

God Created Harvard

This is the "Harvard Oration," delivered at Class Day exercises on Wednesday, June 5, by Joshua S. Preven '91 of Adams House and Larchmont, New York.

Distinguished faculty, faculty, fellow classmates, cranky siblings, honored guests, Mrs. Robinson . . .

I humbly present to you the seven days of creation: In the beginning God created Harvard, and he saw that it was good and hiked up the tuition. The earth was without form and void—like New Haven, but safer.

And the Lord said, "Let there be an admissions policy and let it be a dubious, quirky process steeped in patronage and nepotism." And it was so. The Lord separated the unqualified legacies from the very unqualified legacies . . . and accepted them all—myself included. And the Lord created "early action" so that admitted students could alienate their envious peers. And he called the successful applicants "freshmen," and the rejected students he sent to Stanford, which didn't even exist yet. And the



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Lord said, "Why do you keep referring to me as 'He,' you sexist pig!" And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

And the Lord, she said, "Let there be Freshman Week, so that those from Andover and Exeter can intimidate their public school classmates." And there was Freshman Week, and all were goofy, and some even ran for the Undergraduate Council. The Lord created the Freshman Outdoor Program so

that students could get wet. And she built Pennypacker, Hurlbut, and Greenough, so that some would feel left out. The Lord made the quantitative reasoning requirement, and she saw that it was good, but she kept failing the computer part. And God created the Union so that students could gain weight. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

And God said, "Let there be a Core Curriculum." And there was a Core Curriculum, and the Lord saw that it was good, because things at Brown were getting ridiculous. God brought forth Michael J. Sandel to smite uppity freshmen before large groups of gleeful upperclassmen. And she breathed life into Stephen J. Gould, so there would be at least two famous professors with "J" for a middle initial. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

And the Lord said, "Let there be a mighty football team" and . . . well . . . there was a football team. And God said, "Let there be a House system and let it be grossly unfair so that some get the best of both worlds, while others get completely shafted." The Lord created Mather to promote existentialism, and she built Quincy House to make Lowell feel better. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

Then the Lord said, "Let there be a cappella music," and there was a cappella music—a lot of a cappella mu-

sic—and God saw that it was good, but after a while it gave her a wicked headache. And God created crew, because she needed photographs for the Harvard catalogue, and because the Charles was too filthy for other water sports. And the Lord said, "Let there be student publications," and there were student publications, like the *Crimson* and the *Indy*, and God saw that they were good . . . for kindling or even for making a funny hat. And the Lord made final clubs to protect men from "cooties." And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

And God said, "Let there be tenure" and there was tenure, except in the history department. And the Lord created the thesis to promote verbosity. Then God said, "Let there be a Renaissance scholar appointed to the presidency, so that English majors will finally get some respect around here." And there was Neil Rudenstine and the Lord saw that he was good, like Bok. And there was the Class of '91, and the Lord saw that it too was good . . . in a relative kind of way. And she said, "Let us make Harvard grads in my image and let them have dominion over the earth . . . or at least something to do next year." And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and divide and add seven, now double it, subtract three, and take the square root." And the Lord said, "Behold, I have given you every privilege which is upon the face of all the earth, and now you want to traipse around Europe all summer?" And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

Thus Harvard was created. And on the seventh day God finished her work which she had done, and she rested on the seventh day, except for one LSAT practice test (which she didn't tell her friends about). So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all her work and still managed to get a 46.

Thank you. ◻

Explanatory Notes for Other Generations

The optional, Outward Bound-ish *Freshman Outdoor Program* occurs just before Freshman Week. *Pennypacker*, *Hurlbut*, and *Greenough*, the so-called Union dorms, are outside Harvard Yard. *Brown* is known among undergraduates for its unstructured curriculum. *Michael J. Sandel* often uses the Socratic method in teaching *Moral Reasoning 22* ("Justice"), traditionally one of the Core Curriculum's most popular courses and last fall the largest course in the College. Top score on the *Law School Admission Test* is a 48.



Songsters Laurence O'Keefe '91, Glenn Kiser '91, and Markham O'Keefe '93 give the Class Ode their attention. To the tune of "Fair Harvard," it was written this year by Oren Izenberg '91.