No. 36.
The benefits of Xmas.
A Christmas Sermon.

Dec 24 1820
This would seem at this time, as if, to have its worth with an appropriate impressiveness. We have come near to that day.

Luke 21, 19, 21. "And the angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

On the occasion, when all was together, there were words seem to have an appropriate impressiveness. This day is considered, by a large portion of the Christian world, as the anniversary of the birth of Christ; though there is some difficulty in fixing the precise date of this event, yet our uncertainty in that respect is of no considerable importance. It is the grand event in itself, in which we are directly interested, and we would communicate. The thoughts on this subject bring to our minds, naturally induce us to stop back, as it were, in our imagination, to that time, when in the
of their natural distinction. The children of the chosen people of God could not ill brook the name of a foreign master; it was regarded that when their deliverer should come, this office would be taken up, that the Roman emperor would no longer appear bearing the hilt of Rome. These second hopes of foreign interpositions about the fulness of time, the sounds of the trumpets heard, as they watched their stocks, as well as the rest of their countrymen; it was hardly on this account that they heard the declaration of the angel with such joy, of having found the necessary to the place where the infant Messiah was to be found. But these were false and childish feelings; it is not for government to have different feelings that are not taught to look back to the machinations of the human heart, as the appearance of a prince invested with temporal glory, but as a teacher from God divinely qualified. Yea, verily! We exalt to it as the commencement of a great social revolution in the world. He came to them, not a new empire, but a new religion. Then, as at the first creation,
the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters. Speaking
crowned the earth with gross darkness. The nations, but become
to shed abroad the light of heavenly truth on earth. The
spirit of religion was lost amidst causes of rebellion, and
the heathen forms, preserved by a ritual art, had be-
come little else than an empty name; but he taught men
these high and pure, curious doctrines, and spoke to religious
duties, to immortality, and to God. Such are the elevated as-
sociations connected with the birth of J, as we should say
it is only when we consider it as giving an impulse to the
spiritual renovation of the world, that we think fit in its higher dignity of importance. It is then only that we
can feel the force of the angel's announcement to the hap-
less shep: "Behold, I bring you good tidings." "

We are led by this impressive passage of scripture, by
the nature of this anniversary, to think of the benefits
which its sheets brought, and the means of a religion from J, has
confessed when we, the Jews, have indeed brought good tidings
of great joy to the people, and to the world a Saviour is born.
We derive in this day to cherish remembrance of the
so any sentiment, with all that remembrance should in-
clude, it is that of gratitude for all that God has done, has
done, is doing, and here it should be observed that a very
false standard is often set up, by which to judge of the need-
lessness of these benefits. Where, it has been asked, where are the
evidences of the good influence of J? Has not the page of
man's history, since the times been as dark as ever?

Do not the passions of men still spread violence, oppression,
and wickedness through the earth? These questions arise from
a very common disposition to estimate the morals of an age by
its comparative improvement or degeneracy, solely from its
great and conspicuous transactions, from those extended act and
events, or meet the eye of you the attention on the entire
sheet of past times. Such events, however, are by no means
the proper criterion, by which to estimate the influence of any
system of truths, which are directed to the heart, if such moral
they are like the rough, bragg'y eminences, or rise from the
earth, whose scattered at a distance from each other, where
there are maps of fertile plains and valleys. It is within
the contents of public assemblies, in the poetry & intrigus of
the ambition of power, in the negotiations of embassies, in the conflicts of civil wars, in the train of the state, monarch, or the match of the nation, that you are to look for the general effects of religion, from the nature of the case, they cannot here be found. Where the nature of the passion is lowest and most imperfect, the middle term of religion cannot be so often heard, and the influence of its operation will probably be felt the least of the least. If you would find the grandeur of its blessings, you must turn from the tumults of crowds of public transactions, to humble persons where you meet what may be called the average of life. You will then be able to mark in some degree the malignant nature of the evil in the conduct of every day: you will find mutual civility more agreeable, widely diffused, than it would have been without religion; the principles of good morals more practically understood, more deeply modified with the operation of the thoughts and affections of men, you will find the most effectually controlled, manners more gentle, humane, more purity of integrity in the inter-

The course of life, you will find minds better prepared for the necessities of the world, from a firmer dependence on the care of Providence more profound resignation to the will of the All-merciful and rational Deity; a brighter hope of riches consolations under the infirmities of age, and the approach of death. Nor, the good and more serious effects do not appear on the page of the historian. Let the deep grief there, it is only with present notice and adequate demonstration, and it is therefore wholly unprofitable to form that you do not bestow; the influence of it in the minds of nations you foresee, where it must necessarily be almost entirely lost from our view. But perhaps its general operation even there has been something more: then has been suffered from some final examination.

It is then primarily to the usual and ever present of life, that we are principally to look for these blessings of the age this occasion calls upon us gratefully to remember; for we may first turn our attention to the good effects of religion on mankind as connected together in society, with a reference merely to this world.

In this view, then, we must observe that it has served...
The standard of social morality, as fixed by the foundations of social happiness, it has created a pure regulating influence on the fixed judgment in morals. It has communicated a healthy, vigorous tone of feeling, thinking with respect to the principles of action. It has given a fixed and permanent standard of duty, to act a strict appeal, at least, if out of the acquisition of legislation is contrarily made. And at length, perhaps insensibly, in a great degree corrects and regulates public opinion. I do not mean, that you will not find much moral impurity even there, where the genius of it has established the wrong. Under the influence of the best religion, there are doubtless bad men enough. But still it must be conceded, that in those countries, more solitary and remote checks to corruption, crime, are constantly at work. Immutability is rarely tolerated as innocent; it still merits applause; if vice ventures to raise its head, it finds an arm to meet the storm of public opinion. In its retreats in confusion of shame. Daily intercourse, conversation are doubtless more pure, than they would be without our religion; immutability does not progressively smother the contaminating influence to the bad customs. And it should not be forgotten, that in these countries, many are very little by religion are not kept within the bounds of duty and decency, by a sense of shame. Yokes because from vice is frequently in time refined by habit into good principle. Others, who cannot be stimulated to virtue, are compelled to secrecy and silence in this view, this diffuse less widely the power of their sentiments than the image of their example. We on seldom aware, how much evil is the religion presents, as well as how much positive good it produces. The number is large of those, who act directly, mightily from principles, who thus oppose to be degraded from the light of nature, from the dictates of their own reason, or from the dictates of conscience, but whom there have been inducted from public opinion. If public opinion has received its truth, its rectitude, its purity from itself, be sure, you eye back to those ages, in which, from parents over them, and sometimes required, to sacrifice their children on the altar of a cruel deity, look at Roman morality in its
There is another point of view, in which the importance of
society, may be considered, which gives the best foundation for social
ethics, by giving the most elevated view of man, as the center
of all. The interest of all the members of a society, will depend in
an unanswerable degree, in minds of feeling, thinking, and acting
with regard to those, with whom we are connected. A diseased
mind, or corrupt heart, must
prompt and views of men, as well incline and change,
perhaps contempt, for the offices of justice and affection.
He who looks in this pathway, merely as bringing with
necessity is interest, compel him to hold alliance, where he
may use to obtain a favorite object, it may pass as an
heir, he in that, he seems men only in the light of being
them as competitors, it helps, or disturbances, in the pursuits
of gain, of honor, of of pleasure, cannot have any very
elevated standard of social morality, or any very strong

tive to bind them to its observance. No, if we are to dis
in a very plausible
change, the duties which we owe to each other, as members
of a community, even must have an importance in our
estimation. There must be among us, not only a common

brightest days, when suicide was thought to conform
in the character of pain, of fear, of rage, from love
of pain,-when it was sanctioned by the example of the hero,
and noted in the disquisition of the philosopher,-as
not to rise to the standard of moral morality, or any other the
measure of moral feeling.

To society, in the spirit of

society, where one sees a species of reverence, which was not well known to the ancient world. These combinations for doing good, with the morally separate effects
of individuals are collected into a large efficiency mass, to
which all done by our treatises for ages, misfortune, believe
where the hand of charity is extended, to relieve 

spirit which leads to each action comes more or less remotely from
our religion.- It is by his revealed the body of society,- it has
divided the nation, and pressed from the eternal fountain in
to numberless minute streams, as have flowed in every direc
tion, and have nourished as their flames.

A fashion,
we may so say, affected a distillation of moral and religious instruc
tion through the community,- though itself is not always
visible, yet its effects are constantly noted around.- God
thought, if we think right, are almost daily minds back to us, as
the man of many blessings, from every as a social community.
interest, but an interest consciencially secured by noble and dignified views. Now it is precisely this interest and this importance, where supplied by that regard for God as the Great Ruler of mankind, that the Scriptures inculcate. It is God who teaches us that we are all candidates for the same blessings, and that the same bright hope beams on us all. With this impression deeply fixed in our minds, wherever your eye meets a human being, your friend, who belongs to eternity, or who equally with yourself claims the care of the bounty of heaven. If you have that sincere regard for God, it makes it your duty to have, you must entertain the sentiments of kinship with all men, and seek for man; if you will be made friendly to feel that if you violate the laws of justice or disregard the blessings of dependence towards any of the human family, you will offend that God to whom we are created as unimportant, who is as strong to the good as a refuge from the storm, as a shadow on the heart. Thus the deep pity of God makes us obligates to social duty a sacred principle; it shows us that the rich beaks to each other in this world is but a part of the plan that reaches to the throne of God.

There are a few of the good influences, with the religion in this land spread through the community, and it seems proper at the occasion to bring to view. But there are only what may be termed the public blessings of God, the blessings which are scattered by the way on its march to immortality. When a still more exalted and important stage to thank our religion for. It is not only as members of the community, but as individuals, so human beings, that we have a deep interest in God. Our Saviour has taught us such truths, that must feel we have a personal concern in them. But we have, and so the leading blessings of our religion in this respect, our sect communicates a knowledge of the nature and character of God, and our condition of descent.

If the Saviour has blessed us, because it has given us high spiritual, spiritual, spiritual, spiritual view of God. There is no sentiment that is more important to preserve ever, natural, consistent with itself, than that each needs the human mind to Deity. The question is deeply interesting, with what character shall we suppose that majestic power to be invested? How all around us does witness.
about this question have proceeded there unhappy errors and unassisted reason has sometimes arrived under the influence of religion. Imagination has been bent ahead, obstructed with a confused, fantastic, and terrifying account of the unseen agencies, and failed to universe. But in the subject, a subject so important to man, as it comes to enlighten and to satisfy, it's to relieve us. It gives us the most clear and explicit instructions concerning the character of Providence of God; it teaches us what He is, what He requires of the relation in which we stand to Him. The clouds that had enveloped the throne of deity have rolled away; they have placed us as a point of observation, from which we can look without dismay or confusion to them, and direct our judgments. The divine character, as we have described, the darkness of ignorance and doubt, of excitement and hesitation, with all the sense of the universe, the knowledge of the undeveloped nature before expressed; it has brought confusion and mistaken truth to light, what was but little, that little but doubtfully known, it has divulged to all places beyond all doubt, in every chance, blind necessity has made one light under, by beauty, are displayed in all things, now so all are effects of arrangements of supreme benevolence and love. We cannot estimate the good God has done for us, by bringing us to the settled belief of abiding conviction, that are all things are under the care of a wise and good God; that the shadow of His providence is everywhere, that in all He does the deep source of all the best good of his creatures, the very soul of man, is truly our Father and our All-Good. This is a point of knowledge and reason, where there has been so much time, that we are certainly, and from whence we derive it, what we should be without it. And there is something in the manner, in which the knowledge of the character of Providence of God, as it is so closely and truly derived from the authoritative teaching of men who are judges to be theMessiahs of God, of us it is so better adapted to lead us to the great mass of mankind, whom we do not so much systematizing, as results of principles. And it represents the divine character.
as perfectly harmonious, & consistent throughout. It does not, as some systems of human invention do, represent the attributes of Deity as all one with each other. They do not transparently justify, for then it would be weakness; justice does not transparent in meaning, for then it would be cruelty. Nor the God, whom the Jews declare, is a God supremely perfect, supremely wise, infinitely good.

But this is not all, it does for us: it not only teaches us important truths concerning God, but likewise concerning ourselves. Its influence on us the nature of our condition, of the destination, in each of us, that we shall be solely as we please here, whatever we may look for beyond this scene. It teaches us that this life is the formal period of our existence,—that we are not set into the world merely to walk the menu of pleasures and affairs to be heaped around us in unsatisfying pursuits, to be flushed forth by hidden & diabolical wiles, & then thrown out of existence; nor are we taught that the sense, in which we are now placed, is with strict sense a scene of probation, that we are here entrusted with knowledge & opportunities for an account must be rendered. The God, who placed man in a light, is the man, & stood before it, has raised

from the dust & added him to God, it has made him feel that he is connected with the Divine that made him & guides his destinies, as the child is connected with the parent. Does not that relation bring us a blessing, which instructs us that we are stewards in the employment of a heavenly Master, that we have souls that may be ruined the glory of such a scheme, that we have mental & moral capacities for our improvement, the fruits of reason, & conscience, if they are those of capacities are furnished with an inestimable capital, of means & helps, & objects? Is it nothing that man is taught that nature is the law of happiness, or less than the law of God, & that he is placed in a condition to be released from those feelings of distress & insecurity not unseemly the mind? & leave it at the mercy of cented circumstances? rebellious feelings?—And yet, is it not something for which we should be grateful, that we are brought to know that when earth is but an introduction to eternal life, that of the grave shall have closed over the body, dust, mingled with dust, the spirit shall take its upward flight, stand at the bar of a just & gracious God? Would you
The conversation of J. Fox speaks not now of the difference between
the instructor's teaching and that of other instructors. He
would not impose on the student, nor on the instructor, the
impression that he is the only authority. He would let
the student judge for himself. He would let the student
see for himself the value of the different methods.

Have I spoken of some of the principal social blessings
which have been conferred on us, as members of the community, as
human beings? The day in which we are reminded of the
birth of Jesus Christ, the birth of a new era, a new
sense of the blessings of the gospel for mankind. More than 18 centuries
have passed since Jesus of Nazareth appeared, but he left the
day of his divine religion to the world. From that day
to the present, it has been spreading influence, growth,
salvation through the earth. It is not a few
of its good effects that we have ever considered; it is perhaps we can
consider—far from them, nature their situation is grad-
ually in advance. But we have seen and may always see
how to make us exclaim with Peter, "To whom shall we go?
they have the words of eternal life." When heart doesn't
raise the tribute of gratitude to Heaven, when he reflects that
looking as he does to God for guidance from all quarters for
success in his understanding of faith, that he has not
pulled to search for the rules of duty of the gallon to be used among the confused superficial declensions. If we ask ourselves, 'What shall we mean to die? To live? To live forever?' If when the shadow of death passes we the closing eye, it cannot claim for a moment there brighter beams, where will love go in futurity? Such images are some of the thoughts which we should cherish, when we celebrate the birth of a babe, not while our minds are filled with such reflections, but hasten to the world with such feelings, if it is announced to us that he will this day have been a son, who is the child - that we can echo back the song of the heavenly host, 'They bee to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men.'

And I grant that as the light of my soul go down the passage of years, as new worlds pass successively, come to the temple of the Most High to celebrate the birth of the Saviour of sinners, the truth of the song may go forth, subduing a surging multitude, till our heart shall be filled with a gratitude and joy that is not hindered in devotion to Him, who sent theMessiah of light to a dark and troubled world.

O God, in You, with united, grateful hearts we would bless and magnify thy name for the gift of Thy Son on Sin. On this occasion, while we celebrate the memorial of the birth of the Messiah, we would remember with gratitude all the blessings and their best comforted us through him. We give thee that through him thy heart actuated our spiritual acts of fraternal, civil, and national miseries. For the light, the hope, the bliss, all these best sent from heaven in the gladness of the Son, we would claim. Thank thee. We bless thee for the good influences of thy in the morals of happiness of the world, that it is taught us to know thee as our Creator and Father, to know the character of one thing of thy coexist, in the gracious and compassionate dispositions towards mankind, to understand the way that leads to the supreme felicity, of those who know that is no duty of what our destination. And while we celebrate the maturity of the AC, we would pray that the good effects of this religious life.
At home, December 24th, 1820, after noon.
At Waltham December 25, 1820.