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## PROBING EDUCATION

### Harvard and Benazir Bhutto

**Direct Readings**  
**By Rev. Charles Brock**  
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*Editor's note: This Jefferson Publications series examines ancient universities that thrive today – how they have shaped the world and influenced education methods, citizenship, the meaning of government, and cultural life. Today's article features Harvard University and Benazir Bhutto.*

#### **12th in a Series**

**Early Curriculum at Harvard** – During its early years from 1636, Harvard College offered a classic academic course based on the English university model but consistent with the Puritan philosophy of the first colonists. The mission of the college, according to the 1650 Charter, was: “the advancement of all good literature, artes, and Sciences.” Latin was the language of instruction (although the Latin speaking requirement was not renewed in the College Laws of 1692). Students were expected to arrive at Harvard well-versed in Latin grammar and, once enrolled, followed a prescribed course of studies in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the examination of classical languages through histories and drama providing the base for scholarly pursuits. Other disciplines included Rhetoric and Logic, Ethics and Politics, Arithmetic and Geometry, and later, Algebra, Astronomy, Physics, Metaphysics and Theology. A prescribed course of studies remained in place through the early 19th century. Elective courses were not introduced until the 1860s.

Each of the early college presidents, from Henry Dunster (1640-1654) to Joseph Willard (1781-1804), influenced the academic landscape according to his interests. Reflected in numerous ways, including thesis disputation topics, teaching staff appointments, and lectures, presidential leadership affected the expanding colonial Harvard curriculum.

The formal naming of Harvard as a university in 1780, the founding of Harvard Medical School in 1782, and the establishment, early in the 19th century, of Harvard Law School (1817) and Harvard Divinity School (1819) broadened the overall curriculum, advanced Harvard from a provincial seat of learning, and secured its reputation as a national university.[1]

From the 1640s to 1770, the president and faculty ranked the members of each entering class in the fall of their freshman year according to their perception of the social standing of each student's parents and other close relatives. This order was largely preserved until graduation day, at which time several students who had done exceptionally well were finally recognized with speaking parts, regardless of their social standing.

Today Harvard ranks as one of the top universities in the world.

**Benazir Bhutto**, (born June 21, 1953, Karachi, Pakistan – died December 27, 2007, Rawalpindi), was a Pakistani politician who became the first woman leader of a Muslim nation in modern history. She served two terms as prime minister of Pakistan, in 1988-90 and 1993-96.

Bhutto was the daughter of the politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was the leader of Pakistan from 1971 until 1977. She was educated at Harvard University (B.A., 1973) and subsequently studied philosophy, political science, and economics at the University of Oxford (B.A., 1976) before completing a postgraduate degree in international law there (M.A., 1977).

Shortly after Bhutto completed her studies in 1977 and returned to Pakistan, her father was deposed by Gen. Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, who then made himself the chief martial law administrator. After her father's execution in 1979, Bhutto became the titular head of her father's party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and endured frequent house arrest from 1979 to 1984. In exile from 1984 to 1986, she returned to Pakistan after the lifting of martial law and soon became the foremost figure in the political opposition to Zia. President Zia died in August 1988 in a mysterious plane crash, leaving a power vacuum at the center of Pakistani politics. In the ensuing elections, Bhutto's PPP won the single largest bloc of seats in the National Assembly.

On December 1, 1988, Bhutto became the country's first female prime minister and the head of its first civilian government since the dissolution of her father's

government in 1977. She formed a fragile coalition with independent parliamentarians from her home province of Sindh, but they left the coalition the following year as ethnic tensions in that province escalated. Without their support Bhutto was unable to pass legislation to address Pakistan's critical issues, including widespread poverty, governmental corruption, and increasing crime. Meanwhile, she bore the brunt of a discordant relationship with the military leadership. In August 1990, the president of Pakistan, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, dismissed her government on charges of corruption and other malfeasance and called for new elections. Bhutto's PPP suffered a defeat in the national elections of October 1990, and thereafter she led the parliamentary opposition against her successor, Nawaz Sharif.

In elections held in October 1993 the PPP won a plurality of votes, and it succeeded in beating out Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) party in every province—including Sharif's home province of Punjab—except Balochistan. In her second term, Bhutto made headway in Pakistan's relations abroad, attracted foreign investment in the country, and implemented social programs. Moreover, she had an important ally in the president, Farooq Leghari, who was a member of the PPP. But Pakistan continued to experience an unstable economy and a decline in law and order. Meanwhile, a dynastic spat embroiled her in scandal as her brother, Murtaza, accused her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, of corruption. With Bhutto losing public confidence amid her mounting troubles, Leghari dismissed her government in November 1996.

Voter turnout was low in the 1997 elections, in which Bhutto's PPP suffered a decisive loss to Sharif's PML-N. With British and Swiss cooperation, Sharif's administration continued to pursue the corruption charges against Bhutto. In 1999 Bhutto and her husband – a controversial businessman and senator jailed since 1996 on a variety of charges – were both convicted of corruption by a Lahore court, a decision overturned by the Supreme Court in 2001 because of evidence of governmental interference.

Bhutto did not achieve political accommodation with Gen. Pervez Musharraf's seizure of power in a 1999 coup d'état. Her demands that the charges against her and her husband be dropped were denied, undercutting negotiations with the Musharraf government regarding a return to the country from her self-imposed exile. Facing standing arrest warrants should she return to Pakistan, Bhutto remained in exile in London and Dubai from the late 1990s.

Because of Musharraf's 2002 decree banning prime ministers from serving a third term, Bhutto was not permitted to stand for elections that same year. In addition, legislation in 2000 that prohibited a court-convicted individual from holding party office hindered her party, as Bhutto's unanimously elected leadership would have excluded the PPP from participating in elections. In response to these obstacles, the PPP split, registering a new, legally distinct

branch called the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP). Legally separate and free from the restrictions brought upon the PPP by Bhutto's leadership, the PPPP participated in the 2002 elections, in which it proceeded to earn a strong vote. However, Bhutto's terms for cooperation with the military government – that all charges against her and against her husband be withdrawn—continued to be denied. In 2004 Bhutto's husband was released from prison on bail and joined Bhutto in exile. Just before the 2007 elections, talk began to circulate of Bhutto's return to Pakistan.

Shortly before Musharraf's reelection to the presidency, amid unresolved discussions of a power-sharing deal between Bhutto and Musharraf's military regime, he finally granted Bhutto a long-sought amnesty for the corruption charges brought against her by the Sharif administration. The Supreme Court challenged Musharraf's right to grant the amnesty, however, criticizing it as unconstitutional. Nevertheless, in October 2007 Bhutto returned to Karachi from Dubai after eight years of self-imposed exile. Celebrations marking her return were marred by a suicide attack on her motorcade, in which numerous supporters were killed. Bhutto was assassinated in December in a similar attack while campaigning for upcoming parliamentary elections. Following her death, party leadership fell to her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, and later to their son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Bhutto's autobiography, *Daughter of the East*, was published in 1988 (also published as *Daughter of Destiny*, 1989); she also wrote *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West*, which was published posthumously in 2008.

*Article on Benazir Bhutto from The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. This article was most recently revised and updated by Adam Zeidan.*

Her important book on world affairs and religion - *Benazir Bhutto's 'Reconciliation': Islam, Democracy, and the West* (Harper Collins) is reviewed here by Michiko Kakutani, Feb 19, 2008, in the New York Times:

“Benazir Bhutto called her 1989 autobiography ‘Daughter of Destiny,’ and when she was assassinated in December at 54, she became the fourth member of her immediate family to die violently against the backdrop of Pakistani intrigue and politics: her father, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was hanged in 1979 on charges of having ordered the murder of a minor political opponent; her younger brother, Shahnawaz, mysteriously died of poisoning in 1985; and her other brother, Murtaza, was gunned down outside his home in 1996.

The head of the populist Pakistan Peoples Party, Bhutto was herself a charismatic and polarizing figure, who ran as a representative of democratic hopes, and her death underscored the instability of Pakistan – a nuclear-armed country deemed by many as the most dangerous place in the world – and the

precarious state of politics in that nation, which headed to the polls on Monday in a vote that will determine the next prime minister.

In Bhutto's new book, "Reconciliation," a volume she finished days before she was killed, she lays out her vision of Islam as "an open, pluralistic and tolerant religion" that she says has been hijacked by extremists, and her belief that Islam and the West need not be headed on a collision course toward a "clash of civilizations."

If Bhutto's own life reads like a Greek tragedy, she was nonetheless a very modern politician, and the book she has written is part manifesto, part spin job, part selective history and part term-paper analysis. It shows Bhutto in the many guises the public in both the West and her native Pakistan came to know: an Oxford-educated debate champion, adept at invoking Spengler and T. S. Eliot to make her points; a savvy and self-dramatizing campaigner, adroit at charming members of the Washington power elite as well as the disenfranchised poor in Pakistan, whom she pledged to represent; a determined heir to her father's political legacy, who found duty turning over "years of pain, suffering, sacrifice and separation" into "an all consuming passion."

After a privileged childhood and a Western education at Radcliffe and Oxford, Pinkie, as Bhutto was known in her youth, returned home to Pakistan where her father was arrested by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq in 1977. In

"Reconciliation" Bhutto writes: "On the day my father was arrested, I changed from a girl to a woman. He would guide me over the next two years, cautioning me to remain focused and committed and never bitter. On the day he was murdered I understood that my life was to be Pakistan, and I accepted the mantle of leadership of my father's legacy and my father's party."

As head of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Bhutto was twice elected prime minister and twice expelled from office under charges of corruption, and she spent many years in exile abroad (in addition to some five years in prison and under house arrest). Her return to Pakistan in October 2007 was marked by terrible violence – at least 134 of her supporters were killed, and some 400 were wounded in bombings – that would prove to be a harrowing foreshadowing of the violence that took her life two months later.

It is Bhutto's contention in this book that dictatorship breeds extremism and that democracies – and here, she sounds a lot like President George W. Bush – "do not go to war with democracies" and "do not become state sponsors of terrorism." She quotes passages from the Koran in support of her argument that Islam preaches tolerance and pluralism ("You shall have your religion, and I shall have my religion"), and she compares Osama bin Laden's "attempt to exploit, manipulate and militarize Islam" to terrorist acts committed by other religious fanatics: "whether Christian fundamentalists' attacks on women's

reproductive clinics or Jewish fundamentalist attacks on Muslim holy sites in Palestine."

Much of "Reconciliation" consists of history lessons, delivered from Bhutto's own unique perspective, about conflicting interpretations of Islamic doctrine, the Shia-Sunni schism and the debilitating legacy of Western colonialism in the Middle East. Bhutto takes the United States to task for its role in helping to overthrow the democratically elected government of Iran in 1953, arguing that this not only undermined the future of democratic government in that nation but also "made generations of Muslims suspicious and cynical about Western motivations."

She says that if the United States had not used Afghanistan as merely a "blunt instrument to trigger the implosion of the Soviet Union" and then abandoned it, history in the entire region might well have been very different. And she deems Iraq "a quagmire for the West and a great and unfolding tragedy for the people" of that country – a "colonial war in a postcolonial era" from which America cannot extricate itself.

When it comes to Pakistani history and her own role in it, Bhutto's account is considerably more problematic. She asserts that if her government "had continued for its full five-year term, it would have been difficult for Osama bin Laden to set up base in Afghanistan in 1997 when he established Al Qaeda to openly recruit and train young men from all over the Muslim world." Never mind that it was on her watch that the shadowy Pakistani intelligence service began actively promoting the Taliban in Afghanistan and recruiting young Islamic militants for its continuing struggle against India in Kashmir. Grandly equating herself with democracy in Pakistan, Bhutto also writes, "In 1998, two years after my overthrow, Al Qaeda declared war on America," and suggests that "the age of international terrorist war actually coincided with the suspension of democracy in Pakistan."

Also sprinkled throughout this book are accusations against the current Pakistani president, Pervez Musharraf, with whom she had reportedly been negotiating a power-sharing arrangement, promoted by the United States. Bhutto blames Musharraf's government for allowing a Taliban resurgence by pulling its own military out from North Waziristan in 2006. She writes that there were reports of "wide-spread rigging preparations" for the 2008 elections. And she accuses Musharraf's supporters of doing little to provide adequate security for her return to the country in the fall of 2007, accusations that would be revived by her supporters in the wake of her assassination.

She knew the risks of returning from exile. "I would have done anything to spare my children the same pain that I had undergone – and still feel – at my father's

death," she writes. "But this was actually one thing I couldn't do; I couldn't retreat from the party and the platform that I had given so much of my life to." Her platform, laid out in this volume as democracy in Pakistan and a vision of reconciliation between the Muslim world and the West, was an optimistic one in which globalization promotes tolerance, not resentment, and in which "modernization and extremism are contradictory and mutually exclusive." It was a platform deeply shaken by her own untimely death."

**How does Bhutto inform us on education?** She was well trained at Harvard and Oxford in political leadership. Each university has a long tradition of its graduates immersed in political action. Harvard has produced eight presidents from the 17th century and many in Congress and the courts. Oxford has produced 30 British prime ministers from the 17th century and countless MPs, including 14 PM's in the 20th and 21st centuries so far.

Bhutto charmed everyone near her from Western academics to Pakistani peasants. She was a great debater and president of the Oxford Union, which specializes in producing politicians who can think on their feet. She read extensively. She could network with the best of them (one of the biggest reasons parents sacrifice plenty to get their children into Harvard and Oxford – regardless of the education). She understood her religion and related it positively to the modern world, searching for that reconciliation with other religions that is so hard to come by.

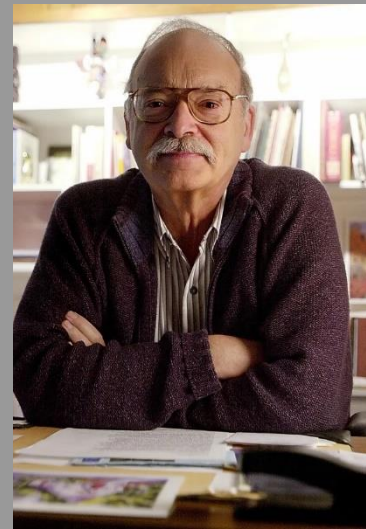
She was a willing martyr for the cause of freedom and democracy as were others in her family. "I couldn't retreat from the party and the platform that I had given so much of my life to." That may sound old fashioned in these days of grabbing for oneself, but it is the ancient universities that fostered that virtue. We could use it again!

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[1] *Early Curriculum at Harvard: Historical Sources*, Harvard University, online

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Rev. Charles Brock**, an Erie native, is an Emeritus Fellow, Chaplain, and Director of Ministerial Education at Mansfield College, Oxford, UK, where he taught for 35 years. He serves as the Director of the Institute on the American Dream at Penn State Behrend. Rev. Brock is acting minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Girard, Pa., and he is a Founding Member of the Jefferson Educational Society. Rev. Brock serves as the Director of the Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education at the Jefferson and serves as Secretary of the Jefferson Educational Society's Board of Trustees.



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