Morison commented on Harvard's library in *The Founding of Harvard College*: "That such a collection could be brought out to a country only seven years settled is striking evidence of the Puritan purpose to maintain intellectual standards in the New World." Most of Harvard's books were destroyed by fire in 1764, but one survived: John Downname's *Christian Warfare Against the Devil, World, and Flesh*.

### *Higher Education Today*

Pointing out how far Harvard University in 1993 falls short of the intentions of its Calvinist founders is too easy. While the University has grown to be one of the most esteemed in the world, it has abandoned its purpose of creating learned and godly Christian men.

More important than seeing how far Harvard has declined in purpose is understanding how far contemporary Christian institutions are from the academic standards set by the founders of the first University in the English new world. For the most part, American Christians have abandoned higher education to the secularists, the government, and the Roman Catholics. The result is not only an unlearned ministry, but also a Biblically illiterate laity.

What is worse, contemporary Christians generally do not show the same concern for knowledge and education that the first Americans -- the Calvinists -- did. They founded a college 16 years after landing in the wilderness, lest the light of the Gospel burn out in the new world. We, who are much more affluent than they, are not even aware of the dark.