

12-13-14

Mr. PATTEN'S

Thanksgiving Discourse.

*Directions with regard to the improvement
of temporal blessings.*

A

Thanksgiving SERMON,

Delivered to the

First Society in NEW-LONDON,

December 20, 1784.

By WILLIAM PATTEN, A. M.

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In a day of prosperity be joyful.---

The inspired Preacher.

NEW-LONDON: Printed by T. GREEN:

TO those Gentlemen whose importunity allured away a copy of the ensuing discourse for the press, and whose generosity has defrayed the expence of publication, its author begs leave to dedicate the performance.

He thinks himself favored, *indeed*, in having men whose judgment he reveres---whose taste is refined, and who are among the first of those whose approbation he is studious to enjoy---whose friendship he is ambitious to deserve, to *patronize* its reception.

Thanksgiving Discourse.

ECCLESIASTES IX. 7th.

GO thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart—.

“**T**HAT I intend.—But does the scripture inculcate my resolution?—I could wish to hear the liberty explained :—I fear it is ironical.” It is not ;—but the text is serious in that which it enjoins.

The other part of the verse is the reason upon which the command is founded, *for GOD now accepteth thy works* : the meaning of which is, “ He now blesses your exertions, He prospers your undertakings, he succeeds your designs, therefore improve his gifts with joy.” *GOD now accepteth thy works* cannot be applied in a spiritual sense, i. e. “ He approveth of your person, he is pleased with your conduct as a moral agent ; and since you are interested in his love, and are sure of heaven you may now take pleasure in worldly enjoyments :” at least it cannot be confined under so limited a construction ; but it immediately refers to the smiles of God’s providence, to his crowning *our labors with his loving kindness*.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, mankind are considered in two points of light,—as *moral agents*, and as *rational beings* whose present state of existence is *frail*, whose present enjoyments are *transitory*.—The Preacher gives them directions with regard to their conduct in both respects :—how they may secure their *future peace*, and how they must improve the enjoyments of this life, if they would be happy in them : this cannot but
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be owned by all who peruse the book impartially, and if so, that the construction upon the words which are the subject of this discourse, is just, must follow ; for, *eat thy bread with joy* must have reference to an improvement of temporal blessings.

The text is liable to abuse :—*drink thy wine with a merry heart*, i. e. “ be as gay as I please,” says some light mind ; but it does not *justify*, much less *enjoin* any indulgencies, which are inconsistent, either with reason, or religion ; for as mankind are a rational and an accountable species, it is necessary that their gratifications bear the marks of propriety and dignity, and that their recreations be innocent and refined.

Upon this occasion I trust that *none* will think it unsuitable, to consider the manner in which we ought to improve the blessings of providence, particularly those for which we have assembled to give thanks. My text will lead me to dwell, principally, upon this ; but in its connexion it suggests another idea, which may well be brought into view, so that I could wish to have my—DOCTRINE—as general as this,

That it is the duty of all whom the Almighty prospers,—all of whose labors he approves, to improve his gifts with joy, to make use of them in a manner which will afford them the most *real* happiness.

It is the duty of all, who are prospered in any degree. This is implied in the text :—*eat thy bread* ;—they who have only *bread*, or what is barely necessary to life, must improve *that* with *joy* ; and they who have *wine*, who are bless'd with the conveniencies of a higher station, must use them with a *merry heart*.

I would discourse upon the doctrine under three heads, of which the

Ist. will be, That when the labors of any are attended with success, it is owing to the blessing of GOD :—*for GOD now accepteth thy works*.

I would consider

IIdly. What is implied in the exhortation, *eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart*. And
 IIIdly,

IIIIdly. That it is the duty of all whom Providence succeeds, thus to improve their prosperity.

The discourse will conclude with an application of the subject. The

Ist. Observation which invites your attention is, That when any are succeeded in their labors, prospered in their pursuits, it is owing to the blessing of God :---*GOD now accepteth thy works.*

Though this truth be so *obvious*, the idea so *familiar*, yet it is but *seldom*, and then but *faintly* realized. All have need to be reminded of it, and, particularly, is it of importance upon this anniversary of praise.

Mankind have some sense of their obligations to God for signal interpositions in their favor; but they take but little notice of his common providence. They own themselves indebted to his care when they have been protected from any surprising danger,—when they have been preserved in a situation in which others have fallen,—when they have been restored from diseases which to others have been fatal; but a continuance of their lives, while others are in health, they impute to the purity of the air,---to some favors in their constitution, or to some circumstances in their natural situation, separately from the idea of the providence of God.—And though they may acknowledge the goodness of God in supplying them, while others are destitute, and in providing for them beyond their prospects; yet they look no *higher* than the *clouds*, no *further* than the *sun* to find the reasons why they have the necessaries of life in those seasons in which God causes the *earth to yield her increase*. And though they may acknowledge the goodness of God in *silencing* the *din*, in *soothing* the *distress* of war;—though they may own his hand when it leads them from the dreadful field whose *air* is *smoke*, whose *day* is *flashing flame*, whose *thunders* wing a thousand *bolts*, whose *surface* streams in *blood* :—though they may see his hand when it leads them from so fatal a situation, and places them under the luxuriant vine, the peaceful fig-tree, yet, after they have rested there but a little time, the reason why they are not disturbed will be, that there is no nation,

nation, who can conveniently commence hostilities against them. But the Preacher had ideas different from these, *GOD now accepteth thy works* :—“ every successful undertaking is an evidence of his goodness. Though the attainment may be an end of which your exertions were the mean, yet it is his gift, you are indebted to him for it as a *favor*. All those blessings, which appear to have a cause in nature are bestowed by him, if not in an *immediate*, yet in *his way*. He has established the connexion between causes and effects, and it is owing to his superintendency, that any means are attended with agreeable consequences. He has the control of all things,---the direction of every favor :—if you enjoy your health, it is because he hath commissioned no disease to *seize your feelings*, or to *waste your bloom* :—If the fields yield their increase, it is because he hath said, that, *while the earth remains, seed-time and harvest--shall not cease*, and orders the seasons accordingly ; and if you enjoy your liberties, it is because he hath not said to any of his *swords, awake*.” So that God is the author *all*,--of *common*, as well as *singular*,--of *stated*, as well as *occasional* mercies : no works prosper, but those which he accepteth, no blessings are enjoyed, but those which he bestows.

This brings us to the next general head which is to consider

Ildly. What is implied in the exhortation, *Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart*.

This will be a complicated enquiry, for the terms *bread* and *wine* may include all temporal blessings : those which are necessary, as *bread* ; and those which are convenient, as *wine*, agreeably to a similar passage in the 14th Psalm, in the 7th verse of which those, whose temporal situation is, in every respect, prosperous, are described, *Their corn, and wine and oil increase*. There must be various senses, then, to our text : we will consider it

1st. In its *literal* meaning. In this it teaches us, that persons should cheerfully make that use of their interest which necessity, or reason requires :---that none should deprive themselves of the use of worldly blessings, when they have them in their possession, barely from a fear that they shall need
them,

them, in future, and thus, in the midst of abundance, suffer that want which they dread.——To be more particular : the exhortation implies

First. That we supply our *own* necessities from our interest : —that we make it subservient to our own happiness.

It appears as though our text were originally addressed to one, desponding under the apprehension, that his necessary expences would reduce him to want : “ What shall I do ? —I tremble whenever my appetite requires the use of any part of my interest, lest I should be unable to replace that which it consumes :—-I can take no comfort in my wine, when I consider how much it costs, and the uncertainty whether my estate will always support me in the use of it.” To this distressed person the Preacher says, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart* : “ Your uneasiness is *irrational* : you have no cause to fear expences which the *necessity* of your situation *demand*s, which the *dignity* of your station *requires* ; but you may, without the least reluctance, dispose of your money, when any thing is wanting, which is necessary to your subsistence, or comfort.” It implies

Secondly. That we be suitably ready to relieve the wants of the poor.

As such are dependent, it is necessary that they be supplied, or assisted from the wealth of others :—and from the same principles that we may answer, with joy, our own desires, we may give, with pleasure, to such.

Reason tells the most anxious, and avaritious miser, that he must bestow something upon himself :—-the same reason teaches him, that others are subjects of similar necessities : and may he not relieve such, when they are dependent on his assistance, from the same principles from which he supplies himself ?—There is only this difference, with respect to his own person, he not only knows that he has wants ; but he *feels* the necessity of their being supplied : whereas he does not *feel* the necessities of others ; but only *knows* that they are in need : notwithstanding, if he conduct under the influence of reason, and not of feeling, will he not be as ready

to administer to these, as to his own wants?—And this is what my text enjoins :—it forbids our repining at such expences. It implies

Thirdly. That we should not hesitate to answer any rational and reasonable *demands* upon our estates :—not barely *private debts* ; but any expences which the *interest* of government, or the *institutions* of religion require :—that we be not afraid of impoverishing ourselves, by supporting the existence, and even the *dignity* of both.

This may be inferred from the same principles from which we relieve the poor, and, consequently, the same from which we supply our own wants.

The wealth of society is in the hands of individuals who compose it ; and government is dependent on them for its support ; nor has God seen fit, that mankind should enjoy his institutions, without expence. When either of these, then, require any part of their estates, it is their duty to bestow it, and whenever this is the case, they may do it with cheerfulness ;—they may thus *eat their bread with joy*.

We may observe, that our text enjoins *only* a *rational*, it encourages *only* a *prudent* use of our interest :—it is, if not as *great*, yet as *certainly* a sin, to be lavish, as contracted : and while *drink thy wine, with a merry heart*, would dissuade us from the *alarming* apprehensions of the *covetous*, *eat thy bread with joy*, would bind us from the *inconsiderate* profusion of the *spendthrift*. Nor does the command direct an *individual*, to bestow his interest upon every subject of expence that comes within his knowledge ; but only to use it as necessity requires,---as reason enjoins, and then, without regret.

Secondly. The text may be applied to our *social conduct*. As *bread* and *wine* are expressive of all temporal blessings, they must include those of a social nature.

That the preacher meant his exhortation should extend to these, is more than probable from what he says the verse but one after, *live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest*—: " Be not anxious in your friendship :---be not jealous of those

those whom you esteem. If they, with whom you are connected, have some failings, yet be not severe, but candid to them. You must not expect perfection here, and since you are obliged to reside with the *imperfect*, enjoy their *virtues*, and *o'er-look* their *faults*. This is the language of *eat thy bread with joy*, when applied in this sense.

Drink thy wine with a merry heart, likewise allows us the *innocent entertainments* of society :---perhaps to *tread* the *amusing floor* *, as well as to *enjoy* the *cheerful circle* ; but the other part of the verse regulates our diversions, for, *eat thy bread with joy* forbids an unsuitable mirth :---nor will either part of the passage *justify* that *giddy levity*, which *intoxicates* the *frolicsome heart*, or *countenance* those *wild careers* into which the *inconsiderate* are *hurried* ; but, the text, while it *raises* us above a melancholy *stupidity*, would *restrain* us from being *frantic*, and *enjoins*, that we be *sedately happy*, and agreeably *cheerful*.

3dly. The exhortation has reference to our *civil liberties* and *privileges*. These are temporal blessings, and *eat thy bread with joy*, as it respects these, implies, that we be not too suspicious of an infringement upon our rights :---that we do not look upon every *concession*, which is necessary to the good of society, as a prelude to total *subjection* ; nor think, that investing rulers with *suitable powers*, is forming them into *tyrants* ; but, that we place suitable confidence in those, whom we have chosen that Providence should place over us.

Jealousy in society, is the same as covetousness in our expences : neither of which can, upon any principles, be justified :---and as there is, likewise, such a thing as being

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profane

* *And a time to dance*, Eccles. 3. 4. The author acknowledges, that the *liberty of dancing* is more frequently *abused*, than any with which we are *indulged*---that the *exercise* is more commonly *unsuitably* attended, than any to which *there is a season*. It is *often* under no kind of regulation---it is confined to *no hours*, and it is *too often* considered, not barely as an *amusement from care*, or a *social entertainment* ; but as a *licence to inconsiderate mirth*,---if not to *indecent indulgencies*.

It would not be *strange*, then, if some should conclude, from the *consequences* to which it is abused, that the *exercise, in itself*, was *condemned*.

profuse with wealth, so there is a danger in being too inattentive to our privileges.

Upon the whole, it appears, that it is the design of our text, to guard men from extremes, with respect to every sublunary enjoyment. They must be *prudent*, but not *covetous*: not *levish*, yet *liberal*. They must be *sedate*, without being *dull*, and *cheerful*, yet not to *levity*. They must exercise *discernment*, without being *captious* or *severe*: they must be *cautious*, yet not *suspicious*: *confident*, and yet *attentive*.

The last general head may now, with propriety, be brought into view, which is

Thirdly. That it is the duty of all, whom Providence succeeds, thus to improve their prosperity. *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for GOD now accepteth thy works.* The

1st. Reason I would offer in support of this will be, that it is the design of Providence in the bestowment of favors that they should be thus improved.

He does not give us riches that they may shine in our coffers, or be lavishly squandered:—he does not guard the harvest from mildew in the field that it may moulder in our graneries: nor does he give that flavor to the clusters on the vine, in order that their juice may turn sour in our casks; but he is pleased when his blessings are suitably improved. I might further add, that he has not continued our social capacities that we might be uneasy and jealous, or stupid in our relations:—nor does he bless a nation with civil liberties to distress individuals with the fear of losing them; but he wills that all our privileges should be happily enjoyed. The

2d. Reason in favor of my text is, that unless we *eat our bread with joy*—use our blessings in the manner which that enjoins, they will be of no advantage.

This is the only way in which they can be improved:—particularly those of wealth. From the same reason that we reserve to-day the use of that which might be now enjoyed,

enjoyed, we shall to-morrow, and to the end of life:— for if we do not improve a blessing, when we have it in our possession, for fear it will be needed in future, when the time, in which we propose to enjoy it, arrives, we shall, for the same reason, defer it to another: and thus all that part of our interest, which ought to be devoted to present purposes,—to our *own* convenience—to the relief of the *poor*, or the advantage of *community*, will be entirely useless.---And should a person conclude it to be necessary to reserve all his estate for an hereafter, his wealth might take its rest, till it should succeed to wiser heirs, till which time it would be, in all respects, unprofitable.

3dly. We should *eat our bread with joy*, and *drink our wine with a merry heart*, because we have no reason to be anxious:—for

1st. GOD, who has blessed our labors,---who indulges us with mercies, is ever the same, and we have equal reason to hope, that he will prosper us hereafter, as we had to expect the success, with which we have already been favored:—at least, we have more reason to expect his blessing, if we suitably improve his gifts, than if we neglect the use of them.

2dly. We have no reason to be anxious, because life is uncertain.

We know not what a day may bring forth; why, then, should any deprive themselves of a reasonable and comfortable use of God's gifts, for the sake of enjoying them at a time, to which it is scarcely *probable* that they will arrive. Nor

3dly. Can any justify a *covetous* reserve of the blessings with which they are intrusted, from the desire of leaving them to be improved by their *heirs*, for none know to whom their estates will succeed.

Were a person certain that his wealth would be inherited by a *lovely* child, who would gratefully improve it, there would be some reason in his eating the *bread of carefulness*, and his fatigue, his toil, his *anxious prudence* he might
view

view as in some degree compensated, though he should never enjoy, in his own person, the affluence which his labors acquired, his concern secured ;---But this is very uncertain. No man can know his *heir*, whether he will be a *son*, or a *stranger* :---a *wise man*, or a *fool* *. Mankind, successively, are liable to death, and property in consequence of it, to the most unexpected changes. How frequent are the instances, in which an estate very suddenly forsakes the hands into which it was *willed* :---and how much more common, still, are those, of its being improved in a manner, very different from that which its *testator* expected ! How many, could they return from their graves, would have the mortification to find, that they had spent their lives in anxiety and toil, and had denied themselves every expence, but those which were barely necessary, in order that they might lay up an estate for some *profligate*, who, while he is *supported* in his pleasures by *their* exertions, *cursets* their *covetousness* and *ridicules* their *industry* ! How many who have been deaf to the *language* of *need*,---who have resided by the *shelter* of *Poverty* and have frequently cast a glance into its half-stripp'd abode and beheld the *ravenous* aspect, and the still more ghastly *glare* of *hunger*, and the shivering limbs of ragged nakedness, and then have gone to their wardrobe, and sealed the door,---to their coffers, and made them doubly secure, could they return would find, that *all this* was only to introduce some *wretch* to the card-table :---that they *toiled*, *feared*, *suffered*, *saved* to heap up an estate for some dissolute heir to seat upon the wings of hazard to---vanish away !

In this view, from the uncertainty of our successor,---from our ignorance of the improvement he may make of our interest does it not appear, that that man conducts wisely who not only *eats* his *bread with joy* ; but *drinks* his *wine with a merry heart* ? Besides, is not the person as much to blame, who neglects to improve the gifts of Providence for the sake of leaving them to a *fool*, as though he, himself, should expend them upon those ends to which the fool will apply them ?

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* Eccl. 11. 18, 19.

The last argument I would mention in favor of the duty under consideration, is

4thly. That a compliance with it is necessary to the happiness of all who are interested in it :---to our own---to that of the poor, and to the well-being of society.

What is *wealth* to those who fear, that every expence will bring them to want :---that every little *nothing* which is bestowed on *charitable*,---or that any larger sum which is applied to *general* purposes, will make a fearful vacancy in their property ! Who look upon *units* in their *expenditures*, to be a reduction of *thousands* in their *capital* ! How can the poor be relieved, or government, or religion supported with this disposition !---Or what is *liberty*, while those who enjoy it are continually apprehensive of its loss !---Or what is *friendship* with jealousy !

Having considered each part of the text, we may now, with judgement, form a comment upon the whole, which will be, doubtless, this,---that mankind should view all things as in the hands of GOD,---and that, from a sense of his goodness,---of their own frailty, and of the uncertain nature of worldly blessings they ought with joy to improve his gifts. That none should ever indulge anxiety ;---neither about their future support, nor under the present expences to which they are called, either by their own wants,---or the necessities of the poor, or the good of community ; but that they should cheerfully resign what such demands require, if they have it in their power ; as cheerfully as they *eat* their own *bread*, and *drink* their own *wine* :---and that this happy temper,---this disinterested disposition ought to extend to all their concerns,---ought to be exercised in all their relations, and with regard to all temporal enjoyments. To

IMPROVE the subject, we will

1st. Consider an idea which the text, itself, and many of the observations which have been made have indirectly suggested ;

suggested ; namely, that it is of the *highest* importance that we be *truly religious*.

The advice which the Preacher gives us is *fatal*, and there is something very striking in the indulgence :---*go thy way---eat thy bread---and drink thy wine---*“ you may well enjoy them---nor need you mourn the loss of blessings which you have improved.”

Has the tear never been called into your eye, when you have heard a *Physician* say to some *nurse*, “ Let the *sick man* have what he wants :---indulge him in his desires :---nothing can retard his death, and therefore nothing can injure him so much as his *own anxiety* :---study then his feelings, and give him any thing for which he has a taste.”---

How melancholy is the liberty, particularly, if the person who receives the indulgence imputes it, not to his being a dying man ; but to his having recovered beyond the danger of gratifying his appetite ;---yet this is, in one sense, the language in which our text addresses us,---*Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart* :---“ improve the blessings of Providence in the manner which is necessary to your *present* happiness :---they are not lasting in their nature, and ye, yourselves, are frail :---should you neglect them now, you may never derive any comfort, or advantage from them.” In this view does it not appear of importance, that we be interested in *higher* blessings than any upon which the *sun* looks down :---in more *durable* treasures than any which time can measure ? ---for we are *immortal*,---we must live beyond the grave :---and could we be happy in the other world, provided we could escape punishment, without any blessings, without *any* agreeable circumstances in our situation, when it requires so many to make a short continuance in this, supportable ?

May we not, while we are permitted joyfully to improve the transitory blessings of this frail state, like the languishing man, who, while he is allowed to gratify the feelings of appetite, looks back upon life :---may we not, like
him,

him, too fondly indulge the idea that such happiness is lasting ; but may we realize the necessity of being interested in *that* which will *put gladness* into our hearts, when *corn*, and *wine*, and *oil* shall no more encrease.

2dly. How many are the obligations under which we are laid to GOD, in having so much reason to *eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart* ?

Each one of us may comply with the exhortation, not only from the *general* considerations which have been mentioned ; but from almost every other.

Whose *works*, of us present, has not *GOD accepted* ?— who has not been succeeded in labor, and prospered in business ?— GOD has likewise blessed us in our social relations :—how *many*, and how *engaging* are the qualifications of those whom we stile our friends !—Who, may I not say, has more *agreeable*, or more worthy connexions, than those which we are permitted to form ?—We should soon find ourselves lost in the goodness of GOD, should we attempt to trace it only through our private circumstances,---should we only consider how frequently he has interposed in our favor, and in how many respects we are happily distinguished from others :---how, then, shall we be able to feel *all* our obligations to him, when we turn our attention to his goodness to the society of which we are members, to this City, to the State, and to our Country ?

He has caused the earth to bring forth plentifully :— he has, indeed, prospered the work of our hands ;—he has succeeded our designs :—he has visited us with no evils ; but has blessed us with almost every favor,---indulged us with almost every privilege :—while our *swords* remain in *plow-shares*, there is prosperity in our borders, and health in our habitations,---*well*, then, may our bosoms be composed, and well may we *eat our bread with joy*.

Particularly are we under obligations to GOD, in this sense, for our religious advantages :---for the gospel, and that its doctrines are preached,---its institutions established in our land ;---and for the favorable opportunities with
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which we are indulged, of securing *treasures* which can never *waste*,---*privileges* which can never *cease*---which we shall *never* leave :---and thus, while the blessings of a future world are offered to our acceptance, we have a still higher inducement not to be anxious in any earthly concerns ; but to *eat our bread with joy*.

Nor have we any cause to be apprehensive that we shall, hereafter, be less happy, than we have *reason* to be at present ; for,

Perhaps none have *brighter prospects*, than those to which we may look forward.

As individuals, it is true, we know not what is before us,---life is uncertain ;---but as a Society---particularly, as a Nation we may form more substantial hopes.

As the Almighty has made our country his peculiar care, will he ever leave it ?---Have we not, rather, reason to look forward and behold it, under his smiles, rising, by the swiftest degrees, to the summit of national greatness ? As its territory is extensive,---its soil so fertile,---its seasons so agreeable,---its climates so salubrious, and as it has all those civil and religious privileges which *greatness*, or *virtue* require, may we not behold our shores crowded with emigrants from realms less happy than our own :---may we not behold our *sea-port*, and other *commercial* towns *bearing* not only the *name*, enjoying not only the *privileges* ; but *rising* into the *greatness* of cities,---while intermediate villages, commodiously and pleasantly populous, appear in all the charms of rural beauty, and flourish under the arts of industry.

May we not look forward, and behold those howling *wilds* which are the *man* of savages, falling before our advancing *settlements*, till those tracts of desert *blossom like the rose*,--- and till its groves are formed into the *social dwelling*, or the sacred *temple*, and till we hear these echoing to the voice of joy, resounding with the hymn of praise.

Thus may we not proceed, till the western ocean, *foaming* to flying *navies*, salutes our senses,---and till we
behold

behold its borders equally populous, pleasant and flourishing with our own.

Behold America thus blessed!--Behold her under cultivation!--Behold her rivalling the bloom of *Eden*!--her meadows clothed in verdure!--her pastures graced with frantic herds,---her *streets* * with *sportive flocks*!--her orchards bending, with their modest treasures to the lowest *stretch* of children^{hood},---and her heavy harvests drooping to the reaping-cradle;---while her *cities* rise in *finished* greatness, and astonish the *admiring* eye;---or fill the *ear* with the tolling tones, or solemn chimes of *assembling* worship.

Then may *This* be great, and may your sons be *kings*, and *priests* to *GOD*!

Thus, from every consideration of a temporal nature, may you conclude, that you may *eat your bread with joy*:---And under what obligations are we laid to *GOD* in being blessed in *such* a manner, as that we have so much reason to comply with the exhortation!--Is not a tribute of praise most justly due to *HIM*, who has thus *loaded us with his mercies*?---And is not *HE* entitled to our thanks, who will make America an *habitation* of his *mercies*,---an *assylum* of the most *important* privileges, and the *flower* of the world?

With propriety is this day devoted to a consideration of his goodness,---an acknowledgement of his favors, and inexcusable shall we be if we do not always live to his praise.

3dly. Is it the duty of all those whose labors *GOD* accepteth to enjoy their prosperity;---to improve his gifts as their happiness requires,---as their reason dictates?---permit me, then, to say to you, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart*.

Be, hereafter, *sober* and *cheerful* in your enjoyments; and may your pleasures be elevated and refined!--Nor will you *eat your bread with joy*, unless you attend to the *dependent* poor,---unless you pity their wretchedness, and

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relieve

‡ Psalm cXLIV. 13.

relieve their needs, not barely when they *pine* with hunger, but when they are shivering under the inclemencies of the present season, without raiment, or fuel.

Nor will you *drink your wine with a merry heart*, while any important interest needs your liberality, and suffers, *apparently* from your concern for yourselves.---In all such senses may you comply with the exhortation in the text : ---and in this light permit me, again, to say, *eat thy bread with joy*.

God forbid, that in repeating the command I should *imagine*, that you are not sufficiently liberal to yourselves : ---or that I should contradict your reputation so much, as to intimate that you are contracted in your *families*, or in your commercial intercourse, or in your relation to civil society :---in these respects I would not doubt but that your *honor* is established ;---But---and yet I would adopt a *milder*, and, perhaps, a more suitable term and say, has *Religion* no demands upon your estates to which, as a Society, you are strangely *inattentive* ?---To be as particular as I mean,---does not the house of worship, in its appearance, reprove you in being negligent of that which it absolutely requires ? *

Shall *your own* dwellings be suitable for the *feeblest* state of indisposition : and shall the barely *delicate* be insecure in the *Temple* ?---Shall your own dwellings appear so *decently* elegant, and so agreeably *grace* your private circumstances,---and can you be willing that the house of God should dishonor his worship ?

Is this a suitable return to HIM to whom you are indebted for all your enjoyments,---and but for whose blessing upon your labors, you never could have prospered ?

Nor am I pleading only for the *honor* of religion ; but for *your own* interest ;---for how rapidly does Society degenerate, when the worship of God is neglected ! and it always will be neglected by *some*, where there is such an inconvenience respecting its exercises. *These* will have influence on others, and soon,---before we are aware, not
only

* Hag. I. 4.---9.

only the *reality*, but the *appearance* of Religion is gone !

From the subject we learn, that there is no reason why there should be *any* hesitancy about expences of this nature :---or why you should defer this important concern from time to time, for your lives are uncertain, and *wealth* has wings, *your's* may leave you ; or you may die from *that*, before you make your exertions,---and that part of your interest which you reserve for this purpose may fall into the hands of *heirs* who *may* apply it in erecting a Building,---it may be a *Temple*---and it *may* be a Brothel :---and it is *uncertain* which, as you know not who will *succeed* you,---nor *how* vicious society may become from your neglect.

Be persuaded, then, to comply with the duty which the text inculcates, in this one,--this *necessary*,--this important respect.

Under a belief that *this* is your determination I am happy in resuming a more general topic by saying, go your *way*, my friends,--*eat* your *bread* with joy, and *drink* your *wine* with a merry heart, in all the *other* senses in which the exhortation has been explained,---and

Be led by the uncertainty of terrestrial enjoyments to look above. When you *eat* your *bread* and find, that when it is improved, it's gone :---that *earthly comforts*, which you once enjoy, return no more, realize, that you were not made *immortal* to be happy in any blessings which *decay*,---and aspire to those which are substantial :---and when, hereafter, you indulge yourselves in the innocent amusements of the *social*, the *friendly*, or the *cheerful* circle, consider the importance of being Candidates for the society above---of being interested in the Saviour's merit, since, if you be not, you must *take up* your *abode* in *that* place, in which joy and friendship are strangers,---and in which there is no concord ;---but the *thrill* of groans, and grating *blasphemies* !

Be induced to look upon *all* your enjoyments and *privileges* in this light :---and to improve them as the subject,

to which you have been attending, enjoins :—and may we all, at last, be admitted into *that* world, in which *society* is perfect, and unimbittered *pleasure* flows :—where blessings *never* fly away,—*prospects* never fade.

