

**A SERMON DELIVERED BEFORE HIS
EXCELLENCY EDWARD EVERETT, GOVERNOR,
HIS HONOR GEORGE HULL, LIEUTENANT
GOVERNOR, THE HONORABLE COUNCIL, AND
THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS, ON
THE ENIVERSARY ELECTION, JANUARY 2,
1839, PP. 1-39**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649239153

A Sermon Delivered Before His Excellency Edward Everett, Governor, His Honor George Hull, Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Council, and the Legislature of Massachusetts, on the Eniversary Election, January 2, 1839, pp. 1-39 by Mark Hopkins

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Cover @ 2017

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MARK HOPKINS

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THE HONORABLE COUNCIL,

AND

THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS,

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY ELECTION,

JANUARY 2, 1839.

BY MARK HOPKINS, D. D.

President of Williams College.

Boston:

DUTTON AND WENTWORTH, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1839.

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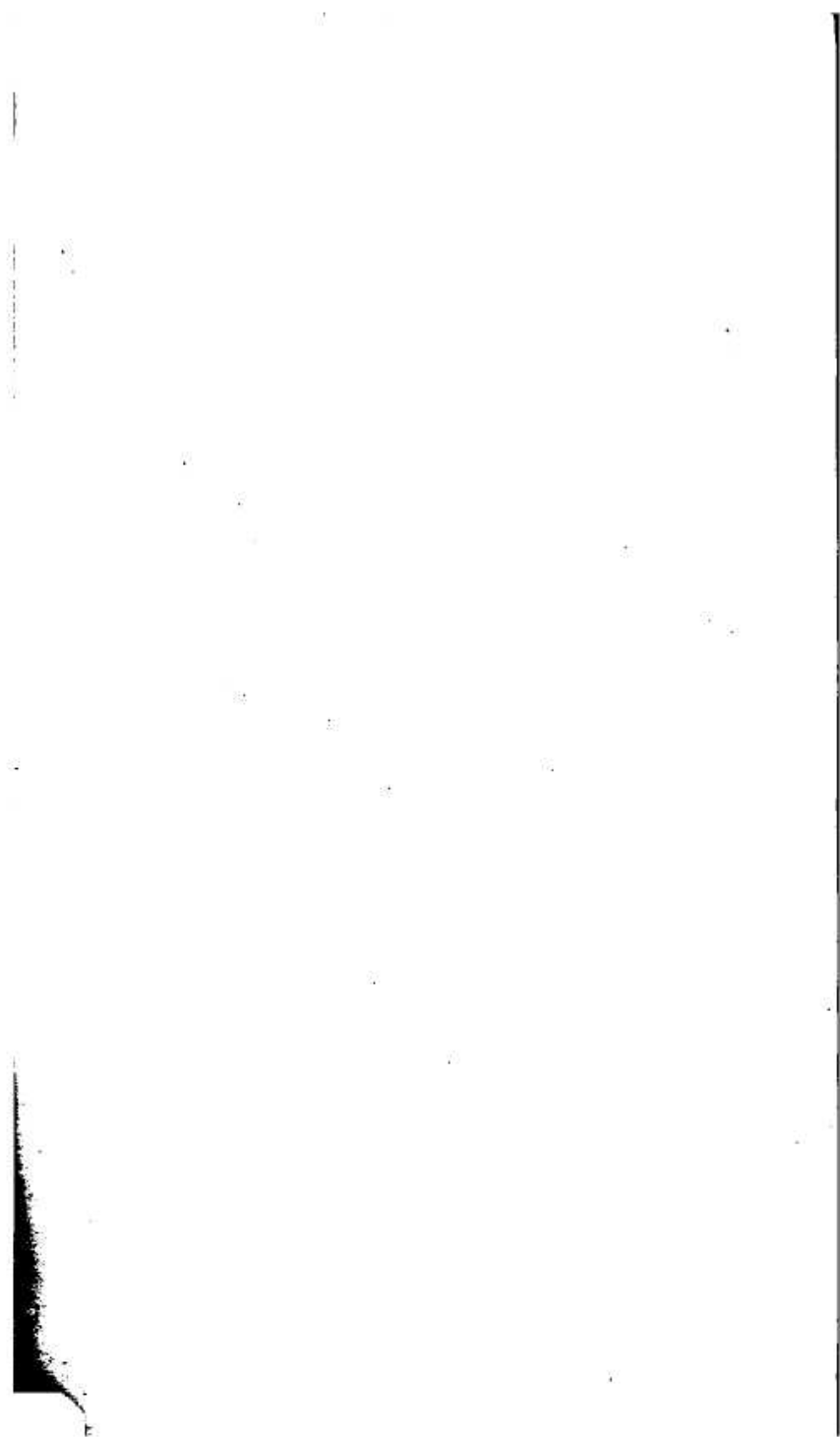
Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

SENATE, JANUARY 3, 1889.

Ordered, That Messrs. Filley, Quincy, and Kimball, be a Committee to present the thanks of the Senate to the Rev. MARK HOPKINS, D. D. for the discourse yesterday delivered by him, before the Government of the Commonwealth, and to request a copy thereof for publication.

Attest,

CHARLES CALHOUN, Clerk.



S E R M O N .

Acta v. 29.

WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MAN.

MAN was made for something higher and better, than either to make, or to obey, merely human laws. He is the creature of God, is subject to his laws, and can find his perfection, and consequent happiness, only in obeying those laws. As his moral perfection, the life of his life, is involved in this obedience, it is impossible that any power should lay him under obligation to disobey. The known will of God, if not the foundation of right, is its paramount rule, and it is because human governments are ordained by him, that we owe them obedience. We are bound to them, not by compact, but only as God's institutions for the good of the race. This is what the Bible, though sometimes referred to as supporting arbitrary power, really teaches. It does not support arbitrary power. Rightly understood, it is a perfect rule of duty, and as in every thing else, so in the relations

of subjects and rulers. It lays down the true principles, it gives us the guiding light. When the general question is whether human governments are to be obeyed, the answer is, "He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." "The powers that be are ordained of God." But when these powers overstep their appointed limits, and would lord it over the conscience, and come between man and his maker, then do we hear it uttered in the very face of power, and by the voice of inspiration, no less than of indignant humanity, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

It has been in connexion with the maintenance of this principle, first proclaimed by an Apostle of Christ eighteen hundred years ago, that all the civil liberty now in the world has sprung up. It is to the fearless assertion of this principle by our forefathers, that we owe it that the representatives of a free people are assembled here this day to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, to seek to Him for wisdom in their deliberations, and to acknowledge the subordination of all human governments to that which is divine.

Permit me then, as appropriate to the present occasion, to call the attention of this audience,

- 1st. To the grounds on which all men are bound to adhere to the principle stated in the text ; and
- 2d. To the consequences of such adherence, on the part, both of subjects, and of rulers.

I observe, then, that we ought to obey God rather than men, because human governments are comparatively so limited and negative in their bearing upon the great purposes, first, of individual, and second, of social existence.

The purposes for which man was made, must evidently involve in their accomplishment, both his duty and his happiness ; and nothing can be his duty which would contravene those purposes. Among them, as already intimated, the highest is the moral perfection of the individual ; for as it is by his moral nature that man is distinguished from the inferior animals, so it is only in the perfection of that nature, that his perfection, as man, can consist. As absolute perfection can belong only to God, that of man must be relative, that is, it must consist in the proper adjustment of relations, and especially in the relation of his voluntary actions to the end for which God designed him. This is our idea of perfection, when we affirm it of the works of man. It involves, mainly, such a relation of parts as is necessary to the