No. 20.
On religious joy.
At Watertown, Feb 7th, 1819—afternoon.
- Halls St. Feb. 21st, 1819—afternoon.
- Foshing's March 25th, 1819—afternoon.
- Dr. Holmes April 4th, 1817—afternoon.
- Mrs. Swett's April 25th, 1819—afternoon.
- Weston July 25th, 1819—afternoon.
- Brookline Sept. 12th, 1817—afternoon.
- N.York Feb. 20th, 1810—afternoon.
- Kingston (Marcell) Dec. 3rd, 1820—afternoon.
- Medford July 19th, 1821—afternoon.

Philippians, IV, 4—"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice."

Our religion is designed to make us happy. While it furnishes the noblest principles of action, it sets before us the task of strenuous exertion—the high responsibilities of most solemn obligations, that excite every feeling that
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- Hollis St. Feb. 11th, 1819. afternoon.
- Greenwood, Dec. 21st, 1819. afternoon.
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- Dr. Holmes, April 11th, 1819. afternoon.
- Mr. Drew's April 25th, 1819. afternoon.
- Weston, July 25th, 1819. afternoon.
- South Lake, Sept. 12th, 1819. afternoon.
- N.York, Feb. 20th, 1820. evening.

Philippians, IV, 4. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." —

Our religion is designed to make us happy. While it furnishes the noblest principles of action, & sets before us the task of strenuous exertion of the high responsibility of most solemn obligations, it nourishes & invigorates every feeling that is connected with pure & permanent felicity. No one knows better the character of faith, than the Apostle, who has told us that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." He who "trusts in the name of the Lord, & stays upon his God," is not taught that his heart is to be made better by being wrapped in gloom, or that he will be holy in such the same proportion as he succeeds in making himself unhappy. — If it will not have us purchase subc—
ten at the expense of cheerfulness; she does not invite us to a region where clouds envelop the sky & the scenery is shrouded in darkness, but bids us look around and see how fair & happy is the place where influence has blessed. If the xian, the xianan, who is truly such, be unhappy, it is not his religion but makes him so. When, therefore, the sacred writer addresses, with the solicitude of sympathy, those who were his "joy com"n, what could be a more appropriate encouragement than "rejoice in the Lord always & again, I say, rejoice!" This animating quality in the genius of Christianity distinguishes it from the religious institutions & systems of mortality. The features of the Jewish legislation were hard & severe. It was not like the better revelation of after days, full of sublime & gladdening hopes. It was suited to the character & condition of the nation & stage, arrayed in the form of ceremony, surrounded with the impressive solemnity of circumstance, maintaining its grasp on the mind by fear more than by love, speaking in the voice of terror rather than in the tones of invitation. The law, as St. Paul has well expressed it, "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto". No did the philosophy of ancient times communicate those cheering & elevated instructions, or could satisfy the moral wants of beings made to live here & hereafter. It might give a home to the mockery of pleasure, but what was this to the consistent & well-grounded joy of the xian? It might teach that virtue in its perfection is frigid insensibility, but what was this to the calm & comforting spirit of the Gospel? Christianity, perhaps, had its efficacy to quell the uneasy & turbulent passions; but it froze the current of real & spiritual life, of comfort, of better affections of the heart. While it taught man the pride of self-sufficiency & the dignity of imaginary independence, it robbed life of its mildness, its charm, its grace. Like the winter's sun, it
might enlighten, but it did not warm. For these principles, however, there is an apology. They who defend & inculcated them, never understood of those bright views of glorious hopes of I. of Naz., came to open the holy of the temple. But for us, if we think not more correctly, & more nobly, there is no such excuse. It is for us to be cautious, that we do not make the gospel seem other than it was announced to be by the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem, or by the tidings of great joy. Why should religion (in truth) be made subservient to any principle to harmonise with the material purposes of life? Who could imagine that thus should flourish a gloom over the sanctity of their religion, a heavy cloud to intercept the holy light of verses from heaven to animate & gladden us? It was to come to promulgate its works in this world, that it consists in what is useless or unintelligible, in austerity, in solitude, in melancholy, in despair. The spirit of our religion is the amiable spirit of joy, of cheerfulness, of peace. Let us consider what is the true character of that joy, which is fitted & designed to inspire. No man can pass through life without feeling own principle that animates & progresses, nor our present condition of being seems adapted to produce. This state of excitement is in some degree necessary to give energy to character, to make it live, healthy & vigorous. Whatever may be our faculties, as of intellectual, action is necessary to give them force (as the pool of Bethesda had no efficacy till it was agitated). We have tested fruits, the cup of joy, & it has been taken from us. But the remembrance remains; as our master wish is to be happy, we are urged to strenuous efforts to recover the possession of what has once delighted us. Thus the desire, prompted by the recollection of departed joys, keeps the mind of affecting & active & teaches them with high excitation. But the danger is, that amidst these agitations & excitement & we may become the slaves of circumstances & of the force of events. The pleasure of we seek may be temporary, is not founded on sure & permanent
sources of its gay forms may pass over the mind like glimpses of the sun on water, or shine but leave no sign that they were ever there. None can pursue with earnestness the delights of joy merely from the objects of earth, without lamenting their inconstancy. Reality & brevity without feeling when they at last submit to the搜集 declined graph that they are unsatisfactory. If existing. They want that consistent permanent character which gives to the enjoyments of man their best value. The heart is perhaps now filled with gladness, but it is soon made weary with vanity, or shrinks under the pressure of disappointment. Now it is in contrast to this, that the character of religious joy differs still more, for it is free from the defects which weaken & mar the delights. It is equable, calm, & comfortable, well established. It leaves you not to mourn that it is gone just as you had reached it, & comes as soon as disclosed to your sight. It does not raise a temporary swell of feeling, as then on for you to languish in disappointment, for it depends on resources which are unalike, as by...
Of agonizing recollections & of disappointment.

By religious joy one means the joy of the mind, not of the senses, & justified by the love of God & man. Such joy has been too much nourished by the influence of high motives & sacred principles, to be termed by the enquirer of rebellious passions: Yes, may the joy of the Lord be the chief of life in the sublime vision of the Apocalypse, for its source is from the throne of God. It will not fail, because it is the constant friend, your faithful guide; it will smooth the path of life & make every step light & easy: it will never desert you; it will dwell with you in the city, & in the remotest corner of moral life; at home, in the inmost recesses of your family, abroad, the companion of your travels; in sickness & in health, equally ready to bless & to relieve.

When we invite you to religious joy, we do not call you to imaginary raptures or the extravagance of fanaticism; it is not a passion, it is a gift, it is enjoyment; it is the true & proper state of the mind, & has learned to be the disciple of Jesus. Religious joy is nothing else than the permanent cheerfulness of a good heart.

Such, my soul, is the character of the first joy.

II. And now we proceed to enquire what are the sources of this joy? What foundation does the Gospel afford for the animating exhortation, "rejoice in the Lord always"? It is the foundation of all that it teaches us of God: the character & designs of our Maker & Creator.

1. By what it beautes us of God. There is no sentiment, as it is more important to preserve peace, rational, & consistent, than that it be a source of joy. Among the declarations of men, the best claim to be considered as natural, is that which prompts him to the belief of some secret or invisible power. Nature sheaks like an agency more than human; the voice, sometimes mysterious, but always distinct, needs his ear in impressive accents. Thus the question occurs, what shall we think of this majestic power? & what shall we say of it? & when shall we be treated as we should be by it?

And here, usually may be fixed the starting point from which we have proceeded through...
unhappy errors art unassisted reason has received under the name of religion. Imagination is not abroad in the world, it is confused, fantastic, or horrifying account of the unseen agency art tells the universe. It is not mean to say, that the true character of deity is not to be known, the deep, powerful, living. beings in the universe, are found in every part of what we see around us, we find them too much interrupted, too disconnected, and scattered to bring us to a rational, just, result. The path in which the Almighty walks through his creation, is indeed a path of light and glory, but the eye of man does not discern it under those its operations, or mark the wonder of its splendid. We consider nature too much by parts, so as one uniform and consistent whole. Great and alarming events are there as most powerful and immediate. The storm and tempests the prodigies of the earth, &c. spread out in its track, send out thoughts to the mighty invisible forces which guide it, more efficaciously than all the ordinary, though perhaps more common operations of nature; the lightning natural.

from the cloud in sudden terrific grandeur becomes the fearful herald of the God whom we forget in the calm, constant sunshine. Though engaged by reason alone, we are exposed to the danger of forming distorted, partial, and secretly damaging views of the divine character, of the sensible, or even of the host of fictions and misleading deities, which have engaged the devotion of nations among whom revelation has never been made, yet his holy, cheering light, are melancholy part of the truth of this conclusion. Now it is easy at this point of difficulty, that figures in to give us peace and confidence, to say, It was to tell us of the relation and tends to only makes the dwelling of one society, the name of our happiness; to tell us, that He is that Being "whom" as the Apostle frequently expresses it, "having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, we rejoice with joy inperspicuum e full of glory." Do you ask why

the thin joys in this good? The general answer is - it is because that God is his Father, and that it is because the high is lofty One, whose name is holy, who is clothed with honour, and majesty, who coverseth himself with light as an irrisible...
ment, who has stretched out the heavens like a curtain, who layeth the beams of his chamber in the waters, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh on the wings of the wind, because Jehovah, the infinite Spirit, whose residence is the universe, whose duration is eternity, is the faithful Guardian, the unchanging refuge of his creative man; because he can bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion, (who brings forth Aurora forth in his season,) and guide the steers with his hand; in the same way he who judgeth among the races of our earth shall profit by this new day of the week and shall know not the exact beginning and end of his so-called protection. Yet the Gospel has told us that God is truly our Father, and that he appears as the merciful parent equally in our joys and sorrows; that it is he who makes our paths go down from on high, who sees the eyes of the congregation and the groups of the people. Thus the river of his grace flows on; thus the salt of his grace spreads through the earth. Thus the character of the xian's God is clear to all who meditate upon his word. Where shall we find the unceasing source of peace, so sweetly soothed, so sweetly soothing his mercies unto us, not only in the great events of life, but in the usual course of things? when we bend not the divine hand as to bow it to fall in refreshing dews in the night when no eye sees them? As from our vantage point we learn that God is with us not only in the light and glimmer of day, but that in the darkness and silence of night, there is One who never slumbers or sleeps; that amidst all these varied attitudes of life, there is an unseen hand guiding us to glory, to honor, to immortality. Thus, in some mysterious manner, we may find the character of the xian's God, who sees us and who loves us and will see us and love us forever; who in his grace, will never suffer the delight of his name to be in the earth, that his name may be great on earth. And in the reflection that the God of glory is the God of mercy, and that his presence is the hope of the confided in his children. Well may the xian repeat the sentiment of the prophet, so full of gladness and trust, "though the fig tree shall not blossom neither shall fruit be in the vines, yet will I cause to sprout up the olive tree, and I will set him in his place."

## Final Thoughts

The text reflects a deep understanding of the divine nature and the role of God in the natural world. It speaks to the idea of God as a constant presence, guiding not just in times of joy and peace, but also in the stillness and darkness of life's challenges. The language is rich with metaphors and references to celestial and natural phenomena, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all creation and the benevolent care of the divine. The author's meditation on the constancy of God's presence in both light and darkness offers a profound message of hope and reassurance for the believer in any season of life.
2. It affords a foundation for religious joy in what it teaches concerning ourselves, our situation & destination. Were it not for the instructions of religion, (natural revelation) there might appear much that is obscure, perplexing, or unintelligible in the condition of man. We might trace our progress from infancy to manhood without knowing for what purpose we were here. We might see our powers of action & enjoyment constantly increasing, our faculties ever growing new objects, subduing new difficulties, extending the range of our powers. If our affections multiplied & gaining strength as they become interwoven with the affections of others, we might find ourselves alternately by the smile of good fortune, with no hand but that of chance to distribute like the events of life. And after all when we were sinking down to the grave, we should look back with some melancholy question, why have we been for the past so unceaseful in the future so dark.

From such feelings permanent peace never spring--the heart ached, is startled, is disturbed. Throughout all of life, no character of cheerfulness. I do not say that innocence itself is not of itself natural sources of peace & satisfaction. They doubtless are so; but unaided by the aid of religion, it may be overcome or depressed by the calamities or the fears of old age & life in full. It may lose its courage when it sees some so ungodly & vigorous so malicious & it may lose much of its health & comfort, so the affection of misfortune the grace of affliction. It is a generous plant, but it will not borrow sentiment & grace of religion to shelter & support it. But, thanks be to God, religion does come to give it support, to give it an event & form & vigorous life. We find the greatest was offered to us in a rich source of happiness & prayer in every heart because it has told us what we are. We point in his desire but to what we are destined. In the heavenly bright light in it shines around us, the objects & events of life assume an animating & steadfast character. If the heart is elevated by views in which the conquests & temple of the world are lost, springing in hearing, that of knowledge & industry, in the heart is never so long as to be unholy. It is the joy of the by a man from those feelings of distress & insecurity, which unsettle the mind, if leave it at the mercy of untoward circumstance.
ces, or rebellious passions... to have taught us that virtue is the road to happiness, no less than the laws of God. While man feels that he is connected with the Power which made him, guides his destinies, as the child is connected with the parent, he cannot be unhappy. The man can look abroad on the objects of the beauty of nature, commune with them, and find his soul filled with a joy that none can feel. But who, with filial confidence inspired, men who have left life to hear an unprejudiced eye, bör, in the main, making any one justify a general will? But our religion displays its true facts, and its true tendency. It is not in bringing excellence in human to the true character of our condition here, in teaching us to own our condition in this earth, but an introduction to life eternal, that when the grave closes over the body, and the spirit moves the dust, the spirit takes its upward flight, and stands at the base of a just and merciful God. There are two views of the condition of mankind, the one, exclusive of the other, inclusive of a life to come. Ask you, to ask of these, you would look for your life of happiness the ground of your beings. Would you see earth, through all your darkness, or arranged by its Creator in smiles? Would you look on life as the journey of a day on the close of which the shades of night settle peacefully, as the commencement of the path of eternity, of light, of greater joy, of more elevation, if eternal? Would you stand alone in the universe, as feel your soul to God? Would you stand alone in the universe, as feel your soul to God? Would you stand alone in the universe, as feel your soul to God? Would you stand alone in the universe, as feel your soul to God? Would you stand alone in the universe, as feel your soul to God? Would you stand alone in the universe, as feel your soul to God?
the earnest & the pledge of immortality. He triumphed over death & we are no longer its captives.
- such are the views which open of our condition's destination. - I mean I will not ask you, whether the pain may be joyful; I will ask you, how can it be otherwise? how he, whose home is heaven, whose name is his God, whose guide which is his Saviour, can bear the weight of that anguish? -

I have thus my spirit of the character & sources of the pain's joy. - And now do you ask, for examples, in whose brief animating principles have displayed their combative & cheering influences? - let me point you to that venerable, but whom the page of history presents to your view, who toiled & suffered, bled without a murmur, because the prospect of heaven & remembered that the malignity of man could not reach them there - who welcome persecution, exile, & death, because they believed that he who goeth forth & weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. - And when he was, who gave that animating exhortation, “rejoice in the Lord always & again & again rejoice.” - It was one to whom no form of labor or of pain was unknown.
ion of the Gospel; for this alone can give you a permanent source of joy in that 'hope which emanates from the sin of righteousness, & shines to enlighten & to cheer, becoming brighter as the day of life advances, & irradiating its closing scenes with beams of everlasting glory.'

Jan. 1819.