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April 13, 1815.

REVEREND SIR,

AT the solicitation and in behalf of a number of the Citizens of the Villages of Waterford and Lansingburgh, we tender you our thanks for the Discourse delivered this day, and request you will favor us with a copy for the press.

We are, Sir,

Very respectfully,

Your friends,

JAMES VAN SCHOONHOVEN,

JOHN CRAMER,

JOHN HOUSE,

*Committee from Waterford.*

ELIJAH JANES,

ELIAS PARMELEE,

EBENEZER W. WALBRIDGE,

*Committee from Lansingburgh,*

Rev. Dr. SAMUEL BLATCHFORD.

1815  
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## AION.

xvi, 1.

O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD ; FOR HE IS GOOD : FOR HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER.

**G**RATITUDE, expressed to our benefactors, is one of the most reasonable and pleasant exercises of the heart.

The psalm, which includes our text, contains a general exhortation to render thanks to God for his various, and manifold mercies ; whilst the inspired penman exhibits several reasons for the discharge of this duty. The general reason mentioned is, that the Lord is God, and “ his mercy endureth for ever.” That God is merciful, is a fact of the first consequence to mankind ; and, it would seem, that the Holy Spirit would impress it upon our minds with more than common weight, since the sentence which contains it, is, perhaps, more frequently repeated, than any other which occurs in the scriptures.

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# A SERMON.

PSALM cxxxvi, 1.

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**G**RATITUDE, expressed to our benefactors, is one of the most reasonable and pleasant exercises of the heart.

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To a right conception of the divine mercies, we know that mankind are averse ; and therefore, God, in infinite condescension, is specially pleased to illustrate for our use, this perfection of his character.

We are called upon this day, by the constituted authorities of our country, to give thanks to God for the many blessings with which he has remembered us ; and especially for that prominent favor, which has already produced a burst of joy from the whole nation—I mean the late PEACE—Its tidings were welcomed as life from the dead—we then said to one another, to our country, and to the world, “ *We are glad.*” We are now, in the recognition of the blessing, to say to God, *we are thankful.*

I. But what is it to give thanks to God—or rather how are we to characterize the duty ? This shall be the *first* article of consideration.

Of giving thanks, we may in general have some idea, especially with respect to our fellow creatures, when they are at any time pleased to confer upon us any acts of kindness and liberality. Ingratitude, or the withholding of due acknowledgment from those who serve our interests, is branded amongst all descriptions of men, as the meanest and most hateful vice ; for gratitude is one of the natural affections of the soul, and is exercised by all classes of men towards one another. Thus the publicans loved those who loved them. But however common this may be from man to man, there is a great reluctance in the carnal heart to render thanks to God, the su-

preme benefactor. It is true, he is the supreme friend of the world ; whose providence pervades the universe ; in whom we live, and move, and have our being ; who orders for us all the circumstances of our existence ; in whom are all our springs, and upon whom we are absolutely dependent. But men, for the most part, lose sight of this, and betray by their worldly mindedness, their forgetfulness of God. How often does the glorious Sovereign of the world elevate individuals and nations to scenes of prosperity and splendor—How often does he succeed the efforts of men to the accomplishment of their object—He raiseth the poor out of the dunghill, and sitteth them among princes. But to what are men more prone, than to arrogate their success to themselves. Were it not for this, the prophet's words had been without meaning ; “ They were filled and their hearts were exalted, therefore have they forgotten me.” Nor could the force of the reproach have been felt, which Israel deserved and received ; “ But Jeshuran waxed fat and kicked, thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, then he forsook God that made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. Of the rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee.”

To correct this disposition of the human heart, God often brings us into distress ; and in his hand there is a cup, it is full of mixture, and the wine is red. He pours upon us his judgments : permits us

to indulge our passions, and unrestrained by his preventive grace, we seek the high places of the field—sword meets sword—havoc and carnage rage—the red blood stains the sod, and colours the ocean—man is the murderer of man—The chaste labors of the husbandman cease---the busy hum of commerce is still---the cottage of the poor is deserted; save, where the widow weeps for her husband, and hushes her orphans to sleep on a pallet of straw. The palaces of the great, too, sink under the rude violence of war, and the Lord is known by the judgments of his hand.

It is in distress that we commonly begin to think about God. But prayer, in distress, would seem to be a work of necessity :---It was so considered during our late conflict; and our citizens were called to the confession of their sins, and to humiliation before God: Now we are called to thankful praise; and this is

#### AN ACT OF DUTY.

Of this, we have a noble example in the devout psalmist. With what ardency of affection—with what fervency of spirit does he express his obligations to God! It is almost impossible not to catch the fire, and feel the glow, which inspired him in that flight of sublime praise, of which we have an instance in the hundred and third psalm! “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy



name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Such ardent addresses as these, so often repeated, display the strength of the impression on his heart, and intimate to us the propriety and excellence of that sensibility of feeling, which ought never to be restrained in the recognition of the divine mercies. The duty is undeniable : It may be characterized as a

#### SPIRITUAL DUTY.

Brethren, the spring of that thankfulness, which is acceptable to God, is in the heart. Thankfulness is the soul's exercise ; for it is the soul which recognizes divine favors, and understands those obligations to the goodness of God which such favors create. Its expression, indeed, is often found in vocal praise : in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs —And this is natural ; because, when the heart is filled with sincere gratitude and love to God, it will express itself in devout and thankful praise. Between the heart and the tongue, there is a natural and undeniable correspondence---so that, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. But the chief act of thanksgiving is to be sought in the interior of the man : it is, as we said, the act of the soul. In this, there is a manifest propriety and ne-

cessity ; for “God is a spirit, and he will be worshipped in spirit, and in truth.” “He searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men,” and resents it as derogatory to his glory, when we draw near with our lips, whilst our hearts are far from him. There is, therefore, an important design in the psalmist, when he calls upon his soul, and all that is within him, to unite in offering praise to God. The *understanding* must be engaged to consider and admit the great arguments of praise ; to admire, whilst it traces the divine goodness in all its glorious displays, and to ascribe the glory which is due to God for all his mercies, which is a reasonable service.—The *memory* is employed to register the benefits which heaven confers, and bring them into light : And the *will* and *affections* are used to rejoice in his character, and love him for the beneficence of his designs, and the condescension of his acts.

Thankfulness to God is a

#### SOLEMN DUTY.

This remark is intended to correct a mistake into which thousands are apt to run : for multitudes, in all ages, have considered days of thanksgiving, as seasons of feasting and carnal mirth. So the Israelites, when they had sacrificed to their idols, sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. This practice was consistent enough for idolators, but it cannot be suitable for the worshippers of the true God.

Christians should know better. True thankfulness is immediately connected with humility. We are then most thankful, when we have upon our hearts the clearest perceptions of the divine character ; and every proper view of the glory of God and his perfections, will produce that solemnity which is characteristic of the duty. Thankfulness to God implies a

SERIOUS RECOGNITION OF HIS MERCIES WITH ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ADD LUSTRE TO THEM.

Our mercies are both common and special ; and they should both be continually acknowledged by us. Not only on such a day as this, should we call them to mind ; but more or less every day. An habitual feeling of obligation to God is so reasonable in itself, that it ought to be indulged ; and it is so congenial to a heart, penetrated with the divine goodness, that it is one of the best evidences of our sincerity. The mercies of God are new every morning and fresh every evening : great is his faithfulness. Our common mercies are included in what our Lord styles “ our daily bread ”—that general support and care afforded us by the paternal providence of our Father who is in heaven. But sometimes God is pleased to interfere particularly in our favor by the most signal displays of his wisdom and power. He rescues us from deep calamity and distress :

He calms the tempest of sorrow which would overwhelm us : He saith to the waves of affliction “ be still ; hitherto ye have gone, but ye shall go no further.” He places us on a rock—the billows indeed may beat at our feet, but we are safe ! And then, whilst, like the shipwrecked mariner, snatched from the horrors of the deep, we survey the ruin we have escaped, it is indispensable to true thankfulness, that we should go over the incidents of our deliverance, and revive the impression of the mercy by a constant recognition of the blessing. Thankfulness to God implies

#### A DUE ESTIMATION OF HIS BENEFITS.

This will be effected by a realizing consideration of who God is, and what we are. The great God, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, is infinite in his glory. His majesty filleth the heavens. He is exalted above all praise. He bows beyond all expression, when he notices the bright intelligences of his throne, and listens even to the songs of angels.—Now the smallest favor done to us by such a Being, rises in estimation beyond all thought ; for as the guilt of sin swells, in enormity, according to the dignity of the object against whom it is committed ; so that, altho some sins against God may be considered as comparatively small, yet there is no such thing, in its intrinsic nature, as a small sin. In like manner, although of mercies, some are, in comparison,

eminent, and some ordinary, yet every mercy is inexpressibly great with respect to the glorious Author from whom it comes. In contrast with him, what are we?—"Lord, said David, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him"! What indeed is man? What is he in his collective capacity? In comparison with God, all the nations of the earth are as grasshoppers, inconsiderable as the dust of the balance, less than nothing and vanity. Considered in his natural state, man is a creature as but of yesterday, and crushed before the moth. In his moral state, he is a child of wrath, polluted with sin, corrupted from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet; poor and wretched, blind and naked, destitute of all things.—Yes, brethren, a reflection upon our own vileness, will assure us, that we do not merely, not deserve the smallest blessing at the hand of God, but rather deserve his heaviest judgments; and such reflection will necessarily heighten our esteem of his mercies.

II. Having thus characterized the duty of thanksgiving to God, our next article will be, to consider the reasons of this duty, as we find them particularly mentioned in the text: "O give thanks unto the Lord"—Why? "For the Lord is good, for his mercy endureth for ever."

"The Lord is good." He is so; and we are witnesses of the fact. It is continually manifesting itself. Consider,

GOD'S GENERAL PROVIDENCE OVER THE  
WORLD.

His kingdom, saith the scripture, ruleth over all. It is under his government, that we are blessed with the sun, and moon, and stars ; with the revolving seasons ; summer and winter, seed time and harvest. As the great Father of us all, he shelters the family of man under the shadow of his wings : gives bread to the eater, and seed to the sower ; accommodates the constitutions of his creatures to the snows of Lapland, or the burning heats of the torrid zone. He is the God of the sea, where the sailor climbs the mountain wave, and the God of the dry land, where the shepherd feeds his flock.—“ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.” But we must not roam at large—Let us consider some of the particular acts of his goodness, with which he has remembered us.

1st. And here *first*, shall I call your attention to that

AMPLE SUPPLY OF THE NECESSARIES OF LIFE  
WITH WHICH WE ARE FAVORED.

America is justly styled, the poor man's country ; for here the hand of industry maketh rich. It is the land of corn, and oil, and flax, and wool. The earth yieldeth her increase to the husbandman, who tills the soil, and casteth in the wheat, and the rye

and the cummin and the barley—Her productions are so abundant and so uniform, that here is no dread of famine, none of scarcity—every mouth is filled; there is no want—America is a granary for countries far distant. The surplussage of our produce supplies the necessities of other nations, and alleviates the miseries of other people.

With the labor of the farmer, the ingenuity of the mechanic is respected, and his work rewarded.—Indeed, there is not one among us, but the improvident, the lazy, or the intemperate, but may exclaim, the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage.

Even the child of misfortune and sorrow is here provided for by the most active benevolence. The chief city of our own state affords the most splendid instances of combined charity of which, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, any city in the world can boast. The friendless orphan finds an assylum, the regularity and comforts of which, almost make him forget, if ever he remembered, that he once had a father to supply his wants, and a mother to sooth his griefs. The sick are provided with the means of cure, in establishments, where the most eminent skill is gratuitously afforded to their relief—Nor is it only in that city; through most of our cities and villages, benevolent associations are formed to raise the head of dejection, and supply the wants of the poor. I love to hear of “*Houses of Industry*,” “*Widow Societies*,” “*Societies for the Relief of the*

*Sick,*” “*Female Benevolent Societies.*” They are the ingenious devices of a generous sensibility for distress, and proofs of regard to the sufferings of humanity. They do honor to those who framed them, and to those who support them—they are amongst the rich blessings of our country, and a ground of thankfulness to God. Then let us beware that we forget not him who is the supreme Benefactor; whose controlling influence disposes the heart to charitable deeds; who is the sick man’s best friend; “the husband of the widow; and the father of the fatherless. —The Lord of hosts is his name.”

The natural advantages of our country are beyond all others. Our shores are washed by an immense ocean, which bears on its bosom the productions of other climes; and gives to the merchant the cane of the Indies, the silver, the gold and the pearl; “a country watered with the dews and rain of heaven, feeding innumerable springs and wells and navigable rivers. A land out of whose hills you may dig iron and stone, marble, coals, clay and innumerable articles of daily use. A land which maintains herds and flocks, dairies and hives, and a thousand other classes laboring for the inhabitants.” Our lakes are inland seas of vast measure, long known to our country, either as separating lines between this and other dominions, or, as the means of facilitating an increasing and extensive commerce; and lately they are known to the world by events, which astonish by their magnitude and their novelty. But we must not enlarge. Consider therefore



## OUR MEANS OF EDUCATION.

Perhaps there is in no country, if we except Scotland ; and *Switzerland* in happier times ; where the means of education are so cheap and so extended. Here, in most of our States, the poorest child is taught to read and write, and the expense is paid at the easiest rate. The system of common school education is rising in magnitude, and improvement ; and unspeakable advantages are flowing in upon society from our charitable and public institutions. Our Lancastrian establishments afford instruction to thousands, and present, to the friend of his country, a spectacle of no common interest—The scheme originated elsewhere ; but, having obtained the plan, we adopted it. We do credit to the author, and enjoy the blessing.

The higher branches of learning, too, are acquired within our own boundaries ; and he who would prepare himself for any of the professions, called learned, need not go to Europe for his qualifications. Our halls of science, open to the student the philosophy of Newton ; the metaphysics of Locke, and Stewart and Reid ; the languages of polished Greece and Rome, in the heroic verse of Homer ; the sweet numbers of Virgil ; the profuse eloquence of Cicero, and the thunder of Demosthenes.

The young civilian is taught, in schools of law, the principles of justice, which in our courts are expounded, and reduced to practice. The student in

medicine, with advantages which are every day increasing, may explore the arcana of animal economy, and, profiting by the experience of professors of established fame, be the successful instrument, of arresting disease in its progress, and reanimating the lamp of life, just trembling in its socket. The youth also who devotes himself to the service of the sanctuary has now, in our theological seminaries, the means of acquiring those branches of knowledge, so desirable in themselves, and so important to the church, which, under the blessing of him whose gospel they expect to preach, will be the probable means of supporting truth, of putting gainsayers to silence, and of exhibiting, in the best possible manner, the mysteries of grace to a ruined world. Consider further,

THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR COUNTRY, AND  
THE PRECIOUS LIBERTIES WE ENJOY.

Civil liberty is a choice blessing ; and we possess it in that degree, in which we ourselves have chosen to possess it. The constitution is the palladium of our liberties ; and the good providence of God permitted the people to form it for themselves. It recognizes common rights : the life, the property, the liberty of thinking and acting is secured to every citizen, within the boundaries of law and equal justice. In some other countries, says a late writer, the life of a subject is at the will of his lord. Pro-

perty, in some nations, the poor have none, they are property themselves; the slaves and beasts of nobles. There are subjects on which no conversation is allowed, and there is nothing but one general slavery. Like Egypt, the whole country is resembled to a large gaol—a house of bondage; in which the chains of some are of iron, and those of others are of gold; but all are in slavery, and they have no deliverer to set them free. O happy people of America! “Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good!”

Again consider

THE RECENT INSTANCE OF DIVINE GOODNESS  
IN SUDDENLY, AND UNEXPECTEDLY, CHANG-  
ING THE RAGE OF WAR INTO THE TRANQUIL-  
ITY OF PEACE.

This blessing of heaven is prominent. Let us, that we may feel it, look at the evils of war, connected with the blessings of peace---But where am I going?---Shall I trace back to the origin of the war, and pronounce concerning its policy, and its morality; whether it was just and necessary? Shall I look at the manner in which it was conducted, and give my opinion of the wisdom of our plans and points of operation? Shall I look at its termination, and pronounce concerning the terms of peace, whether we have obtained the objects of so tremendous a conflict?--No, I will not. Justice, however, requires

us to say, that we have gained additional proof of the patient and hardy courage of our soldiers in the field; whilst, on the ocean, and the lakes, the daring intrepidity of our seamen has astonished the world. The American eagle tore with his talons the cross of St. George, and bore away in his beak, the trophies of victory, from the mistress of the seas. But still war is a dreadful scourge, call it by what name you please. With us it was connected with innumerable evils. Commerce was interrupted. An immense property was sacrificed. The ships of our merchants no longer ploughed the ocean; but found their stations in the secure retreats of harbors, creeks and rivers. The revenue of the country could not support the expenses of the contest; and the national treasury was exhausted. Increasing taxes upon the community, became necessary. Mutual recrimination among our statesmen presented a distressing omen, and the union itself was in danger. A flood of immorality broke in upon society; and multitudes of lives were lost in the sickness of the camp, and the carnage of the field—**BUT THANK GOD WE HAVE PEACE!** Yes, Brethren, we will thank God that we have peace. No longer does the hoarse trumpet call our legions to the embattled plain---no longer does the loud cannon utter its roar of destruction---Our troops are returning to the habitudes of social life---Our frontiers hail their opponents as their friends, nor fear the deadly incursion

to drive them from their homes by the flames of their own dwellings.--Commerce is now flowing into its wonted channel---Our wharves are crowded with busy scenes; and whatever depressions we may yet feel, the goodness of God hath given an energy, an enterprize to our country which, we trust, will at length overcome the disadvantages of the present moment, and that we shall yet arise a praise in the midst of the whole earth. May the guardian arm of Omnipotence surround us, and the presence of God be a glory in the midst of us! We dread now no foreign foe: let us beware of ourselves---our own bad passions---the rancor of party zeal, and whatever may embitter our blessings and impair our felicity. Let us look for moral principle and disinterested patriotism in our rulers, and be at peace among ourselves.

I cannot conclude this discourse without reminding you of a blessing superior to every other, and without which we could have no real enjoyment of any; upon which we should dwell with delight and for which we can never express sufficient praise.—I refer to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; that Gospel which brings us glad tidings of great joy;---which proclaims peace on earth and good will towards man; that Gospel which reveals the way of life, exhibits an all-sufficient Saviour to the world, develops an hereafter to man, and resolves the anxious enquiry “what must I do to be saved.” This

Gospel is the foundation of our social happiness ;-- its laws are holy, just and good ; its promises cheer and animate the christian pilgrim in his course ; its doctrines shew the way of reconciliation with God, support the departing spirit in the conflicts of death, whilst, being interested in the covenant of grace, by faith in the Redeemer, it wings its way to those triumphant seats, where God hath provided an everlasting residence for his children. We enjoy this Gospel in all its rich exhibitions for ourselves : nor do we confine it here ; from our plenitude we are enabled to send the missionaries of the Cross to the habitations of the wilderness, and to nations far remote---May so great a blessing be wisely improved and its benefits be extended from the rising to the setting of the sun, and reach, like the undulations of the pool, from shore to shore. For this Gospel we are bound to be thankful ; and here is best explained the last member of our text ; “ His mercy endureth for ever.” *16 -*

My Brethren, I have done. Upon these altars you offer your thanksgiving to God in the name of Jesus Christ, through whose righteousness and blood alone, we have access to his throne. It is a righteous---a holy act : may God accept it at your hands, and whilst he records it in his remembrance, “ Be ye for him,” and not for another ; still bearing it upon your hearts, that those who love him keep his commandments.