No. 169.

On the manner of showing gratitude to God.

Thanksgiving Sermon, 4.
Psalm CXVI, 12, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"

No question can be more appropriate, than this, on the present occasion. Assembled as we are, to reflect together on the goodness of God, publicly to testify our gratitude for that goodness, it becomes our serious duty to consider, what we shall render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us... In now waking up from sleeping hours... at our desiring you... uprising... we are alike surrounded by the bounty of heaven... We may begin from ourselves, as individuals, different as we are... journey out from thence to the condition of the world at large... and shall everywhere find the benefits of the Lord towards us, clustering thick around our path... We look back on the time...
end with the inscription of the tender mercies of God. To almost all of us, the enjoyment of health has been continued; the check of life within us has been fanned by the fresh air of reason; in our daily round of duties, cares, duties, pleasures, we have met life with a firm purpose to every action has been called to see the wasting of sickness in the strong man bowed down in the feeblest of disease. They have earned the thanks of the hastening man. It is not in vain that he has toiled to the sweat of the brow, that he has worn the toil and compost has been given to them, though as they were passing, at particular times we cast our minds to the satisfaction of self-sacrifices, for more of the craving influences of the sweet rain, yet on the whole, the aggregate of the produce has furnished us a sense of thanks for the bounty of the great Provider. The various arts, trades, commerce, manufactures, though not driven to an unnatural prosperity, have yet furnished to the utmost of reasonable expectation. We still enjoy the rich advantages of our schools, academies, literary institutions, and continually throwing on a mighty influence to form the minds and hearts of the rising hopes of our country, and are sending forth those who are to be the enlightened spirits of an enlightened community. The light of God's will shines upon us; the influences of His holy religion still descend upon our hearts, though alas! too often leave them as barren as before; we have not under our feet the victory of sin to make us afraid. But with this faith, the doors of the sanctuary have been thrown open, we have been permitted to come and bathe, to mingle in one offering the incense of our devotion to hear on, listen to the truths that concern us all alike, as mortal beings. Peace too has been shedding down its bless songs on our country. Not with foot has invaded our soil, nor war; a scirmish has ever done our shores, to carry lessons to the happy fireside, of moral perfection, nor was the hand. Our rights of liberties have remained un- injured, unimpaired. The hard, most trying conflicts, that they were wrangling from the hands of oppressors, to our blood, of our fathers in the battle field of their daily action in council, are the only price of their tenacity of freedom, and is our natural thought, thank we have been so long accustomed, that we know it the value. It is our happiness, too, to live in a time, when opinion is unfettered; the mind is free, when you may think as you please, or what you think, without...
fear of dungeons, tortures, or flames... This is peculiarly true with regard to religious opinions. In this respect the age in which we are cast is particularly happy. It is, but a few centuries since the soul was in bondage to the meretricious deportment of armed forces, since a heathenism, whose root was found when the needs of conscience required it, in its native form, associated of everything human being, was dragged into the service of every earthly passion as man undertook to legislate in the place of the All-seeing fellow man. But God looked with compassion on his children, thus oppressed, and gave them grace to set forth on the earth with mercy. Men arose in the cause of freedom, who were prepared by God from men enough to open themselves in the cause of religious liberty, truth, justice, and good policy. They began to look into the errors of popish councils, to struggle for the rights of conscience, to establish the protestant principle of free unrestrained enquiry. And the result is now appearing in that these men of God fought it out with so much toil and inroads that there is none who once cast a fearful looking down at this condition in the time of its foes, as one of those dreadful periods, an exciting period, but one have passed away never to be revived.

Yet even now, religious liberty is in many countries as imperfect. There are institutions, as encumbrances, that impede the progress of the mind, establishments that are worse enemies to free reasoning than they supposed. The soul may be fettered in other ways, than by despotic power, perhaps not into the only man, who have corrupted religion. But in our frame, there is every impediment to be removed from the path of every investigation, except those may come from the passions of prejudices of men. There is where no establishment will hold out remissly, demons, as a guide, for believing good and evil without a question; no ingenuous officer, to see one must render an account of our faith; no power that can be it ever his heritage... It is time, there are in the country those, who can raise the cry of tyranny, sedition, and oath after them, whenever they wish to put down a good government, man, who in quinty of the enormity of not stretching his case to the dimensions of favor, there are those, who in the madness of their zeal, think they are fighting for God, now, they are only fighting for a party... But after all, there are weak, the masses of nations, as ever, only to show that the power of God's hand to do mischief, is not so strong as their disposition.
making every abatement of deduction, we still have some in to rank among our blessings religious liberty, at least to as great an extent, as man can enjoy it, in this state of imperfection. When to these, you add the catalogue of private blessings, with all which one may swell these counts, you will surely feel how much it becomes us to pause in the midst of our enjoyment, and reflect upon our hearts thankfully to the Great Giver.

Yes, my soul, repeat it, when this brief review of the happy circumstances of our times of condition. It is our serious duty to consider what we shall render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us. Not that we are to suppose, we can in a strict sense make any return to God for this goodness. He communicates every thing but he can receive nothing. It is not for us, weak and imperfect as we are, to do any thing, or to add to the happiness of glory of Jehovah. But he has not forsaken us. He may send us to make more bright the dawn of that day of thanksgiving, which we commemorate. We should then be thankful for the goodness of God, just as much as there is

an obligation corresponding to the kindness of earthly benefactors.

I will now therefore speak of one or two ways in which we may render what we can unto the Lord for all his benefits.

1. We may render something unto the Lord for his goodness by the public services of religion, such as those to which this day of thanksgiving we are called, such as those thank-offerings which are called in the Psalms. They are expressions of gratitude, and should have a purifying and salutary influence in our own hearts, so that we may alone, if for ourselves, they must be acceptable to God. It is irrational grown worthless to suppose that the Deity requires of us homage for his own sake, as if his happiness is glory were at all connected with any thing that man can give or withhold. The blessings conferred upon them, as the world, have treated was to those men, who were pleased with their applause, and lived on the earth of their flattery; if the service they paid to them was indifferent to such ideas. They thought the marble temple, the lofty dome, vaulting clouds of smoke to be homage enough, as such was the most splendid the world could give. But, if the Deity has taught us higher things, they have not us be such sensual degenerating things.
Let us suppose the God to be like an eastern monarch, who sits on his throne merely to receive homage, yeilding that act
by trembling subjects. When, therefore, Jesus says that these outward services are one means of rendering to the Lord
his benefits, I do not mean to ascribe a false dilapidated estimate, value to the mere act of celebrating the hours of
worship. Still, we must not forget, that it has its place.

Though the happiness of any of the A. are not at all
influenced by our being grateful, or otherwise; yet it is not
our lot, if incumbent upon us, to be grateful if we have our
gratitude. On this principle, no judge is set in our
intercourse with God. Besides these services have or should have a
strong reflective influence, i.e., if they come from the heart,
they go back to the heart, ifershows the best of present
feelings & dispositions. The very expression of thankfulness
has a tendency to make us more thankful; it is the
influence of impressive services, which make together in the altar of
God, while they are an acknowledgment of dependence, also
necessarily strengthen the feeling of dependence. We cannot
come, only, to this place, to mingle our ascriptions of praise,
if we do it in a formal spirit, without deepening our service.
in this delightful part of worship; but we ought all
to cherish the conviction of the high importance of utility, as
the means of religious feelings & improvements. In this gin
all the other services of the sanctuary, let us join our hearts,
I thusrender unto the & the offering of our gratitude for all
the benefits towards us.
2. Another great benefit the way of worshipping is, the tribute of
our hearts, for all his benefits towards us, is to make a more
appropriately use of the blessings we enjoy from his hand. Nothing
can be more acceptable to our Lord, than this; for it is
precisely for this purpose, that He confers upon us all our
enjoyments. By conferring, therefore, to this main purpose
of the Alt., by way of a proper religious manner, securing
from abuse, the benefits He bestows, we render the best
offering of gratitude. And rational moral beings can render
To enjoy & to obey. With this view let us recapitulate the
blessings to which we have already referred.
In looking back then on the last season, we find health
among our enjoyments. Would we manifest gratitude for
this blessing? let us then resolve not to abuse it to
purposes of vanity & forgetfulness of God. And this
caution may, is of no means unecessary. Here are more
strongly tempted to give up to the riot of unlawful pleas
ure, at least to lose the sense of one defidence of God,
as when the loiter beats vigorously, the blood dashes in our
veins uncontaminated with disease, our limbs are strong with
energy & strength. Against this danger let us be guarded,
but we consecrate the hours of health to strenuous exercise
as moral duty, to the great task, of making good of being use
ful to maintain us. When our bodies are most vigorous, let our
activity in every office of duty to God or man be most vigorous
too. If we neglect it then to express our gratitude for the
blessing of health, the time may soon come, when we shall
suffer in bitterness of heart for the neglect. The day may be
soon now on the way, when cold storms shall settle, when we
all is beautiful sunshine, when the dews of sickness shall
shall gather on our brows, when pain shall common the heart
of blessings fail the limbs. Then it will be a sweet remedy.
branch something like a ray of light & a fountain of
of the effects of neglect. That while the days of health were present with
us, we gave the best tribute of gratitude for them, by giving
them in the faithful discharge of high & useful duties.
On the catalogue of blessings for the past season, we
likewise find, profusely in the means of living, abound;
of these things our satisfactions to the comfort of enjoyments
of life. Are we thankful for these? Let us then show our
thankfulness, by not converting plenty into idleness, content

private losing, enjoying well the liberality of Heaven. But
openly that he can be grateful, who takes the gifts of gifts,
chains them into the corruptions of his soul, or, because
nothing 
mostly is that intemperate indulgence which
satisfies the faculties, brings man to the level of the beast,
that to do for him? No, he may be as kind as he pleases in ade-
stanting the busses of God; but this man is not grateful.
He only is grateful, who when he has gathered in the abun-
dent harvest of his fields, or his success in his business,
shows temperately; spiritually the blessings received,
reflects on his fellow man, a pattern of the bounty of God.
He has fallen on him, who looks upon the increase of his pro-
duction, as his wealth, as an increase of the means of doing
wrong, becomes more notorious in proportion as heaven is more
kind.

Again, we have reason to be thankful, that all the ad-
vantages of our literary institutions, our schools, our means
of education, have been continued to us; if we count
upon that we owe thankful for these, there is one cor-
rect way, as by improving them diligently so earnestly. These
are a rich treasure of more value to your country than
you can well realize. They are worth more, as a means of
defending, of perfecting our institutions, of liberty, than any
powers of your property to this purpose, for it will
come back tenfold into your own bosom of love, the bosom of your country.

Again, the blessings of religion are still with us; and I will ask no better evidence of your thankfulness for them, than that you should become more, and feel more, by them. If we remain just as we should be, the light of divine truth did not shine upon us; if we are brothers in practice, while we are strangers in name, if it is all in vain for us, that God has lived, taught, suffered, died; this, in itself, is a full reason for us to pretend that we are grateful for it, our lives past to frame the profession, otherwise that would mean that, for a soul, must fall the apple for life, while the heart tells us, we have no regard for that soul. If we will accept the offering of a good life as a testimony that are value for another, the means of elevation, any other offering, unaccompanied with this, is all we regard only as the sacrifice of the hypocrite.

We have likewise to be grateful for the blessings of peace, if we would be thankful to God that the minds of heaven are not bearing us the trials of blood, death, and defeat, we must show that we have a conscience to cultivate peace in private, and in public, to spread around us the fruits of good will amongst. Let not the desire of glory, or other men's achievements, nor suppose that a nation's glory to be found only on the record of its battles. If we see in one collected view the tears of the widows and the sighs of the moral degradation of pollution, if we lead, if we are blessed with its brilliancies, if we are allowed to play honors, the true friend of peace is the best friend to the interests of men.

Once more, it becomes us on this solemn day, to remember that all the blessings, and the secure enjoyment of unsurred political rights, have been continued to us, that we truly feel thankful for them, let us see, that we don't grow content in the midst of our happiness, that we don't convert liberty into licentiousness, that we are not unwilling to rule ourselves. The experiment of going on among us, seems to be the last trial, whether a people can bear to be free, happy, itself governed. If we should be our own masters in the midst of our happiness, that we don't convert liberty into licentiousness, this is that we are unwilling to rule ourselves. The experiment, the going on among us, seems to be the last trial, whether a people can bear to be free and happy, itself governed. It should be our earnest care, that we do not hold fast to future ages, on the record of history, the mournful failure of so many glorious experiments. There are many whom the inhumanity of a people, as citizens of the only republic in the earth! The history of man for freedom of his rights beyond the control of a despotic
leds, after being driven successively from one place to
another, like a gnat without finding a resting place,
have at last taken refuge on these shores; yet grant
that the shriveled branch may be hewed out, as a sign that
the storm has passed away, 1, set its force without ad-
sisting this western world. As surely is the employment
of fools to boast of the future, as wise men fearfully say,
in the speculative spirit of sober calculation, that about
as ourcitizens shall retain the spirit of freedom, intelli-
gence, and noble views; so long as they shall bear the
mark of party spirit, faction, remember that as they have
a limited interest, so they should have limited feelings
so long as cabal, intrigue, or hasteless ambition can be kept
out of the public councils. They themselves cleave
with unshaken firmness to the institutions of religion
and the means of moral improvement; so long as our sit-
tuation, and the history of our country shall make a
new era in the annals of the world, that all shall
exhibit te the eye of the observer, prominence to terri-
ory, ever so are freedmen, who live for garrisons, and
for designed they should be, that there are now
only wide ranges of forests, inhabited by human feet,
shall spring up towns villages, teeming with life and indu-
try, surrounded with scholars, patriots, and
the world need not be ashamed. But do not forget
all these flattering expectations depend on the use a
future generation, of our political blessings, if we
are wise, and thus show ourselves ungrateful for them we
may reverse the picture. If present a frightful anticipa-
tion of Mohamed, becoming of slavery; we may make
our advantages themselves the source of our ruin. we
are not always we are proportioned in bitterness to the val-
ue of the privileges we enjoy.

In the last place, we are the victims among our blessings;
religion liberty? if we would manifest gratitude, we
must guard it with all jealousy and caution, and practice
such to protect principles. Perhaps you may think that
at this day, in this country, there is no necessity of cau-
tion in this subject. But mind, the spirit of war led to persecuting tyranny in religious affairs, is out that
it is only claims, mortals, it still rests to the little
power, wh it has left of struggles in various ways to gain
its former dominion. The principles of religion liberty may
be infringed in other ways, than by facts, dungeons,
flames... There are a thousand acts, by which many be
frightened into a sense of sin that they do not believe may be made unhappy if they persist in what some take upon themselves to call an heresy. But every such encroachment on the rights of free enquiry be simply a violation of priory respect. Bear it ever in mind, that it is not the unity of faith, or the right to seek, but the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, which religion has made a tool in the hands of party spirit, not to be mingled or blended with the civil power. There have been times when ecclesiasticstics, always the most abuses of power, rendered the sword more unmanaging than the letter, and more unpraying than the spirit. Now may such days return! men may see men, under pressure of greater purity of faith than others, throwing obstacles in the way of enquiry, striving to check the progress of the church and its fellow-countrymen into that state of dead uniformity which resembles the silence of the grave, or, where all is muteness, because there is no life there. It is the glory of an age of country, that one may think and speak freely without fear in religious subjects, that one may deem ourselves responsible to God, to God alone. We are grateful for this privilege, let us see that we never infringe it ourselves, nor countenance the infringements of it in others.

We have thus considered that we may best render unto them, for all the benefits we have received, our unceasing receiving from them. While it is not altogether the same that we set apart this day for the purpose of giving thanks to God. We should carry the spirit of gratitude into the whole of our lives, and express it in our daily conduct. When we come near home, it is the circumstances of our own lives, and the circumstances of those around us, that are the most of all to be thankful for. When the fruits of the season are gathered in, there is a sort of rest, a time, when the mind seems naturally turned to God. Would you then, in your own gratitude to God, forget the gratitude to God? Would you then, in your own gratitude to God, forget the gratitude to God?

Another direction is, to lead people to consider the circumstances of our own lives, and to express every reason to be thankful for. When the fruits of the season are gathered in, there is a sort of rest, a time, when the mind seems naturally turned to God. Would you then, in your own gratitude to God, forget the gratitude to God? Would you then, in your own gratitude to God, forget the gratitude to God? Would you then, in your own gratitude to God, forget the gratitude to God?
The faithful servants of the Lord, that as for your departure from your house, you will serve the Lord; then shall you truly enjoy the life that is eternal. Of the Lord is wisdom, and no good thing will be withheld from them that fear Him.

No. 1822.

At home, Thanksgiving Day, Dec. 5th, 1822.