

Over Harvard Doors

During construction of Emerson Hall at Harvard University, President Charles Eliot invited psychologist and philosopher William James to suggest a suitable inscription for the stone lintel over the doors of the new home of the philosophy department.

After some reflection, James sent Eliot a line from the Greek philosopher Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things."

James never heard back from Eliot, so his curiosity was piqued when he spotted artisans working on a scaffold hidden by a canvas. One morning the scaffold and canvas were gone. The inscription? "What is man that thou art mindful of him?"

Eliot had replaced James' suggestion with words from the psalmist. Between these two lines lies a world of difference – the distance between the God-centered and the human-centered points of view.

And to know that God is in control, not man, is a wonderful reassurance. His power and His love are manifest daily in our lives through His amazing grace.

--Beecher Hunter