



John Chavis: African American Patriot, Preacher, Teacher, and Mentor (1783T1838)

Helen Chavis Othow

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John Chavis had a profound impact upon the history of North Carolina, the life of African Americans, and the course of religion in America. Born in 1763, Chavis fought in the American Revolution and studied at Princeton, becoming the first black person ordained as a missionary minister in the Presbyterian church. Many of those who learned from his teachings were white, and many of the students in his Latin grammar school were the sons of prominent North Carolinians. His lifelong relationship with his students created connections with some of the most powerful individuals of the nineteenth century, and his religious writings can still stir the soul more than 150 years after his death. Chavis's story illustrates the power of faith, intelligence, and determination to overcome the precariousness of life for a free black man in this era. This account of Chavis's life, the result of research by one of his descendants, presents a thorough examination of his life, his work, and the world in which he lived. Also included is the full text of John Chavis's Letter Upon the Doctrine of the Extent of the Atonement of Christ (1837), long considered lost by many of his biographers.

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