No. 66
On Accountability to God

June 25, 1820
Romans XIV. 12. — "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

If revelation had taught us but this single truth, it would be worthy of all that display of glory, by which its promulgation was attended.

If the Bible contained but this one sentence, it would deserve all our attention, your highest estimation. This declaration we might expect to see written by the finger of God, in brightest characters among those instructions which seldom descend to communicate to man. If God himself were to speak from the throne of his glory, what could the voice of his Majesty
announce more tremendously important to the race of man, than this sentence: "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." That large, but sublime, is the meaning of this most solemn truth. It carries its important charge to every member of the human family, to the whole of each member's existence; it includes the large size of man, and the eternity to which that race is destined. This is the key, that unlocks the mystery of man's existence; it tells us why what we are born, for what we live, and for what we die. It is this we teach us, that we are not merely bound, without an object, through the busy, fleeting scene; that God has not sent us into this world merely to gain an accident, the number of His favor, in a few days to return to that nothingness from which we were called. Besides, for argument, what human life is; yea, even consider what we should be, if there were no object to look to beyond life; "When the moderate hopes of early youth, or those, then, own disappointment, have been staved down by longer experience or more extended views, when the keen contemplations which earlier life employed on age, have expired or been abandoned, when we have seen year after year the objects of our nearest, dearest, and of our fondest affections lie down together in the hallowed peace of the grave; when pleasures and amusements begin to be uncertain, the gay disorder that measured them to appear flat and unprofitable, when we reflect how often we have mourned, been comforted, what different paces we have successfully maintained; when we have gradually been formed, when frequently the objects of our pride have gloved the bough of our shame;" it is at the end of this long array of sentiments, disappointments, hopes, yea, that we are alone left with the enquiry of what we are placed here; what is the fruit?
hereof life? And truly if this alternation of joy &
grief, of defeat & success, were the whole of our exis-
tence, if we had nothing further to look for, it would
be a question shewn could not answered: But it is
our happiness our privilege to know that this
question may be satisfactorily answered. It seems
to know that we are placed here that we may
be trained up the immortality, that the purpose
of this life is to prepare us for an endless existence.
Thus far doubt is silenced, assurance enlightened.
Still one enquiry remains, pith we could find a reply. What is the character & condition
of that future state to which we are all destined.
To this enquiry Scripture furnisheth a short, but effi-
cient answer, when it tells us, that it is a state
of accountability & of remembrance. To know that
there is a world beyond this is to know much,
very much; but unless we know something more
we could scarcely see how the present scene of
things could be called a scene of preparation.
But when we are taught that futurity is
the home, your passage through earth is the jour-
ney to be conducted us thereto & that when we arrive
at that home, we must render to every soul. Tell
an account of what we have done & how we have
improved by the way. Why that account must
receive our sentence, when the character of futuri-
ty is thus disclosed to us, curiosity needs to ask
nothing more: it remains only for us then to de-
gree to perform the task & awaits our rewards.

Yet then, teacheth us that we are accountable
beings; for all we have & for all we enjoy
we are most solemnly responsible. Thus an in-
calculable importance is attached to all that
we do in this world: it is no longer a matter of
indifference whether we are or neglect our oppor-
tunities, whether we are idle or industrious in the
case of these means God has put into our hands.
Life acquires a character, a distinct purpose &
it could not otherwise have. We are no more to con-
sider it as a mere temporary contest for wealth,
for honor, for benefit, or for enjoyment. We not only
have something to do, but we are to remember that
what we do will have a distinct and important bearing
in that future condition, which alone can be called
permanent. This consideration of accountability is
the compass that points to the stars beyond the
ground by it we must shape our course, if we
would reach the haven of peace and happiness.

Let us consider some of the objects of our accounta-
bility, some of those possessions of advantage, for
the use of which we must account.

1. We are accountable for our time. This is a most
precious deposit, yet scarce to see, that we don’t
suffer the treasure to rust on our hands, y’hall not
we shall not waste it in vain. For, for our time
is not our own; it is a manager’s for the management
and improvement of it. It is given to us, but it is given in such con-
ditions as must make the abuse or misapplication
of it appear injury to ourselves, as a deep man against
God. With the idle man time moves, with a stern
and heavy face; yet the idle are precisely those
people, who are most apt to complain of the short-
ess of life. It is a striking fact. One man and
account for a multitude of others, goes to show the na-
dom of responsibility, that in happiness
is in proportion to inaccessibility. That persons and
the golden moments in the indulgences of which
find those moments to be oppressive, better
that in whatever degree we neglect the ends of
life, or that our existence, is given to us, in fact, the
degree of existence becomes heavy and miserable. We
cannot tend more directly to make life appear so
fruitless, long for all desirable objects, yet to
incur it. Can any thing like foolishness, yea, can
any thing, than the consideration, that we are ac-
countable in a strict sense for the use of
our time, that one hour, one day, one month, one year,
so they pass away, bear with them to the throne
of God, the remembrance of what we have been
what we have done. It is good for us to connect
this idea of responsibility with the passage of time
and to remember that each season of life,

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Flourish more is less important in forming our charac-
ters & consequently in forming our halfpersons.

But goodness is not the only use against the duty of eminuing time. It is not only a matter of consequence that we do something, but what of consequence that we do something, that it may be of such a character, that it may yield us a good account in the day of recompence.

We may be very industrious in doing nothing; we may be very busy, yet busy about nothing but one thing. It is greatly that we shall judiciously dispose of our time, & that "time is like a

"one of the old writers, that "time is like a

shrink, not never anched," while I am afraid shall better do the things which shall advantage me at my handings, than practice such as shall cause my committment when I come to shore.

The hours of life must not only be employed but well employed; the fleeting moments should not only carry with them the impression of but we have done, but the impression should be a
good & fair one. In all the various enclosures of duty to God & benevolence to men, in all the

Grace Feltham.
2. We are accountable for the use of our talents, powers of mind, our mental & moral faculties. These are the distinction of the crown of God. He placed on his creature man; his creature is represented by David in one of his finest strains: "as thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and has crowned him with glory and honor: thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." Most surely, then, it is not for man to possess such powers & faculties, but being essentially accountable for them. Beings, who possess such treasures must and are for their use of them. As certainly as indestructibly as our spirits are of a better & more exalted than our bodies, as certainly as things everlasting are better than things transitory, infinite greater than finite, eternity more important than time, as certainly as our affinity with angels, with hands with God himself, is more glorious & desirable than our relationship with the plants of earth & the fields, so certainly shall we be summoned to render an account of our use of these faculties by whom are allotted the purified vessels by the great divine souvenirs. Of man is invested with powers of mind which may be constantly rising by a noble & higher flight, expanding & operating in various spheres, springing from earth to heaven, wandering amidst the immense multitudes of ones & worlds, those scenes of existence & space where the majesty of God is displayed, capable of contemplating the immortal destiny of the soul, of entering into a conception of these things. And hence it is from a view from the relation of man to God & to his fellow men, if we have such powers, we must, certainly we have them for some purpose, & cannot squander them in idle or pollution without unconscious a heavy guilt. Yet how often are they debased, frustrated, shattered.
by the felicity & the absence of man. How often is their brightness dimmed, & their beauty bathed by being
embroiled amid selfishness & self-defeat.

How often is the morning star thrown from heaven & its glory extinguished. It is true, all men have not
equal means or opportunities of mental improvement
in this, as in other respects. There are striking differen
ces; but each one must do all that he can, remembering that he is an agent under God, & is to him
accountable for all those faculties with he has confer
red.

Be accountable for the use of the gifts of
fortune, the opportunities of doing good; of their
influence in society, or it may have pleased heaven
to make our station. Riches, authority, elevated
station are not bestowed on man merely to be
made the vender of his fellow man, nor
is it an aim that the innumerable means of effec
ting good are placed in the hands of all classes
of men. If the use of all these, let us never for
get, God will require an account. To some the
hand of providence has been a bountiful hand.

Hence, wealth, & all that the world calls good
are bestowed upon them in proportion as they are
made instruments of the bounty of heaven, & let
each remember that if those to whom much
is given much will be required. Let there be
remembered that as their means are more extensive,
their field of accountability is enlarged.

In promoting particular as well as general good,
in countenance & upholding religious & charita
tble institutions, in spreading the reign of love &
terror has increased, mercy in adversity & kind
gen in distress, an anxious smile to the face
that was clothed in sorrow, & gladness to the heart
of sorrow, with grief - in these & all the other
and offices of benevolence, some portion of the fond
of fortune may be well & worthily employed. Have
we influence & authority over other? Let us not for
get that all men are accountable; & let
them always be excited in a good cause, let
influence, or he may not do much good in other ways; if for all his influence, for all his power to help the cause of virtue & human happiness, if each man is solemnly accountable to God, & if his servants, we would hear a sentence of peace from the righteous Judge. Let us now faithfully imitate the pious watchfulness of these years of doing good & helping the cause of truth.

4. We are accountable for our use of the means of religion. Where our responsibility is most high, & as a rational & immortal being, surely he cannot neglect it without running against his own happiness & against his duty to God. That cannot be a vain thing for we, through the graces of prophets & apostles, have tasted of the blood of the Son of God, & to proclaim it & to execute a ministry rich & powerful. There is no man, however humble his station, however restricted the circle of his
in all the mighty scenes of revelation, the Bible has disclosed to us, be not a web of delusion, as if Moses, the prophets, Jesus, and the disciples of were not only God's people, but his instruments, there is no religious trinity.

My dear sir, recall your attention for a moment to the declaration of the apostle—"So then every one of us must give account of himself to God." No amount of mine own can give force to this tremendous truth—It would have to be made by itself, full impression on your heart. Upon the gates of the temple there is inscribed what we are all that moral is eternity. At the tribunal of heaven there is but one judge. This is a judge who cannot be deceived. "And when the day shall come to seal the fate of the universe, the judgment is set, the books are opened, and every one is assigned to the guilt declared. If the sentence pronounced—then..."
of the righteous scarcely escape. Oh, where shall
the ungodly & the sinner appear?—June, 1832.

Most high & holy God, give us, we beseech thee, to feel deeply the importance of that
character & these relations, in which thou hast placed us in this world. Impress upon
our hearts a deep sense of our accountability to thee; for all the opportunities, all
the advantages, all the possessions we enjoy. May we so improve our talents, our
faculties, our forces of mind, our
opportunities of doing good; by all the means of our holy religion, that we may hereafterhear that joyful sentence, 'Well done, good
faithful servant, enter ye into the
joy of your Lord.' May it be our steady desire, like our Lord & Master, to finish
the work we have not given us to do; this
we may receive the blessing here of the blessing hereafter in their employ, though J. C.

At home, June 20th, 1820, afternoon.
At Concord, May 19th, 1822, afternoon.
At home, June 16th, 1822, afternoon.
At West Cambridge, June 29th, 1823, afternoon.