

E 392

.H92

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005083655









12

---

---

**DEATH OF**

**PRESIDENT HARRISON.**

---

---

H. Sampson



DEATH OF PRESIDENT HARRISON.

---

A

# DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE VILLAGE CHURCH IN AMHERST, MASS.

ON THE MORNING OF THE

ANNUAL STATE FAST,

APRIL 8, 1841.

BY HEMAN HUMPHREY, D.D.

PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE.



AMHERST:

J. S. AND C. ADAMS.

1841.

E-392  
.H92

AMHERST, APRIL 9, 1841.

DEAR SIR,

We were deeply interested in the sermon preached by you on the morning of Fast Day, at the Rev. Mr. Colton's Church, upon the occasion of the lamented death of GEN. HARRISON, the late President of the United States. We believe that we not only express our own feelings, but those also of the large assembly to which it was addressed, in thanking you for it; and that we truly represent the wishes of every person who heard it, in asking you, respectfully, to prepare a copy for the press.

DAVID MACK, JR.  
OSMYN BAKER,  
EDWARD DICKINSON,  
JOHN DICKINSON, JR.

REV. DR. HUMPHREY.

AMHERST COLLEGE, APRIL 9, 1841.

GENTLEMEN,

If, notwithstanding the extreme haste and consequent disadvantages under which the discourse which you are pleased so kindly to notice was prepared, you think it in any degree worthy of the occasion, it is at your disposal.

H. HUMPHREY.

Messrs. DAVID MACK, JR.  
OSMYN BAKER,  
EDWARD DICKINSON,  
JOHN DICKINSON, JR.



## A FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

---

WHEN at the funeral of *Louis Fourteenth*, his favorite Chaplain rose up to address the vast multitude of nobles and courtiers; of statesmen and warriors and savans; of scholars and artists;—the proud and acknowledged representatives of the talent and learning and refinement and chivalry of France, all clad in the deepest mourning, the first sentence of the preacher was—THERE IS NOTHING GREAT BUT GOD! And methinks I hear the solemn response, from all the long drawn aisles of the Cathedral—THERE IS NOTHING GREAT BUT GOD! Kings, Emperors and Presidents; the proudest Rulers of the most enlightened and powerful states—what are they but dust, with a little breath to keep the particles together, and liable every moment to be dissolved and scattered.

There are some events, which though common in their nature, break upon us like a clap of thunder in a clear sky, and quite stun, if they do not strike us to the ground. The shock is so sudden, so unexpected, that our faculties are paralyzed. We are bewildered. Our mouths are shut. The power of thought and feeling is almost suspended. We want time for silent reflection. We shrink into nothing. There is but one voice that we can hear, and that is the voice of God. There is but one arm that we can see lifted up, and that is his arm. When the flash blinded us, we were gazing perhaps at

a nation's idol, and ere we had well recovered our sight, the idol was gone. "The dust had returned to the dust as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it."

Two days ago, nothing was further from my expectation, than that I should appear before you this morning in the place where I now stand; than that I should be called to address such an assembly as I see before me; or than that such an assembly would be here. With but a few hours for preparation, I am oppressed under the consciousness of my entire inability to do justice to the mournful occasion of this great gathering; or even to my own inadequate conception of what it demands. But I will not waste, in vain apologies, a moment of your time, which may be so much more profitably spent in meditating upon the frailty of life in its highest stations, and gathering instruction from the sudden demise of the chief Magistrate of the nation, to which we belong.

"The voice said cry, and I said what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the grass." "Verily man at his best estate is altogether vanity." "What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." "I have said ye are gods; but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." From these several passages, each of which would be sufficiently appropriate, I have selected the last.

*Psalm cxlvi.* 3, 4.—PUT NOT YOUR TRUST IN PRINCES, NOR IN THE SON OF MAN IN WHOM THERE IS NO HELP. HIS BREATH GOETH FORTH, HE RETURNETH TO HIS EARTH: IN THAT VERY DAY HIS THOUGHTS PERISH.

The word princes here, must be understood as a general term; it being evidently used, not to designate a particular class of rulers, whether hereditary or elective; but it may be applied indifferently to all classes, holding the highest offices in the state, whatever may be their official titles. The obvious sentiment of the text is,

*That no dependance can be placed upon the lives of civil rulers, however exalted in station, or however eminently qualified they may be for the discharge of their high duties.*

This sentiment may be briefly illustrated and enforced:

I. By a few remarks upon the necessity of the caution, *Put not your trust in princes.*

II. Upon the reason, or ground of it: And

III. Upon the sin and folly of disregarding it.

I. As to the *need* of such a caution, under the broad seal of heaven. Every one, I think, would decide confidently, *a priori*, that it could not be necessary. But here, as in a thousand other cases, however we may try to account for it, men are sure to act contrary to the plainest dictates of right reason, and all the lessons of human experience. No matter from what wisdom, or authority the caution emanates, they will continue to lean upon props, which are every day falling, and which they know to be as insecure as the waves of the

sea. When, after a hard and doubtful struggle, any great political party succeed in elevating their favorite candidates to the highest offices, the mass of the people place just about as much reliance upon them, as if they knew them to be immortal. Nor is this infatuation, (for I know not what other name to give it,) confined to the unthinking multitude. Wise men and even good men, with few exceptions, talk and make their calculations during the contest, and when it is decided, just as if they had the assurance of a special revelation to rest upon. It never enters their minds, or if it does, the thought makes no stay and no impression, that the men whom they most delight to honor, may be lying under a speedy death warrant. Especially do they most firmly believe, that their favorites have been called to office for high purposes, when great existing abuses, or supposed abuses are to be corrected; when they possess just such talents as the public exigences require, and when their personal popularity gives them decided advantages over all their competitors and contemporaries. It is under these circumstances, confidently believed, that Providence has raised them up for the very purpose of rolling back the tide of corruption and venality; and that whoever else may die, they will live to accomplish the work. And so unconquerable is this proneness to trust in "man that is a worm," when he happens to be the idol of the day, that the most painful lessons of an opposite experience are soon forgotten. When "the strong rods" on which men leaned are broken, they soon recover themselves sufficiently to transfer the same confidence which has failed them, to others, whose "foundation also, is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth."

II. I am briefly to notice the ground or reason of the

caution in our text, "Put not your trust in princes," in rulers, however exalted in station, or however eminently qualified for the administration of public affairs. Here I might say, and both scripture and observation would fully bear me out in saying, that aside from the uncertainties of life, there are the most weighty reasons why we should not implicitly confide in the wisdom and integrity of any man, or of any administration. Public men, as well as others, are imperfect. There is but one perfectly wise Ruler in the Universe. The wisest and most far sighted men whom you can place at the helm of state, are liable to err on fundamental questions of national policy. It is impossible for any human intellect to grasp all the vital interests and infinitely diversified relations, of a great and enterprising people. There never was a perfect statesman, and never will be. Mistakes will be committed, in spite of the purest motives and the most untiring assiduity. This might be enlarged upon as a reason why we cannot safely trust in princes.

And then again: we are liable to be deceived in regard to their *integrity*. This may be said, without casting the slightest suspicion upon any individual, whether in office, or out of office. The history of all ages and of all governments, proves, that the possession of power brings along with it opportunities and temptations, which men of the fairest characters have not always moral principle enough to withstand. Where many have fallen, to the astonishment of their most intimate and confidential friends, and even to their own astonishment, others *may* be overcome. I hold to that great republican doctrine, that men in power, whatever party may have the ascendancy, *need to be watched*. I will not call them the *servants* of the people, to flatter any-

body ; for I do not like the term. I am sure it gives an unscriptural view of the relations and responsibilities of public men, and in my own judgment, it is as anti-republican, as it is unscriptural. In a free government like ours, there are no servants nor masters. We are all equal. Rulers are neither the masters nor servants of the people ; but their *representatives*, appointed to make laws for the government of the state, and to watch over all its general interests.

Whether the modern doctrine of *instructing* senators out of their places, originated in the notion that rulers are the *servants* of the people, I cannot tell ; but the two are sufficiently alike, to claim an intimate relationship ; and though but superficially read myself in political science, I may be allowed, as a free American citizen, to claim the right of denying the soundness of *both*.

On the other hand, the people are no more the *servants* of the rulers, than they are their *masters*. Whenever they act under free constitutions of government like ours, they delegate so much of their inherent authority to their political equals, under the various titles of magistracy, as they judge necessary for the public good ; retaining in their own hands, the right through the ballot boxes, of superseding them, for good and sufficient reasons.

But to return from this digression, to the particular ground of the caution specified in our text,—we cannot place any certain reliance upon the ablest, the wisest and the most popular rulers of the land, because they are liable to be taken away at any moment, by the stroke of death. *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to the earth : in that very day his*

*thoughts perish.* You will observe, that there is a peculiar appropriateness, a sort of reduplication and climacteric intensity in the terms here employed by the Psalmist to warn us against trusting in the mere breath of the nostrils. In "the son of man," that is in any earthly ruler, however exalted, "there is no help," "his breath goeth forth." He has only to gasp, once, or twice, and it is all over. He is dead. From that moment the agencies of corruption triumph. He returns to his dust, "earth to earth,—ashes to ashes." "In that very day his thoughts perish;" that is, they cease—they pass away with his immortal spirit. "There is no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither he goeth."

No matter how many plans he may have formed for the public good; for restoring the integrity of the Constitution; for making the nation respected abroad, and prosperous at home: so far as the execution of these plans depended upon his life, his agency, his popularity, they all perish with him. All his pledges, and the hopes which they had excited, vanish like the mist of the morning. It is with those who had leaned upon him, had trusted in him, as "when a hungry man dreameth and behold, he eateth, but he awaketh and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite." This brings me

III. To remark, as briefly as possible, upon the sin and folly of such reliances.

They are *sinful*. It is wrong to disregard the admonitions of Scripture—and the teachings of experience. Civil government is of divine appointment. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." Rulers, and magistrates are his servants, "waiting upon this very thing." When they discharge

their duties with ability and integrity, they are great blessings to the Commonwealth, and we are bound to give thanks to God for raising them up and qualifying them for stations of honor and influence. And it is our unquestionable duty to honor them, as "the ministers of God for good.

But he never intended that we should trust in their uncertain lives, or their wisdom, or their popularity. "Counsel is mine," saith the Lord, "and sound wisdom; I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign and princess decree justice. By me princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." God is highly dishonored and displeased, when that glory is given to the creature, which belongs to Him as the Creator—when a nation, and above all a *christian* nation,— "put their trust in princes," instead of regarding them as mere agents appointed by the infinite Ruler, to watch over the interests of the State. Where this affront is put upon Him from whom all authority emanates, and to whom all earthly rulers are accountable, it must be expected, that he will either "bring to nothing the understanding of the proudest," or take them away in his high displeasure.

I only add, that trusting in the mere breath of the most gifted, and popular ruler, argues extreme folly, as well as criminal forgetfulness of God, and his most reasonable claims. There is no safety in it from one hour to another. The most active and vigorous public officer to day, may be in his shroud tomorrow. It is like trusting in a spider's web, where we want the strength of a cable. Who that has the slightest claim to rationality, would, where momentous interests are at stake, place his dependance upon mere dust and nothingness, animated and enshrined though it might be, or even wor-



shipped as immortal, by half a nation? But the *folly* of which I am speaking is too obvious to need any more words for its exposure.

The subject we have now been considering, taken in connection with that mournful event, which has deprived these United States of their Chief Magistrate, so lately called to the Presidential Chair, cannot fail of exciting many serious and profitable reflections in every contemplative mind. The character and public services of him, who four days ago held the highest post of honor in the world, that of presiding over 15,000,000 of Freemen—the remarkable change of public sentiment, by which he was triumphantly called to take the helm of State—the straight forward frankness and sound constitutional character of his Inaugural Address—the sound judgment he evinced in the choice of his Cabinet—the zeal and promptitude with which he entered upon the discharge of his official duties—the apparent vigor of his constitution—the suddenness of his death—the disappointment, the shock, which it has everywhere produced as far as it is known, and will produce throughout the country—the solemn rebuke of an all wise Providence in his sudden removal—the possible effect which it may have upon the strength and policy of the Administration—and the highest interests of the State; all these are topics upon which we might dwell with propriety and advantage, did the time permit. But I can only make such a selection, as best accords with my own habits of thinking, and with the religious improvement of the event, which must bring all parties to a solemn pause, for the moment at least, however it may fail of producing any extensive and lasting benefit.

*In the first place*, the occasion requires, that we should dwell for a few moments upon the character and prin-

people from the effects of hasty legislation, where their will has been probably disregarded, or not well understood; and *thirdly*, to prevent the effects of combinations, violative of the rights of minorities. In reference to the second of these objects, I may observe, that I consider it the right and privilege of the people to decide disputed points of the constitution, arising from the general grant of power to Congress, to carry into effect the power expressly given."

With respect to the tenure of the office upon which he was at that moment entering, he holds this language.

"Republics can commit no greater error, than to adopt, or continue any features in their systems of government, which may be calculated to create or increase the love of power in the bosoms of those to whom necessity obliges them to commit the management of their affairs. And surely nothing is more likely to produce such a state of mind than the long continuance of an office of high trust.

Nothing can be more corrupting, nothing more destructive of those noble feelings which belong to the character of a devoted patriot. When this corrupting passion once takes possession of the human mind, like the love of gold it becomes insatiable. It is the never dying worm in his bosom, grows with its growth, and strengthens with the declining years of its victim. If this is true, it is the part of wisdom, for a republic to limit the service of that officer, at least to whom she has entrusted the management of her foreign relations, the execution of her laws, and the command of her armies and navies, to a period so short as to prevent his forgetting that he is an accountable agent, not the principal. Until an amendment can be effected, pub-

lic opinion may secure the desired object. I give my aid to it by renewing the pledge heretofore given, *that under no circumstances, will I consent to serve a second term.*"

A noble and magnanimous pledge, from the lips of the man whom the people delighted to honor, and whom they had borne so triumphantly, as it were upon their shoulders, to the Capitol, from his own humble dwelling. Would that every succeeding President of the United States, might view the subject in the same light, or rather, that the constitution might speedily be so amended, as to limit the office to one term, of four, or six years. How much more independent would it make the Chief Magistrate, in all his appointments and measures; and how much surer a guarantee should we have that he would serve his country without reference to his own private advantage.

His remarks respecting the poor robbed and persecuted red men, once the undisputed lords of every acre of soil which we possess, are worthy of the exalted station which he was called to fill, and O that he had been spared for *their* sakes, as well as our own.

"In our intercourse with our Aboriginal neighbours, the same liberality and justice, which marked the course prescribed to me by two of my illustrious predecessors, while acting under their direction in the discharge of the duties of Superintendent and Commissioner, shall be strictly observed. I can conceive of no more sublime spectacle—none more likely to propitiate an impartial Creator, than a rigid adherence to the principles of justice on the part of a powerful nation in its transactions with a weaker and uncivilized people, whom circumstances have placed at its disposal."

The following sentences ought to be "written with a pen of iron," hung up in every American dwelling, and deeply pondered by every American citizen.

"To me it appears perfectly clear, that the interest of the country requires, that the violence of the spirit, by which parties are at this time governed in our country, must be greatly mitigated, if not entirely extinguished, or consequences will ensue, which are appalling to be thought of. If parties in a republic are necessary to secure a degree of vigilance, sufficient to keep the public functionaries within the bounds of law and duty, beyond that point, they become destructive of public virtue."

I can make but one quotation more, from the first and last address of our lamented Chief Magistrate, and let us offer up our fervent supplications to God, that all the future Presidents of the United States, may publicly recognize, evermore, and be governed by the principles of the Bible. Hear the venerable Patriot, at the moment when he was about to enter upon the discharge of his high and responsible duties.

*"I deem the present occasion sufficiently important and solemn, to justify me in expressing to my fellow citizens, my profound reverence for the Christian Religion; and a thorough conviction, that sound morals, religious liberty, and a just sense of religious responsibility, are essentially connected with all true and lasting happiness."*

This I regard, as equivalent to a well considered and public profession of his belief in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and an expression of his fixed purpose, to be governed by its benign and heavenly precepts, in the discharge of his official duties.

In confirmation of this, I am extremely happy to quote the following statement from a Washington paper.

“It is known that for many years past, General HARRISON had become daily more and more impressed with religious feelings, always treating serious things seriously, and showing himself mindful of his future accountability. A member of his family has stated that, for many months past, he has never omitted the reading of the Scriptures every night before retiring to rest, however harrassed by company, or worn down by fatigue. On Monday, the third day of his indisposition, and before he felt himself in any particular danger, he declared to those around him, that he had long been deeply impressed with the truths of the Christian Religion, and regretted that he had not connected himself with the Church as a communicant.” I hasten

*Secondly* to remark, that the providence of God, in so soon and so suddenly calling him away, is full of admonition and instruction to the whole people of these United States. He is the first President, that has died in office, since the organization of the Federal government; and how affecting is the lesson here taught us of the uncertainty of all human dependences; of the emptiness and evanesence of all earthly glory. “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his dust.” *Four* days ago, at the head of a great nation, by the suffrages of a free people; and *yesterday* consigned to the tomb! After an unexampled struggle, in which the voice of the people in favor of General Harrison was like the continuous roaring of the sea, he was declared to be elected President of the United States, by an overwhelming majority. The day of his inauguration arrives. Never did a more propitious sun shine upon any great political consum-

We deserve the frowns of a Holy God for our pride, for our unexampled worldliness, for our oppression and robberies, for our multiplied violations of his law, and virtual defiances of his power and justice. The Rulers have sinned. The people have sinned. We have all sinned. Let us therefore humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and unite in fervent supplications that he will avert from us his righteous judgments.

*Thirdly*, if it is wrong, if it is unsafe to trust in civil rulers, because they are every moment liable to death, it is equally wrong and unsafe for them to trust in their own health, or prudence, or exalted stations, to shield them from the inevitable stroke. In the multitude of their public cares and duties, in the love of power and glory, which is almost inseparable from popular favor and high stations, they are in extreme danger of forgetting that they must “die like men, and fall like one of the princes;” that they are as near akin to dust and ashes, as the “lowest of the people.” They want some faithful monitor, to step into their offices every morning and say, *Sirs, remember that you are mortal*. One of the greatest monarchs of the East, did not resent it—he required it. He knew that he must die, and that there was every thing in the cares of State and the voluptuous indulgences and flatteries of a Court, to drive the thought far from him. Yes, O ye Crowned Heads, and Royal Princess; ye Mighty Warriors, and Renowned Statesmen; Ye Republican Presidents and Cabinet Counsellors, Ye shall all die like men. Your breath goeth forth, ye return to your earth. “Be wise, therefore, now O ye Kings, and be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”

*Fourthly*; Let us be quickened to more frequent and

earnest prayer for our Rulers. The responsibility of men high in office is overwhelming; and their duties are extremely arduous. In times of great national embarrassment and peril, many must be their anxious and sleepless hours. Of all men in the world, next to ministers of the Gospel, do they need wisdom from above, to guide them in their deliberations, and strength to sustain them under their burdens. Where they have any sense of religion, at all, it must "strengthen their hands and encourage their hearts," to know that prayers are daily going up for them from every part of the land; and if there any who do not wish to be thus remembered before the throne of God, so much the more do they need the prayers of all good men. "There is utterly a fault," in our churches, with regard to this duty; and it is high time that it should be corrected. *Of the million and a half* of professing christians in this country, how many, think you, pray daily and fervently for those upon whom devolve the cares of State; and from how many of the thousands of our American pulpits, do there go up more than a few formal and casual petitions, in their behalf? I deem the present a fitting occasion, to urge upon you this greatly neglected duty; and especially to remember those, who are now at the head of our national affairs, in the new and trying circumstances into which they have been brought, by the death of the Chief Magistrate.

*Fifthly*; Let us rejoice, that there is one Supreme Ruler, in whom we can put our trust—one who will never die; and who is as "wise in heart, as he is mighty in strength!" Any, or all of our greatest men, may be cut off. Our Judges may lie down in health at night, never to "wake out of sleep till the heavens be no more;" and by an authority which is paramount

to the Constitution, the terms of our Presidents may be shortened to a month, or a day. But as long as the God of our Fathers lives and reigns and we put our trust in him, we have nothing to fear. With infinite ease he can raise up wiser and better men than he takes away, or make us secure and prosperous without them. Even though there should be wars and rumors of wars, and nations should "encamp against us," we might look up with holy exultation and sing, "God our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts, is with us, The God of Jacob is our refuge." "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." "Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."



1  
9

2  
0  
2





WERT BOOKBINDING  
JAN 1984  
Grantville, PA

