

PURITANS AND THE BIBLE

★ **In 1630**, while still aboard the ship that brought them across the ocean, John Winthrop preached a sermon titled **“A Model of Christian Charity.”** Just as one would avoid shipwreck at sea, said Winthrop, so they must avoid similar calamity on land. The only way to do that was to follow *“the counsel of Micah, to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. For this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man.”* If they would so conduct themselves, *“the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us.”* They were *“entered into covenant with [God] for this work.”* Winthrop saw the Puritan venture as a way of demonstrating how nations could prosper and be blessed. God, Winthrop said, would *“make us a praise and glory,”* so much so that *“men will say of succeeding plantations: ‘the Lord make it like that of New England.’”* In short, *“we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us.”*

★ **In 1636:** The Puritans, in the first decade of their colony, founded a college, which would soon take the name of Harvard. Patterned after Cambridge University, from which most Puritan ministers had graduated, Harvard College faithfully reflected the Puritan community. The “rules and precepts” of 1646 stipulated: *“Let every Student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, **the main end of his life and studies is, 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. And seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, Let every one seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seeke it of him”* (Prov. 2:3). **The Bible was to be read twice a day**, with all students expected to be *“ready to give an account of their proficiency therein.”* Harvard’s logo – the Crimson shield – which now reads simply “Veritas” (Truth) was originally **“Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae,”** (**“Truth for Christ and Church.”**) Christians were responsible for the founding of numerous colleges including most of the Ivy League Colleges: Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, Columbia, William and Mary, Queen’s College (Rutgers University), and Brown. The **first Bible** printed in America was in the native Algonquin Indian Language by Puritan missionary John Eliot in 1663; nearly 120 years before the first English language Bible was printed in America. Eliot’s ministry to America’s natives earned him the title “Apostle to the Indians.”

PURITANS AND EDUCATION

QUESTIONS A YOUNG COLONIAL CHILD WOULD BE ASKED BY HIS PARENTS. WOULD YOU KNOW THE ANSWERS?

Who was the first man ?	Adam.
Who was the first woman ?	Eve.
Who was the first Murderer ?	Cain.
Who was the first Martyr ?	Abel.
Who was the first Translated ?	Enoch.
Who was the oldest Man ?	Methuselah.
Who built the Ark ?	Noah.
Who was the Patientest Man ?	Job.
Who was the Meekest Man ?	Moses.
Who led Israel into Canaan ?	Joshua.
Who was the strongest Man ?	Samson.
Who killed Goliah ?	David.
Who was the wisest Man ?	Solomon.
Who was in the Whale's Belly?	Jonah.
Who saves lost Men ?	Jesus Christ.
Who is Jesus Christ ?	The Son of God.
Who was the Mother of Christ ?	Mary.
Who betrayed his Master ?	Judas.
Who denied his Master ?	Peter.
Who was the first Christian Martyr?	Stephen.
Who was chief Apostle of the Gentiles ?	Saul.

THE NEW ENGLAND PRIMER

For centuries, children in America learned the alphabet through the New England Primer. Millions of young Americans were educationally weaned on this small book, which was full of biblical principles. Each letter of the alphabet pointed back to the Bible. Noah Webster wrote about the Primer: "It taught millions to read and not one to sin." It was first published between 1687 and 1690 by English printer Benjamin Harris, who had come to Boston in 1686. For about fifty years, this eighty-page booklet, four and a half by three inches in size, was the only elementary textbook in America, and for a century more it held a central place in primary education. It was the first reading primer designed for the American Colonies and became the most successful educational textbook published in colonial America and the early days of the US. While the selections in the New England Primer varied somewhat across time there was standard content for beginning reading instruction. Included were the alphabet, vowels, consonants, double letters and syllabaries of two letters to six letter syllables. The 90-page work contained religious maxims, woodcuts, alphabetical assistants, acronyms, catechisms, and moral lessons. Many of its selections were drawn from the King James Bible and others were original. Among the topics discussed are respect to parental figures, sin, and salvation. Some versions contained the Westminster Shorter Catechism; others contained John Cotton's shorter catechism, known as Milk for Babes; and some contained both. The primer remained in print well into the 19th century and was even used until the 20th. A reported 2 million copies were sold in the 1700s. No copies of editions before 1727 are known to survive; earlier editions are known only from publishers' and booksellers' advertisements. This is part of what they learned in school!

A	In ADAM'S Fall, We sinned all.
B	Heaven to find; The Bible Mind or "Thy life to mend, the Bible attend."
C	Christ crucify'd For sinners dy'd.
D	The Deluge drown'd The Earth around.
E	ELIJAH hid By Ravens fed.
F	The judgment made FELIX afraid.
G	As runs the Glass, Our Life doth pass.
H	My Book and Heart Must never part.
J	JOB feels the Rod,-- Yet blesses GOD.
K	Proud Korah's troop Was swallowed up
L	LOT fled to Zoar, Saw fiery Shower on Sodom pour.
M	MOSES was he Who Israel's Host Led thro' the Sea
N	NOAH did view The old world & new.
O	Young OBADIAS, DAVID, JOSIAS, all were pious.
P	PETER deny'd his Lord and cry'd.
Q	Queen ESTHER sues and saves the Jews.
R	Young pious RUTH, left all for Truth.
S	Young SAML dear, The Lord did fear.
T	Young TIMOTHY Learnt sin to fly.
V	VASHTI for Pride Was set aside.
W	Whales in the Sea, GOD's Voice obey.
X	XERXES did die, And so must I.
Y	While youth do cheer Death may be near.
Z	ZACCHEUS he did climb the Tree our Lord to see.

A VERSE THAT PURITAN CHILDREN MEMORIZED AND RECITED

In the burying place may see, graves shorter there than I,
From death's arrest no age is free, young children too must die.
My God may such an awful sight, awakening be to me!
Oh! that by early grace I might for death prepared be.