No. 36.
On Social Worship
Ps. cxii. 1. "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright in the congregation."

This is one of those numerous allusions to the devotional services of the children of Israel, with which the O.T. abounds. There is something very touching and sublime in the national worship of the Jews, as successively presented to us in the records of their history. In the earliest ages, the patriarchs, in the simplicity of spontaneous worship, erected an altar on some spot where the mercy of Jehovah had rested with peculiar brightness; perhaps in the untroubled wilderness beside their flocks in the field—there offered the token of gratitude as the offering of praise. Afterwards, when this singular nation wandered from Egypt to Canaan under the guidance of the Most High, the
the records of the N. & S. the heathen authors who occasionally speak of the stars, represent them as habitually assembling for the purposes of devotion & instruction. And this custom has been transmitted from age to age. 

The congregation of Israel assembled round their monarch at their head, under the shadow of Jehovah in that house which they had builded for him, where the heaven of heavens cannot contain. Synagogues were established in every part of the land, & every Sabbath the law was read, & the voice of prayer was heard in these consecrated chapels. Judaism sanctioned by such high authority, venerable by its antiquity, recommended by its obvious utility, the followers of it did not object to. Though the religion they had embraced was a more prosaic & material religion than that of their ancestors, yet they maintained a reverence for its laws, the knowledge of its doctrine, they used similar means with similar zeal. Accordingly
king thought, that there is no day in seven, in which the
things of the world may be dismissed from the heart. In
the feelings that had been treated in the contest, or injured by
the mischiefs of a bustling, active life, may
find a rest in an atmosphere of peace. The Sabbath
is the day of rest for the spirit of man. - Is the
heart, aching with disappointment, or mind de-
pressed with care, may then find relief, while
they rise from earth, and leave behind them their
brothers in their chains.

For the practice of social worship, therefore, so long
as generally, so sincerely established throughout this
country, it would be fair to presume, even previous
to examination, that there were sound and good reasons
besides the positive command of Scripture, and the
more we reflect on the subject, the more we shall
be convinced that this practice maintains its hold on
the feelings and judgments of mankind, by the truest
claims of utility. Let us think of some of the
reasons for social worship, resulting from the benefits
and the source.

I. - We ought to consider more frequently than we do, the
preventive powers of the sabbath, and the means of
keeping it, practiced by years. By this means, we
should think much of the means of grace from it.
Salvation society, as well as that the duties of happiness, all
directly flow from it. We are very apt to consider
one religious institution as ineficacious, as exhibiting
little sign of good influence even in the lives
of those who adhere to them with most devoted
attachment. It is true indeed, let our hearts be touched
with contrition while we confess the truth; that in
most cases, the means of grace by in idle hands, and
on treasure, but an empty charge of neglect.
And it is gone
to the vineyard, that there are not wrought with labor
loves who have their care. We have been like the
worn flag tree, if after all the labor, care of persever-
ing culture have been extended upon us, and perhaps
has come seeking fruit, found none. - But if be are
pronounce the sabbath useless, because many, in-
deed, most, thus do not derive from it the means of
improvement, in knowing not what they ought. But we for
most think what we should be on the contrary,
Here our churches were destroyed, Sunday no thinly
enlightened into the number of seditious days,
may not fear that it would be like entering the
flood gate of emancipation to escape, unwise to run
what we have still remaining of pure & good in the
fabric of society?.- Were there would be many of the
habits of seriousness, who gave too much straitened security
to the intercourse of man with the man?: Was would
be those principles & affections, on such the soul rings
from earth, gains an antipath of immortality? Will
she feel that her home is in high? The sun that
perish it is true, but would they thank you, how
ish amongst the heat, & dust, & stinging of the world?
then now, the earth has enough, abundantly enough,
to clog the springs of the soul & oppress her heavenly
flight: and if there were no day of rest, no pause
for their sacred things, would the greatest part
of man tend be carried away into the whirl of plea
sures of business, & lose that hold on objects of etern
al moment, which before sufficiently peculiar
needed to be strengthened, not to be shaken?: The
spirit in man in the Sabbath freely seeks repose
from fatigue & strength for duty, would then perhaps
never escape from the enashing, absorbing pursuits
of the world.- Is the amount of feeling that con
secrated energy of heart, of man the moral
for the all of his body, & brings the plan to the
foot of the cross, would then be scattered, & spent in
the base service of world in the pollution
of vice gratifications. The affluent vouches of
pleasure, whose course of excess is ruinous
heart partially checked, would then be men without
restraint, perhaps without intermission, into the most
depraving indulgencies: - the poor man, who earns
bread for his family by the wearisome toil of a
labour of six days, instead of finding, as now, a rest
restoration, & the means of instruction in the seventh,
would still be bowed down under the heavy burden
of labour without a respite? Without relaxation the
institution of the Sabbath exists a most powerful
en & salutary influence in public sentiment, acting as a sacred guard around these principles as exist
the subject of security of society. If it does not make
man so good as he ought to be, it preserves them
from being so bad as they would otherwise be. It is
not a wall of defence around the immortal community, with
in its line, at least in its most heathenish forms, occurs
...not near its head, for it wants the stem, and to publish opinions is not to reason. When I think of all the prevailing force of Sunday in the social order of governments, it seems to me that to abolish it would be to rend asunder the bonds of mankind to the heaven and make him as it were fall to the dust of earth, perhaps without a single vestige above the grave they delight in he might find there. Where is the man whose heart feels for the interests of virtue, that could endure to see the holy repose of a Sabbath morning invaded by the din of business? All mankind assume the honors of gain and ambition? Observe the multitude of those who are going with such bent to the house of God, to worship the same Father, to think of the Son, their duty, to confess their sins, and implore forgiveness; to ask for strength for their duty, for grace to meet the trials of life, where who would not wish to see them? And multitude dispersed & hurrying away in the blaze of pleasure, in the struggle for wealth, striving with heated passions in the tumult of the world, seeking for the miserable fleeting forms of earthly goods? Most of the institutions of the old Sabbath were abolished, you would see all this melancholy change, saw more. You would see, too, the whisper of a solemn yet steady, serene, and unexpressed regard for what is good, for what is true. When, therefore, we reflect from how much misery in the social order and the Sabbath rescued, how many decent and orderly, otherwise we should have been, if it had not placed a wall of defense around some of the fundamental principles, in which the peace and stability of society, let us say, if we fear that one may offend for no other, it has claims not to be recognized and revered?...

2. But it has other, and better, claims. It needs no honor. It is not only on the ground of what it prevents, but of what it actually effects. Socialship gives to society a spirit, an earnestness, an energy, which it could derive from no other source. It is a fact of common observation, that our feelings are very much of their vigor emanation from the society of our fellowmen. When men wish to strengthen their characters and principles of sentiments, how natural is it for them to meet together, to sustain each other in company and countenance, that they may give a more decided character of a more vigorous flow to the feelings of by
wish to cherish. And shall we not avail ourselves of the same natural disposition of man, to serve the best, highest purposes to give warmth to piety’s fires of devotion? Are we willing to make use of this expedient, that the energies of the heart may be awakened for the common purposes of life? Shall we not in this manner find a place in those of our hearts, to bear to heaven an acceptable tribute to the praise and glory of our God? It seems that something more than ordinary emotions must be inspired, when those, who are travelling through a bleak, barren world, the same path, to heaven, meet together to offer up at the throne of the Most High, God, this tribute of their common praises for common blessings, to express their sense of common wants, of common duties, of common hopes, at the same time to indulge their affection for common sins. On this ground all may meet, there may be a perfect harmony of sentiment and feeling. What is expressed by one will suit the case of all. It will be felt with double force, when it is multiplied by all the associations of sympathy, by the consciousness that it is a common sentiment. We are sooner sensible of the influence on the habit of public worship, having given to our religious ideas, feelings, more strength and lustre, than they can possess while they are silently in the breast, mere objects of contemplation. Faith thus assisted needs a broader, more vigorous spring, gratitude becomes more ardent, if adhering, benevolence glows more deeply, if full, if strong resignation is more cheerfully yielding, more reserved, if contention more pregnant, if persevering, if humbling. These of feelings, not before more shading and indefinite, of the existence of which we ourselves perhaps more vaguely conscious, acquire a consistency, a colour, a vital force, and leaves no room to doubt of their reality and agency. Those ideas, which were somewhat more clearly perceived, more brightly impressed, become still more forcible, more imposing. I do not by any means intend to make the duty, the value of private worship, the end from me to diminish the reverence which belongs to the devotions of the closet. There, doubtless, may a pure heart, a modest, humble mind, find its course with that shield, its support, its defense under the injuries of the forms of the world. But with regard to the great mass of beings, it is to be feared, that if they had no other form of religious worship.
ship, than they might find in the exercises of private devotion. They would find it acquire that full apperception and feeling of the greatness and glory of the Almighty, and man, should ever be in the presence of the Almighty; that their thoughts would soon become pant and essential to other objects, their affections grow languid, their language be disconnected. So while they flatter themselves that they are ascending to Heaven, they might still find that they were changed to earth. Devotion must acquire new strength and settle deep in our minds, or we feel that the same prayer at we are offering, a debt from innumerable hearts around us. The same tribute of gratitude, in we present, is presented by many others, with us, have assembled around the altar. That the companions of our work have not have made and hearts lovingly and fervently have united with congratulation the hearts of our neighbors, companions, friends. That the same spiritual, affection, sympathy, love, have enlightened and animated us, have too, given us comfort, and joy to those who have come with us to the house of God. Social worship seems to connect the spirit assembled, by a chord of sacred union, if the chord, when touched by the hand of one, vibrates through the whole. Besides, this mingling of the different ranks of society in the offices of devotion has another happy effect. It breaks down those exclusive feeling, as the distinctions of life, and the church, and the profession of man, is bound to inhabit, and, has a right to claim. And so, in which has the direct tendency to come these chilling, ungenerous feelings for it places us on one level in the presence of God. Before the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, all the distractions of high and low, rich and poor, small and great, vanish into insignificance, for before Him we are all pawns, all suppliants, for the same mercy, and penalties on the same bounty. Then the rich and the poor meet together, as the is the Maker of them all. The voice of sincere prayer ascends not more acceptable to Heaven from one who is clothed in rags, as in the hands of poverty, than from the humblest child of royalty, who is the reason of the lips, promises of the God, whom is right. Him also suits the honest, as well as him who moves in the lowest paths of life. There is something extremely holy in this impartiality of religion; it is an affecting.
...encouraging thoughts, that when we enter the sanctuary we must shut out all those distractions which divide and disturb us; when we go out into the world, we must come to the altar of God with the feeling that we are all the same children, in full possession of the rights of man. The pride of man can have no place in the house of God; and such men are none of the happy occupants of social worship, considered strictly as social acts. I have not mentioned them all; but I have mentioned enough to show that we may not think lightly of that act if it is the source of so much good.

3. Public worship has a most salutary and happy effect on the sentiments of men, considered as forming members of society. So many it supplies the defects of early education, by making the ascent of religious knowledge. By attendance on this institution, they learn many things which might never occur to them otherwise. With many more they are brought acquainted with that firm and deep, and renders them most striking and attractive, calculated to give them the best place in the heart, to ennable it to useful exertion. But a still more beneficial effect of this practice is, that it tends to a public renewal of our religious feelings. This is so conducive, before we, that duly enjoined by the sacred himself with such earnest solemnity. We may, it is true, cherish in private a deep regard to sacred things, love to God, and to His Spirit of ascended attendance on the services of the sanctuary, it may not appear that we love religion any better than those who despise these things altogether. These, whose devotion is confined to the closet, can scarce be said to make that profession which signifies his followers, let them beware that they do not exceed the limits of being ashamed of. Let me not be understood to say, that our worship should be an ostentatious display of devotion, it does not mean that God neglects not the service of the beggar, howsoe'er he humble. What to Him are the most sumptuous and costly rites, the most splendid processions, if all the holy songs of external devotion? What to Him are the solemn temples, with their superb decorations? To the God we worship, there is nothing great, excellent, beautiful, but holiness; there is no sound like the harmony
of a good life; no melody like that of a pure & grateful heart. To him the most affecting sermons are not so effectual as the holy aspirations of the mind of whose object the avowments of the heart & the increase of a well-ordered conversation glorify. It is more truly worship than mere words, than he who has virtues immeasurable virtues, upon his altar, devotes to the heaven, the cattle, in a thousand hills. But though we know that an empty profession is nothing, yet we know too that it is our duty to make a publick avowal of our faith in the divine mission of Christ, & of our intention to submit to what is the duties of sacrifice his God may require. It is obvious that to worship publicly is to the God, head of our required, not to forsake our fellow-men, to set aside with a humble & teachable spirit to the instructions of the God, is itself a clear compliance with this duty. Thus by attending on public worship, we are brought to confer before men, & to give the weight of our influence & example, whatever it may be, to the cause of religious virtue. And while public worship has this enrolling influence, let us remember too, that as the social feelings tend their aid to devotion, so does

him in return increases the attachments, strengthens the ties, endorses the duties of social life. The influence of God is alike powerful & beneficial. If the

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from the wish to multiply the faculties of devotion.

If these fail, I trust that it may be considered an acknowledgment that you feel the importance of the
necessity of public worship; of the importance of regular attendance on it. My wish is, that this pledge be given an
voice, but it is not to be said that while we have provided the means of worship, we suffer its spirit to
be either neglected among us. Let us remember that the greater are our
advantages, the more careful should be the spirit of
negracting them. Therefore, "worship the Lord in the
beauty of holiness," nor forget that external acts of modes
of worship are instrumental duties that point to
something better; that they are as it were, the outward
expression of the inward spirit. Religion, the avenues
lead to the goal of faith, the sanctuary of the pure
upright mind, is the true temple of the living
God, that by the services of religion here, we, your fellow
citizens, may become perfected for that time when we shall no longer worship God, that
this is that particular church or society of saints, that shall
take place of worship in that heavenly temple, "where
the Lord giveth them light, from whence they shall
no more go out." ——

1819.
heaven unto us are the prayers which we regularly pray before thee this day: that those among us for whom this house mightly day, even toward the place of which this last said, my name shall be that. What they people come to offer their tribute of love and cheer of peace, to humble themselves before the Lord to confess this one: to spread before these their prayers to supplicate the favor: then hear them beark thy dwelling place, O when their heart, answer for thy bless. When the people came to this sanctuary to listen to the instructions, the warnings, the help of the encouragements of our holy religion, then let them come from heaven, thy dwelling place, I give me to treat the means of efficacy to all the deficiencies of the world in this place. Let kindness to the children be avoided on these walls. I many the people in this place feel that this house is to them more than the house of God: of that this is the seat of heaven And we pray that when earthly altars shall have fallen in ruins, earthly temples shall have crumbled into dust; or may be found the seat of God, and the seat of the Saviour whose hands and arms make us, to thee, shall be the honor of the day.
At home. Nov. 17th. 1819. afternoon.