No. 108.

On drawing near to God.
Psalm LXXIII. 28. "But it is good for me to draw near to God."

There is something very forcible in the expression, as here is in other passages of Scripture, as used to signify religious devotion. It is called "drawing near to God." Now when one considers the greatness of glory of the Almighty, his goodness and perfection, there seems a remarkable force in this mode of speech, as it represents devotion as lessening the distance, so to speak, between man and God. Greater, however, is the distance between man and the holy beings of a day, near to the infinite Fountain of light, the Father of glory. We look around us, and see the impressions of Omnipo-


tence everywhere. The effects produce then are that
God has been there. All nature in this story to pro-
claim a providence. The earth was after its face the
proof of that Providence, which gives it all its en-
gy for-
tility. The heavenly bodies in their orbits of own-
ness, point to Him, who has scattered them
through infinite space. But after all, though it
would be madness to deny the existence of this De-
Being, still there is something so magnificent of
awful in their ways, that we feel ourselves alone
at an immense distance from the great Divine
Being, as if it were not our concern to think of con-
necting our souls with any existence until such a De-
Being. Nor is it here that religion can turn us to
harm this feeling of remoteness from God, through
foreknowledge of being not overlooked in the immensity
of His works. It is admirably called a feeling near to God.

The soul is a representation of the human
being, and yet it finds out a path by man its the thing
of its God. It teaches us that there are many
beneath our Maker, since we are directed to him and
that by means of the spirit, the im-

mortal part, and He has infused into us, we can
commune with Him, whom we cannot compass,
continually approach nearer of nearer to the Eternal
Father. While meantime, God in truth, we bring into
existence, we other, it seems, to a familiarity with
the Infinite Spirit.

It is this feeling near to God, which arises in
the text, to be good sense, when one has in truth been
near to God at first, finding it a good habitus to
exist. Its influence in various ways is most sal-

dary of purification. Dear souls, dear friends, because
it leads us habitually to view the Son in those
baptistic heights, in which we can be aware, I mean the
height of a Father. An sense of the parental char-
acter of God in加深) of strengthening, wherein one
leans near to Him... The exercise applies it to a very
nature, on the part of the Deity, the love and behin-
of a race... some part of the gratitude obliciousness
of children. Myx taught us to say, 'Gather columns of
prayers. That is breathed from the lips. Simon
prayer. There is on this pleasing relation between the creature
of the Creator a feeling that is in truth the nearest to God.'
be truthful, of all men, of all mankind.
ought to be connected with the Most High. My;
the feelings of a good child. Ask, when do
show so much gratitude, as when, upon heart
flows out in gratitude? I love to them, when
and mingled with his soul, if they become in thought,
affection? And in this way is your advantage
of the same connection in your devotion to your best
of your heavenliness. Rather, you will surely be able
to bring your heart near to them, in the offering of a par
pied, sanctified affection. Habitual devotion is good,
because it makes us active, industrious, in the
discharge of duty, by keeping before us constantly
the sense of moral agency, nurses suffering, as to forget
that we stand accountable for all that we are and
that we do. And who has experienced to know
influence, does not know, that devotion speedily
against under the pressure of affliction, of things thrown
of our glowing times? Remember then, that Deo
your attaint to the sense of its importance by saying
\textbf{it is good for me to draw near to God.}

Dear... in the truest sense of praise, meaning, may be
to consist, not in act or expression, but in a state
mind, heart, in that state of mind, which is being
not by acknowledging our relation to God, but
in feeling it, not merely by proclaiming our depend-
dence, submission, of means, but, by the living in
as kind beings, who have need of mercy. Thus, consid-
eration is not confined to times of peace; it may be
cherished in practice of meditation or reflection, when the thought
are sufficiently conditioned of regular, to admit of our
our union... But, though devotion be in its nature
thus universal, it is free from forms, still there are cert
means, by which it may be cherished, without which its spirit is apt to grow languid & faint... It appears, I shall speak only of these means, as we have but four days in public worship, secret devotion, family worship...

1. It is good for us to draw near to God in the set

2. For we are to draw near to God in the set...
the united offerings may rise, like a cloud of acceptable fragrance to the throne of heaven — that we may together confess our sins, together implore pardon, that with one heart we may recall the multitude of the altars of the Most High, a voice before the Lord... On the day, which momemnts the removal of our Saviour, we would remember the blessings of that Saviour's death, devoutly thank God for them, and we would remember the glorious hope of immortality belonging to all, who will receive it, for the only hope of the time of the grace doth not destroy, we would keep the blessing God hath given us, that it shines on the front of the cross, as the richest jewel in its adamic... Now it is surely needful to ask whether such services are with among the means of drawing near to God. They are among the best means. Society in devotion is perhaps as animating as supporting, as it is in every place enterprize of a secular nature. It must be a solace of the heart, that does not rise the awareness of God the better, when he sees it is a worship with his neighbors and friends, these whom he has been accus-
in uncertainty about from one place to another, and you knew not what to do with the time, yet nothing
in excessing in a vice, exposing yourselves to the temptation
of the vanity to be a while. When for six days in the midst
of your cares of business, your peace, your leisure, your
yourselves, do you think it too much to
put off? Do you, and therefore I think it will be a while
for a few hours in the seventh day, to take
Him for His goodness, to pray for the continuance of His
protection on me? - You would not treat a comrade
in your friendship thus, nor would you thus behave towards your mighty friend?

2. Another way, in which we may draw near to God, is
by the practice of private devotion, by making the in-
tercession with our Maker, personal and secret. It is that
man can most effectively bring himself into an
intimate connection with his God. He, who returns to his
heart, that he may continue this and bring to
himself, that he may seek to realise the medita-
tion of devotion the nearness of the All the
incarnations, who shut out the world, that he may learn
in time to rise above it, forbids the exercise of passion.

In the closest season of God's presence, if the man were near
Him, He draws near to them, and His nature is well adapted
to answer the peculiarities in each one's situation, and
with our hearts we all have. The lots of men are
in life are perfectly similar; if there are great varieties
in moral character or moral events. Public worth is
the same in society, private devotion regards them
as individuals, consequently comes down with greater
power to the hearts of each one, who devotes himself to
the resources afforded by the practice of it. - Every man
has some peculiar, more modification of his, thus the
man cannot confess in the assembly of God's house, to the
it is only the transgressions common to all that fire.
He must be alone and
bring up into remembrance, he must be alone and
for his conscience of his God, that he may confess his transguilt.
You have seen persons
incorrigible, he has no scale for a peculiar acknowledgment, yet
not for a common expression of gratitude, but for gratitude.
that shall have all the forms of feeling of persons of private obligation. We have each of us our separate dangers, our separate wants, our peculiar weaknesses, our appropriate trials. One man is assailed by this temptation; another by that. One is agitated by some strong passion; another is daunted by the opposite passion. Of course, the intercourse of man with his God should be adapted to meet these peculiarities of situation and apart to afford support where it is most needed, to guard the weakest point. New private devotion alone can suit all these varieties or admit this adaptation. It is in the retirement of the closet only, that man can send forth his peculiar song, offering to heaven, stretch out his hands to supplicate the blessings, for his particular situation stands in need. In the unbroken freedom of secret devotion, the soul may find herself free from that restraint. Then the height of joy, the thrill of love, the rise of the agent; the deep sorrow, the broken heart in verse, musical and unbroken in such meditations of broken prayer, as may be best suited to his wants, his imperfections, his distresses, or his sin or his patience. Many a sponge from the sacredness of the closet has doubtless risen to heaven more acceptably, to cause more strongly prings with faith, and to desire, than the united petitions of ascriptions of a crowded multitude.

3. The last way I shall mention in which are many that near to God, it is by family worship. I would take this occasion only to urge upon this important, but much neglected duty. It is certainly one of the most delightful acts of all things in which we can draw near to God. It is one of his little triumphs... And yet of course required to select the particular scene, and with religious feeling. If the doctrinal spirit should be wanting, I am sure, it would be the family circle. I find a force called when to point out the practice that does seem to preserve the flame of spiritual warmth, a quiet respect on the heart, I should name the practice of morning devotions in the bosom of a family. Then is something in the exercise of beginningtanding the day with God, that may have gradually at last, a purifying, refreshing influence.
on a heart of any susceptibility. No incense goes more acceptable to heaven, than that which rises from the family altar, either husband, wife, brother, sister, friend, or other one of your own. Then, in the offering, there are connected together by the ties of blood or affection, will find these ties strengthened by the habit of going together to the throne of grace, with the same hopes, the same desires, of the same wants. Besides this, there is something in the circumstances of every day, that calls freely devotion. We rise in the morning refreshed, after a night of sleep, and each day commences as it were a new life. We have been in a state of utter helplessness, of forgetfulness. The beams of morning make us think of the resumption of our duties, and the need for the thanksgiving for the works of the Almighty. And yet we have not seen to thank God that His works have been made on earth, that His providence has watched over us, while we were wandering in the arms of sleep, and that He who never slumber, was mindful of us, while we were unconscious of existence? Surely it is true an appropriate time for those who have been under the same roof to meet in the offices of devotion, and in the breath of morning their acts of gratitude to heaven. Besides you are then looking forward to the day, before you, knowing what it may bring forth, of which scenes you may be called. Well, you see, then, before you is the brief current of the world's affairs, assembled ourselves together in the family circle, that God may imbibe strength for your duty of supporting your friends, of praying for that divine assistance, or may carry each one of you on through the trials and temptations of the day? And when at the close of the day, a family circle, are about to retire to rest, does it become them is it not their duty, to look back on the day's work, with gratitude for the mercies they have enjoyed, for the transitions they have committed, forward to the night? before them with a prayer for divine protection, while the shades of darkness sleep, are gathering around them? It is surely ungrateful if a clock chime, while we enjoy all the blessings of the domestic circle, are cheered by affectionate feelings, to meet of separate day after day without one
raising the heart to that God, whose goodness alone
grants us these blessings, peace of whose children,
Pray, let parents of heads
of families remember the good influence a domes-
tical devotion may have especially on the younger
as of their household, by accompanying them, as they
grow up, to connect every wish the thoughts of
God, of this training them to a sense of their depend-
ability, of obligations to that great Father of
Good. Do not it is a very common objection that
many cannot express their feelings 8 want to express
words with sufficient ease or propriety to make
the prayer pleasant or profitable to their
souls. Doubtless this is often true, though not so
often as many have made themselves, for too the
disposition to pray is found, the powers of expres-
ion will not very frequently be wanting to any great
degree. But even where this difficulty does not
exist, it should be remembered that the most of
family prayers; for there are many good books
of devotions may be used as guides of help, with
great profit. Provided particularly recommend to
you my Prince of Persia's prays for the use of fam-
ilies. It is a small and cheap volume, contains all
the forms of prayers with the general directions of cer-
cies of life necessary, written in a spirit of rational
prayer; adapted to lead the soul towards heaven.
It has sufficient variety to relieve the mind from
the tediousness of repetition, expresses in serious &
short language, gratitude for mercies, petition for
favors, prayers of penitence for sins. There can be no
objection to the use of written forms, where there is a hesitation as
true to entertain the devotion. I am persuaded the
use of the book I have mentioned by the heads
of families, in a proper, elegant manner, would
have much influence in promoting a spirit in
their domestic circle. It is certainly an important
object, one of which would not interfere with any as-
arrangement of family concerns, or any worldly duty
that is to be improved.

Thus, with the sense of all our duties.
Thus thus, Ralph Waker &c; some of the days at
Ah! you may draw near to God. But it is all in vain to talk of our duty, if we do not practice it. Come then, Gentile, open to the House of God with the confession of these who were in spirit and truth; in the retirement of the closet, let your hearts to God; in the house of your family, let the beams of morning and the beams of evening witness the sense of your domestic devotion. And when you look abroad in nature, when you cultivate your fields, gather their fruits, remember that it is God who speaks out these bounty's for you. Study his works, study his word. "Draw nigh unto God. If he will draw nigh unto you." May 1821.

P. Of mercies of God of all grace, will it please thee ever to be with us? Grant us thy blessing. Enable us to draw near to thee in the spirit of sincere worship. On the day consecrated to thee & in that house, may we come with our offering of gratitude, with our in token of vows, with our sincere prayers, with the disposition to have solo thy will. In the retirement of private devotion may we seek to cherish all good principles, all resolutions, of serious souls before thee that we may find grace to help in time of need. And may the spirit of devotion dwell in families; may these, who are at the head of them acknowledge thee by domestic devotion, & teach the members of their household to draw near to thee in prayer. Bear as thy sign to us, may we meditate on our ways & turn our feet to thy testimonies.
At home, May 27th, 1821, afternoon.