No. 64.

Unity consists in "righteousness, peace, & joy in the Holy Ghost."
Romans XIV. 17. — "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

These weeks, 17th, contain a description of the nature of faith, refer to particular circumstances, and a particular state of feeling, among the first community at Rome. In order to understand this allusion, we must remember, that among the first converts to Christianity, in this city, were people whose habits of living, arising from their different sentiments, were very different. Some of the philosophical sects at that time inculcated a most rigid and self-denying mode of life. Some, that there was a great deal of pleasure in abstaining
from the commony innocent enjoyments. This opinion, absurd as it was, still cleaved to them, when they embraced the same religion; in this many, from the habits in which they had previously contracted, brought with them to try an austere way of living, which suited itself particularly in the rise of goods; while, on the contrary, others were totally unacquainted with these rigid habits. Prejudices are engendered slovenly and with reluctance; but was not to be expected that the first class of persons should, immediately on their embracing the new, give up their peculiar self-denying habits of living? Many of the Roman Jews of this description esteemed it unlawful to eat flesh at all; or, at most, would eat only certain meats, & these only on account of the food served. Others, who had brought into it from their previous habits of life no such principle, thought it allowable to eat flesh at all times. Of course, made it a part of their usual food. It might be expected that such a difference in the habits of living of persons, who preferred to be adherents to the same religion, would produce some unpleasant consequences. With that spirit, which loves to dwell on points of difference, rather than on points of agreement, the first converts condemn each other, & departed from the law of love, charity. He who practised the austere self-denying mode of living, considered the brother who did not recognize the authority of his rules, as a persecutor, while that brother, on the other hand, looked upon the rigorous lives as a man whose principles were stretched to an unreasonable degree of severity. Disagreeing, as they did, concerning the eating of flesh, they had divided themselves into parties; & these, disputing fiercely, as this in later times have too often done about a point not worthy of importance, if it were essential to the true being of religion, might at last have ended in embittered animosities, &
this subject. St. Paul thought it necessary to give them his apostolic directions. He charges them not to bring divisions and heart burnings into the church by idle and frivolous disputes about their food. He tells each one to judge himself in freedom and quiet. He tells them that each one should judge his own bulky in freedom and quiet. He tells them not to eat at all, save the Lord's supper, and to judge one another. He proceeds to tell that he was taught by the Lord not to make himself a slave to men, but to serve the Lord. He says that the Lord is not pleased with men who have passed by the Lord's pass, and who have not been instructed in the world. The Lord has ever been a disposition among mankind to substitute inventions of their own in the place of the religion of Jesus. The Lord is pleased to fill the minds of some other leaders than him with reasonableness in heart, to strive for some system, and that one hand has formed great faith, as if the interests of true religion were lodged there. He says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, it does not make men wise."
ered, as an assembly of empty ceremonies and meaningless forms, to whom he had gone through the world in a
faithfully and frequently imagined that nothing more
could be required of them... And at all times, it has
been a common mistake on the part to suppose that, so
for a particular set of doctrines is the same thing as
real for religion?... that they could in no way more
plainly prove that they were saved than by denying
that name to those who are so unfortunate as to have
a different faith... And even now, it is not among
the last of the faults of the fiercest, to imagine
that we can frame for ourselves something else, that
will do as well, as the doctrines of other sects--that
ought to be believed and practiced. But we are ready
to make communions of substitutes for that which
alone is the only thing that God will accept.--No one
will fill our cups from fountains or have been
sent for ourselves, rather than go to the well spring
of that which flows the pure refreshing waters. This is
the disposition of the Lord in the text, especially con-
demned... Since then these things are not religion, let us
consider what, according to the apostles, can, singly
in 13:

1. It is righteousness. The kingdom of God is not made
of dough, but righteousness. The meaning of this
word is large & comprehensive. To be righteous is the
same thing as to have the virtue of being true; to have the virtue
which a Christian ever ready to obey the pre-
cept of and to imitate the example of... The righteous
ness of the soul is seated in the heart & displayed it
within all the fruits of good living. By these
fruits alone, not by professions, are we to judge of its
existence & strength. It includes within its mean-
ing a devoted attachment to duty in all its forms,
so it supposes activity in all the offices of good.
ness; firmly in the discharge of all obligations;
it is not content with humble affiliations & faint desires; it is not limited to occasional
exactions or incidental efforts; it will have
nothing to do with thoughtless services & unwilling
exactions; it must be allowed to claim a wide &
untainted authority over our affections, actions.
words; in short, it must be the source, whence...
like blood of virtue spreads itself through the whole frame. Such as the righteousness, as when we consider it, as we ever should, as a principle of broad and deep, as we see that it stands in opposition to those many false standards of action and duty, which are so common in the world. These are ones, who think it enough, barely to satisfy the demands of justice, who, if they are honest and conscientious, would not even, cannot see, why any thing more should be expected or required of them. who are scarce by willing to allow that obligation of that part of our if example抢劫 is like him to go about doing good?” – you would find it, not from their hearts the beauty of holiness, stone to forget those feelings and duties, not spring from the relation of man to man in the great fam. of our dear Father. No such should remember that as far as they go, as it is all very well, but until they proceed yet further, they cannot flatter themselves that they have reached the mark of their righteousness. for this requires us to be industrious in doing good, to go beyond ourselves in all the offices of generous and enlarged benevolence, to remember that among all the ties of life, as to those by which are entangled in life, there is not one, which should not be turned with strong peculiar grace, and virtue, but comprehends the whole of the plan’s duty both to himself and to others; it requires justice, but at the same time it requires more than justice. There are others, who make righteousness to consist in external forms of outward observances. who are very exact in using the more strong means of exclusion, while they forget the end: these are they, who like the chance in the time of our Lord, “trust in themselves that they are right in the sight of God,” and this for others”, who, who they like them have either the proud boast, “you see thank thee, that we are not as other men are, covetous, unjust, – even as this publican: we fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all our possess;” then claim much merit on the score.
of their religion, with contempt on them, who can only bow in the deep humility of his heart—‘god be merciful to me a sinner.’ And this is very far from being their righteousness; for that does not dwell on the countenance or in the voice; it is not to be found in loud & clamorous prayers, or in severe censures of those whom we may choose to think not so good as ourselves, nor does it vary itself in the outward acts of religion. It does not, if one may so say, remain in the speech of the temple, but it goes directly to the altar & there presents its offering. True righteousness consists in living righteously—that is, in keeping well spiritually & comparatively to the spirit of the law, to the precepts of Jesus, to the will of our Lord. It is vain for us to attempt to make substitutes for it; we must take it as it is, or else we cannot possess it at all.

2. Religion consists in peace. This is the second quality mentioned by the Apostle in the text; it is one of the brightest & lovehest features in the character of Jesus. When the Lord was first proclaimed it was announced to be ‘peace on earth,’ & when uncorrupted it ever has been & ever will be. It is peace able in its nature & peaceable in its effects; it gives peace in this world & will communicate peace through eternity. This benignant effect of Jesus is darkless, wherever it is allowed its full influence in the common habits & conduct of life. It calms those angry passions & those troubled feelings with the entire course of the world is but thought to create. But it alone have the ascendancy in our hearts; it will no longer be a difficult task to quell unruly desires, to suppress turbulent emotions. It will either remove the thorns which are planted in the path of life, or enable us to walk with them without feeling their sharpness. It teaches us to look upon ourselves as children of one common Father, subjects of one common Lord, as guarded & disciplined by the same providence, & as heirs of the same hope. Therefore it teaches us to be peaceable. Again it impresses upon us the duty of a peaceful disposition, because it tells us
that opinions are doubtless of unimportance in our act proportion to the bitterness & violence without that are defended. The very temper & manners of the best ceremony with which they have been advanced, maintain, instead of enhancing the truth & moment of the truths contended for, are rather fitted to create a suspicion of their weakness & insignificance, since men are always most ready to have recourse to evidence & passion when their cause is the weakest; most destitute of reason & argument. If our religion is a religion of peace, let us show by our disputing that we feel it to be such, always remembering that the good heart is of more value than the most deliberate belief in all the creeds & confessions of human invention.

In according to the rule of the text, our religion must be "joy in a holy spirit." By this expression we are to understand that joy which arises from a deep feeling of the value & the support of the truth & hopes of the gospel. There is nothing in our religion which requires or elevates a gloomy, enthusiastic temper of mind.

Cheerfulness should be the characteristic of the true church. But in this subject as in every other there have sometimes been strange pretensions or mistakes. It is but too often, that a deformed countenance, with the connections, its of deceit, deception or elevation of spirits, flights of fancy, & fancies of imagination, have been mistaken for signs of grace, & elevation has been made a passion, instead of being a principle. But true religion is of a different genus & complexion from all such deceptive appearances; it is cheerful & serene, free from turbulent emotions, composed, deliberate, resulting from mature judgment, from cool consideration, from the steady pursuit of a well instructed mind, & the sincere affections of a softened heart.

Like the calm air of unclouded sky, compared to a season of darkness & tempest; such is the true temper of religion compared to the gloom of a dark & enthusiastic mind. Passion & agony, distrust of the divine goodness, terror & despair are directly contrary to that "joy in a holy spirit," as St. Paul
designates as one of principal marks of true religion. True repentance indeed is attended with sorrow & self-reproach, with deep sorrow & pentitent self-reproach. Peace all owners, if it becomes us to bow ourselves down in the spirit of an unfeigned meekness & penitence; but sorrow for sin is a different thing from that habitual gloom & melancholy which spread a cloud over the countenance & disturb all the gentle & kinder feelings of the heart. The true heart repents in bitterness of soul for all his sins, but he rejoices too that God has promised pardon & acceptance to his penitence & contrition. If just the same proportion as reformation goes along with repentance, he finds himself rescued from slavery & misery, & advanced to a state of happiness & joy. Religion most surely is not a thing that comes upon us suddenly like a storm, & then passes away, leaving the mind weak & lifeless resting in a state of weakness & melancholy. It must be seen in the whole course & conduct of life; it must give us generous feelings & good principles. I'm just the same degree as it prepares us for heaven, it will make us better friends to our better neighbors, better members of society. They who can rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience, who are acquainted with that joy which springes from the present affections of the soul, hopes of divine favor & blessed immortality, such persons are no longer strangers or strangers to the kingdom of God. "For, as the Father loveth me, the Father also will love you; & if ye keep my commandments, I will love you, & will manifest myself to you." In a holy spirit.

We have seen, & this, what according to the Apostle's description is the nature of the true religion. We have seen that it consists not in professions, in speculations, opinions, in melancholy & enthusiasm, but in righteousness, peace, & joy in a holy spirit. While we are careful to guard our minds from alarms that arise in this subject, let us gratefully adore the goodness of God, who hath sent his dear servant into the spiritual kingdom & the kingdom of God. May God give us all the heart to become obedient, walking & faithful subjects.
Praise the mercies of God, all grace, 
we should bow down and thank thee 
for all these means of religious in-
struction & improvement, and those 
that are put into our hands, especially 
the news, the bears, the books, 
for the good things of great joy, 
which the Lord hath pro-
claimed on earth. For all the rights, 
for all the blessings, the aid of the
God, are wonderful. Let us thank thee; 
if we pray that we may 
learn from day to day to understand 
better the nature of our holy religion, 
& to practice more purely its precepts. 
May that righteousness, of peace, 
joy in a holy spirit, in which consists 
the kingdom of God, be shed abroad.

At home: June 24, 1820, afternoon.
At Waltham: Sept. 30, 1820, afternoon.
At My Father's: Nov. 25, 1821, afternoon.
At Lexington: March 25, 1821, afternoon.
Abbot: Paddock's: April 8, 1821, afternoon.
Abbot: Paddock's: April 29, 1821, afternoon.
At Weston: June 22, 1821, afternoon.
At Dedham (Mr. Salmon): June 10, 1821, afternoon.
At Dedham (Mr. Salmon): Aug. 12, 1821, afternoon.
At Hingham (Mr. Richardson): Jan. 23, 1822, afternoon.
At T. South's: Jan. 26, 1823, afternoon.
At home: April 7, 1826, afternoon.
in our hearts, regulate our actions, 
& govern our lives. - Givens the true
spirit of others here on earth, that
we may become prepared for the event,
which awaits the faithful followers of
Jesus in the world to come, & to the
world to come.