

September 18, 1936

[Harvard Tercentenary Celebration]

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FDR Speech File

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
HARVARD TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1936

I am here today in a joint and several capacity. First, as the President of the United States. Second, as Chairman of the United States Harvard Tercentenary Commission, which is composed of five members of the Senate, five members of the House of Representatives, a representative of the United States Army and one of the Navy, and two representatives of the Universities of the United States, the distinguished Presidents of the Universities of California and North Carolina. Finally, I am here as a son of Harvard who gladly returns to this spot where men have sought truth for three hundred years.

The roots of Harvard are deep in the past. It is pleasant to remember today that this meeting is being held in pursuance of an adjournment expressly taken one hundred years ago on motion of Josiah Quincy.

At that time many of the Alumni of Harvard were sorely troubled concerning the state of the Nation. Andrew Jackson was President. On the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Harvard College, Alumni again were sorely troubled. Grover Cleveland was President. Now, on the three hundredth anniversary, I am President.

In the words of Euripides:

"There be many shapes of mystery.
And many things God makes to be,
Past hope or fear.
And the end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man sought.
So hath it fallen here."

In spite of fears, Harvard and the Nation of which it is a part have marched steadily to new and successful achievements, changing their formations and their strategy to meet new conditions; but marching always under the old banner of freedom.

s/dm *New England*
In the days of ~~witch-burning~~, it was Increase
^

Mather who told the students of Harvard that they were "pledged to the word of no particular master", that they should "above all find a friend in truth."

That became the creed of Harvard. Behind the tumult
and the shouting it is still the creed of Harvard.

In this day of modern witch-burning, when freedom
of thought has been exiled from many lands which were once
its home, it is the part of Harvard and America to stand for
the freedom of the human mind and to carry the torch of truth.

The truth is great and will prevail. For centuries
that grand old saying has been a rock of support for persecuted
men.

But it depends on men's tolerance, self-restraint,
and devotion to freedom, not only for themselves but also
for others, whether the truth will prevail through free
research, free discussion and the free intercourse of civilized
men, or will prevail only after suppression and suffering --
when none cares whether it prevails or not.

Love of liberty and freedom of thought is a most
admirable attribute of Harvard. But it is not an exclusive
possession of Harvard or of any other University in America.

Love of liberty and freedom of thought are as profound in the homes, on the farms and in the factories of this country as in any University. Liberty is the air Americans breathe. Our Government is based on the belief that a people can be both strong and free, that civilized men need no restraint but that imposed by themselves against abuse of freedom. Nevertheless, it is the peculiar task of Harvard and every other University and College in this country to foster and maintain not only freedom within its own walls but also tolerance, self-restraint, fair-dealing and devotion to the truth throughout America.

Many students who have come to Harvard in the past have left it with inquiring and open minds, ready to render service to the Nation. They have been given much and from them much has been expected. They have rendered great service.

It is, I am confident, of the inner essence of Harvard that its sons have fully participated in each great drama of our Nation's history. They have met the challenge of the event; they have seen in the challenge opportunity to

fulfill the end the University exists to serve. As the Chief Executive of the Nation I bring you the solicitation of our people. In the name of the American Nation I venture to ask you to cherish its traditions and to fulfill its highest opportunities.

The Nation needs from Harvard today men like Charles William Eliot, William James, and Justice Holmes, who made their minds swords in the service of American freedom.

They served America with courage, wisdom and human understanding. They were without hatred, malice or selfishness. They were civilized gentlemen.

The past of Harvard has been deeply distinguished. This University will never fail to produce its due proportion of those judged successful by the common standard of success. Of such the world has need. But to produce that type is not, I am sure, the ultimate justification that you would make for Harvard. Rather do we here search for the atmosphere in which men are produced who have either the rare quality of vision

or the ability to appreciate the significance of vision when it appears. Where there is vision, there is tolerance; and where there is tolerance, there is peace. And I beg you to think of tolerance and peace not as indifferent and neutral virtues but as active and positive principles.

I am not, you will observe, conceiving of the University as a mere spectator of the great national and international drama in which all of us, despite ourselves, are involved. Here are to be trained not lawyers and doctors merely, not teachers and businessmen merely; here is to be trained in the fullest sense - man.

Harvard should train men to be citizens in that high Athenian sense which compels a man to live his life unceasingly aware that its civic significance is its most abiding, and that the rich individual diversity of the truly civilized state is born only of the wisdom to choose ways to achieve which do not hurt one's neighbors.

I am asking the sons of Harvard to dedicate themselves not only to the perpetuation, but also to the enlargement of that spirit. To pay ardent reverence to the past but to recognize no less the direction of the future; to understand philosophies we do not accept and hopes we find it difficult to share; to account the service of mankind the highest ambition a man can follow, and to know that there is no calling so humble that it cannot be instinct with that ambition; never to be indifferent to what may affect our neighbors; always as Coleridge said, to put truth in the first place and not in the second; these I would affirm are the qualities by which the "real" is distinguished from the "nominal" scholar.

It is only when we have attained this philosophy that we can "above all find a friend in truth." When America is dedicated to that end by the common will of all her citizens, then America can accomplish her highest ideals. To the measure that Harvard participates in that dedication, Harvard will be justified of her effort, her purpose, and her success in the fourth century of her life.

END

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
DELIVERED AT THE HARVARD TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION
SEPTEMBER 18, 1936

President Conant, distinguished guests, my fellow alumni:

I am here today in a joint and several capacity. First, as the President of the United States. Second, as Chairman of the United States Harvard Tercentenary Commission, which is composed of five members of the Senate, five members of the House of Representatives, a representative of the United States Army and one of the Navy, and two representatives of the Universities of the United States, the distinguished Presidents of the (Universities) University of California and the University of North Carolina. Finally, I am here as a son of Harvard who gladly returns to this spot where men have sought truth for three hundred years.

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At that time many of the Alumni of Harvard were sorely troubled concerning the state of the Nation. Andrew Jackson was President. (Applause) On the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Harvard College, Alumni again

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

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maya inonu , qeltnesvirL bivinik lo zeltnesvirL ent lo zeltnesvirL

were sorely troubled. Grover Cleveland was President.

(Applause) Now, on the three hundredth anniversary, I am President. (Laughter, applause)

To go back a little further, in the words of Euripides:

"There be many shapes of mystery.
And many things God makes to be,
Past hope or fear.
And the end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man sought.
So hath it fallen here."

(Applause)

And in spite of fears Harvard and the Nation of which it is a part have marched steadily to new and successful achievements, changing their formations and their strategy to meet new conditions; but marching always under the old banner of freedom.

In the olden days of New England, it was Increase Mather who told the students of Harvard that they were "pledged to the word of no particular master", that they should "above all find a friend in truth."

That became the creed of Harvard. Behind the tumult and the shouting it is still the creed of Harvard.

In this day of modern witch-burning, (laughter) when freedom of thought has been exiled from many lands which were once its home, it is the part of Harvard and America to stand for the freedom of the human mind and to carry the torch of truth.

For centuries, the grand old saying, "The truth is great and will prevail," (For centuries that grand old saying) has been a rock of support for persecuted men.

But it depends on men's tolerance, self-restraint, and devotion to freedom, not only for themselves but also for others, whether the truth will prevail through free research, free discussion and the free intercourse of civilized men, or will prevail only after suppression and suffering -- when none cares whether it prevails or not.

Love of liberty and freedom of thought is a most admirable attribute of Harvard. But it is not an exclusive possession of Harvard nor of any other University in America or anywhere else. (Applause) Love of liberty and freedom of thought are as profound in the homes, on the farms and in the factories of this country as in any University. Liberty is the air that we Americans breathe. Our Government is based on the belief that a people can be both strong and free, that civilized men need no restraint but that imposed by themselves against abuse of freedom. Nevertheless, it is the peculiar task of Harvard and of every other University and College in this country to foster and maintain not only freedom within its own walls but also tolerance, self-restraint, fair-dealing and devotion to the truth throughout America.

Many students who have come to Harvard in the past have left it with inquiring and open minds, ready to render service to the Nation. They have been given much and from them much

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It is, I am confident, of the inner essence of Harvard that its sons have fully participated in each great drama of our Nation's history. They have met the challenge of the event; they have seen in the challenge opportunity to fulfill the end the University exists to serve. As the Chief Executive of the Nation I bring to you the solicitation of our people. In the name of the American Nation I venture to ask you to cherish its traditions and to fulfill its highest opportunities.

(The Nation needs from Harvard today) We need in the days to come as we needed in the past from Harvard men like Charles William Eliot, William James, and Mr. Justice Holmes, who made their minds swords in the service of American freedom.

They served America with courage, wisdom and human understanding. They were without hatred, malice or selfishness. They were civilized gentlemen.

The past of Harvard has been deeply distinguished. This University will never fail to produce its due proportion of those judged successful by the common standard of success. Of such the world has need. But to produce that type is not, (I am sure,) the ultimate justification that you would make for Harvard. Rather do we here search for the atmosphere in which men are produced who have either the rare quality of vision or the ability to appreciate the significance of vision when it appears. Where there is vision, there is

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Harvard should train men to be citizens in (that) a high Athenian sense which compels a man to live his life unceasingly aware that its civic significance is its most abiding, and that the rich individual diversity of the truly civilized state is born only of the wisdom to choose ways to achieve (which) ways that do not hurt one's neighbors.

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STATEMENTS FILE

Shorthand By Kannee

FOR THE PRESS

CONFIDENTIAL

SEPTEMBER 17, 1936

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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This address of the President to be delivered in the Harvard Tercentenary Theatre in connection with the Harvard University Tercentenary celebration on Friday afternoon, September 18, 1936.
MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE UNTIL RELEASED.

Release upon delivery, expected about 3:10 P.M., Daylight Saving Time.

Please safeguard against premature release.

STEPHEN EARLY
Assistant Secretary to the President

I am here today in a joint and several capacity. First, as the President of the United States. Second, as Chairman of the United States Harvard Tercentenary Commission, which is composed of five members of the Senate, five members of the House of Representatives, a representative of the United States Army and one of the Navy, and two representatives of the Universities of the United States, the distinguished Presidents of the Universities of California and North Carolina. Finally, I am here as a son of Harvard who gladly returns to this spot where men have sought truth for three hundred years.

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[Harvard Speech,
1936]

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Do not let us conceal from ourselves that this is a hazardous enterprise; the academic calling would not have won its place in the tradition of western civilization had it been otherwise. It is always a struggle with the unknown. Often it is an endeavor to build a track through the desert. Whether it be medicine or the law, whether it be economics or philosophy, the ultimate aim is to give men the means of mastery over their lives. It is hazardous, because it may involve scrutiny of ancient conventions from which in each age we can free ourselves only because the compulsion of the facts leaves us no alternative. Our standards of truth may not vary. But there is no meaning in our history unless we learn from it that each epoch requires its own application of abiding principles to an environment that is never stationary. I cherish for this University the high duty of making the meaning of our effort as a Nation known to those who live by its results. Here the clamor of the market-place is still. Here men may see with the clarity that learning should confer the larger horizon it is so difficult for others to descry. To promulgate his insights so that the voice of Reason may be heard; to do so with independence of the myriad interests that compete for his support; to be free and to be brave; to see through pretensions of class interest or prejudice or power; that surely is the vocation of the scholar whom Harvard is to create. I know no higher task in this Nation. For only through

the insights of its scholars can this Nation live amply. Their insights are the basis of effective statesmanship. There is no American without pride in Charles William Eliot. He is not only the founder of the modern Harvard in a special degree; his standard has become part of all that is best in academic education in America. There is no American without pride in William James. There, in the full sense of the word, was a free man. His love of America was a love of humanity. He made his philosophy, at least to a layman's understanding, an effort to add to the stature of man. There is no American who does not feel pride in Mr. Justice Holmes. He made of learning and the law a key to unlock the mysteries of society. By sheer love of truth he was able to transcend the prison of personal environment and make his method of analysis a sword in the service of American freedom. I mention these names only; I mention them because each in his own distinctive way turned fears into hopes and knew how to merge the historic beauty of the old with the solid contributions of a new time as a part of a continuing process of civilization. Each of them built a straight path from his special task to the central highroad of America. Each of them caught the significance of new deeds demanding urgent attention. Most important, each of them by the relentless honesty of his mind made his insights a means of moral elevation for the age to which he belonged. Respect for them became part of the Nation's self-respect.

This University will never fail to produce its due proportion of men who are successful as judged by the common standard of success. Of such the world has need. But to produce that type is not, I am sure, the ultimate justification that you would make for Harvard. Rather do we here search for the atmosphere in which men are produced who have either the rare quality of vision or the ability to appreciate the significance of men of vision when they appear.

Harvard speech
President 19
Concord

Today we do not merely celebrate a great past to which we are all in heavy debt. We meet also to dedicate ourselves to a future we have to make worthy of that past. A university is something more than a society of scholars who seek knowledge for its own sake. For us, in America at least, it is an essential part of the living fabric of our civilization, expressing and thereby vindicating a faith that it amplifies and enriches. For all of us, I am sure, the greatness of Harvard has been its ability to function as a microcosm of the American ideal. There has been learning, but the glory of the learning has been its relation to that wisdom through which is handed down the torch of our civilized life.

To the enlargement of that wisdom the Harvard of the next age is committed. How can it do so in a manner befitting its past? Above all, it must be free to seek the truth. No creed, no dogma must impede its right relentlessly to search into the true foundations of enduring society. A university that is limited in its right of inquiry has lost the primary condition of wisdom. We, as Harvard men, must claim for the College we love that no man and no system jeopardize that right. It is the sole highroad to the truth; and by the truth alone can we continue to be free.

The right of inquiry presupposes the courage to inquire significantly. This epoch confronts a challenge as profound as any since the foundation of the College. Always, Harvard has been an integral part of that which proclaims the right of men to search for the good life. That quest was the purpose which brought to these shores those pioneers who in the first years of this historic Commonwealth gave of their scanty means to make an institution which should be a worthy temple of the human spirit. That purpose also guided those of its sons who learned here in the critical years before the Revolution that without freedom to direct their own lives the ideals of the Pilgrim Fathers were beyond attainment.

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Where there is vision, there is tolerance; and where there is tolerance, there is peace. And I beg you to think of tolerance and peace not as indifferent and neutral virtues but as active and positive principles. It is the business of Harvard to inculcate these qualities with passion in her sons. Viewed in proper perspective, they are heroic qualities; for they imply in their holders the power of self-sacrifice, the ability to grapple with new difficulties, a temper of mind that is consistently generous, a mood of heart that sees in violence of every kind the enemy of truth.

I am not, you will observe, conceiving of the university as a mere spectator of the great national and international drama in which all of us, despite ourselves, are involved. A disinterested actor, if you will, but an actor called day by day to pledge afresh the claims of reason above all competing claims. Here are to be trained not lawyers and doctors merely, not teachers and businessmen merely; here is to be trained in the fullest sense - men. Those who pass from Harvard to the great world should go out servants of truth, and not of authority. They should be inspired by the belief that life is a noble calling, degraded always when it lacks convictions stoutly held. Harvard should train men to be citizens in that high Athenian sense which compels a man to live his life unceasingly aware that its civic significance is its most abiding, and that the rich individual diversity of the truly civilized state is born only of the wisdom to choose ways to achieve which do not hurt one's neighbors. For what above all this Republic demands of her citizens is loyalty to the creed it was created to fulfill.

It was Increase Mather who told the students of Harvard that they were "pledged to the word of no particular master", that they should "above all find a friend in truth". It was President Leverett who insisted that "without any manner of doubt whatever, all humane matters must be tested by philosophy".

It was President Hoar who sought "any advice or device by which we may become not only nominal but real scholars". It is the spirit which lies behind those words which we are here to reaffirm today. I am asking the sons of Harvard to dedicate themselves not only to the perpetuation, but also to the enlargement of that spirit. To refuse to confound the conventional with the necessary; to pay ardent reverence to the past but to recognize no less the direction of the future; to be eager imaginatively, to understand philosophies we do not accept and hopes we find it difficult to share; to account the service of mankind the highest ambition a man can follow, and to know that there is no calling so humble that it cannot be instinct with that ambition; never to be indifferent to what may affect our neighbors, always as Coleridge said, to put truth in the first place and not in the second; these I would affirm are the qualities by which the "real" is distinguished from the "nominal" scholar. It is as we bring this temper to our understanding of the universe that, in a creative way, our "humane matters" become transmuted into a philosophy that gives us control of the destiny we fulfill. It is only when we have attained this philosophy that we can "above all find a friend in truth". When America is dedicated to that end by the common will of all her citizens, then she can accomplish her highest ideals; and to the measure that Harvard participates in that dedication, she will be justified of her effort and her purpose.

~~_____~~ joint and several

I am here today in a ~~several~~ capacity. First,
^{The} as President of the United States. Second, as Chairman
of the United States Harvard Tercentenary Commission,
which is composed of five members of the Senate, five
members of the House of Representatives, a representative
of the United States Army and one of the Navy, and two
representatives of the universities of the United States,
the distinguished Presidents of the Universities of
California and North Carolina. Finally, I am here as
a son of Harvard who ^{gladly returns to} ~~comes~~ this spot where men have
sought truth for three hundred years.

The roots of Harvard are deep in the past. It is
pleasant to remember today that this ~~very~~ meeting ~~of the~~
~~Association of the Alumni of Harvard College~~ is being held
in pursuance of an adjournment expressly taken ~~at the~~
~~meeting held on the two hundredth anniversary in 1880~~ ^{one hundred years ago} on
motion of Josiah Quincy.

At that time the ^{then} ~~Harvard~~ Alumni were sorely troubled
~~by~~ ^{and} the state of the Nation. Andrew Jackson was President.
On the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding
of Harvard College, ~~the~~ Alumni again were sorely troubled.
Grover Cleveland was President. Now, on the three hundredth
anniversary, I am President.

In the words of Euripides:

"There be many shapes of mystery,
And many things God makes to be,
Past hope or fear.
And the end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man sought.
So hath it fallen here."

In

In spite of fears, Harvard and the Nation have marched steadily to new and ~~unquestioned~~ achievements, changing their formations ^{and their strategy} to meet new conditions; but marching always under the old banner of freedom.

In the days of witch-burning, it was Increase Mather who told the students of Harvard that they were "pledged to the word of no particular master", that they should "above all find a friend in truth."

That became the creed of Harvard. *Behind the Tumult and the Shouting, it is still the creed of Harvard.*
In this day of modern witch-burning, when freedom of thought has been exiled from many lands which were once its home, it is the part of Harvard and America to stand for the freedom of the human mind and to carry the torch of truth.

→ ~~Magna Charta et Pro hac vice~~. For centuries that ~~old~~ saying has been a rock of support for persecuted men.

The truth is great and will prevail.

But it depends on men's tolerance, self-restraint, and devotion to freedom, not only for themselves but also for others, whether the truth will prevail through free research, free discussion and the free intercourse of civilized men, or will prevail only after suppression and suffering - when none cares whether it prevails or not.

Love of liberty and freedom of thought is a ~~conspicuous~~ most admirable attribute of Harvard. But it is not an exclusive possession of Harvard or ^{of} any other university in America.

America. Love of liberty ^{and freedom of thought are} as profound in the homes, on the farms and in the factories of this country as in any university. Liberty is the air Americans breathe. Our Government is based on the belief that a people can be both strong and free, that civilized men need no restraint but that imposed by themselves ^{and a love of freedom.} Nevertheless, it is the peculiar task of Harvard and every other university and college in this country to foster and maintain not only freedom within its own walls but also tolerance, self-restraint, ^{fair dealing} and devotion to the truth throughout America.

A Many students who have come to Harvard in the past have left it with inquiring and open minds, ready to render service to the Nation. They have been given much and from them much has been expected. They have rendered great service. ~~Harvard men have always been ready to die for their country. But this Nation needs more Harvard men who are ready to live for their country.~~

The Nation needs from Harvard today men like Charles William Eliot, William James, and Justice Holmes, who made their minds swords in the service of American freedom.

They served America with courage, wisdom and human understanding. They were without hatred, malice or selfishness. They were civilized gentlemen.

The past of Harvard has been deeply distinguished.

B ~~In the future, I am confident, will be even more distinguished. It will be, if the endless generations of Harvard men streaming away to eternity live their lives in the true spirit of the University.~~

I know no finer expression of that spirit than the words of Pericles: "The whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men; and their story is graven not only on the stone of their native earth, but lives on far away without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men's lives. For you now it remains to rival what they have done and, knowing the secret of happiness to be freedom and the secret of freedom a brave heart, not idly to stand aside from the enemy's onset."