

A

# DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN

TRINITY CHURCH, NEW-YORK,

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1825.

*(The day of General Thanksgiving throughout the State.)*

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BY THE REV. JOHN FREDERICK SCHROEDER, A. M.

AN ASSISTANT MINISTER OF TRINITY CHURCH.

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*New-York, Nov. 25, 1825.*

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

In common with a number of your friends, we respectfully solicit for publication the sermon which you preached yesterday.

With sincere esteem,

Your ob't. Servants,

WM. JOHNSON,

DANIEL BOARDMAN,

E. W. LAIGHT,

F. VANDERBURGH.

TO THE REV. MR. SCHROEDER.

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*New-York, Nov. 29.*

GENTLEMEN,

In compliance with your request, I submit to you my discourse, and fondly trust that you will continue to regard it with indulgence.

With the same kind feelings which prompted your communication,

I am, Gentlemen,

Your ob't. Servant,

J. F. SCHROEDER.

TO WM. JOHNSON, ESQ.

DANIEL BOARDMAN, ESQ.

GEN. E. W. LAIGHT,

F. VANDERBURGH, M. D.

## A DISCOURSE, &c.



• *“Praise ye the Lord.”*

These are the concluding words of the 104<sup>th</sup> Psalm, the master-piece of the sweet singer of Israel : a poem, distinguished throughout by the greatest excellence of thought, sublimity of language, and fervour of devotion. The sentiments which it contains are peculiarly adapted to the occasion on which we have to-day assembled ; and if there is any thing in the dignity or design of a composition that can claim interest, this psalm is worthy of our most devout meditation ; for its subject is God, and its design the expression of pious thanksgiving.

The Deity is here represented under *three* attractive aspects.

I. He is represented as a God *above*; all majesty.

The writers of the Old Testament, in their conceptions of God, portray him under sensible forms; and the most familiar objects are made subservient to their delineations.

They ascribe to God eyes; but they are eyes which are *in every place, beholding the evil and the good*:(a) they ascribe to him a voice; but it is a voice that speaks worlds into existence;(b) and they ascribe to him hands, but they are hands, *in the hollow of which the waters are measured*;(c) the span of which metes out the heavens; and *he taketh up the isles as a very little thing*.(d)

Of these bold drafts of the divinity, there are in the Old Testament numerous illustrations; but the Psalmist, in the effusion before us, is pre-eminent.

Among the inhabitants of the East, the loftiest associations of personal grandeur were derived

(a) Prov. 15, 3.

(b) Gen. 1.

(c) Isa. 40, 12.

(d) Is. 40, 15.

from the state of their princes; for whatever was brilliant or costly, served to give richness to their robes, magnificence to their palaces, and pomp to the chariots and retinue in their train.

These associations the Psalmist transfers to God. He ascribes to him all the eastern attributes of royalty; and by the magick of his pencil, he so mellows his colouring, that we seem indeed to behold, what it is said(a) man cannot *see and live*, a vision of the Almighty.

Observe the grand outline. Has God robes? They are dignity and effulgence in the abstract: He is clothed with *honour and majesty*:(b) He is invested *with light as with a garment*.(c) Has he a palace?

"God builds on liquid air, and forms  
His palace chambers in the skies;"

Ps. 104, v. 3.

He stretcheth out *the heavens like a canopy*.(d)  
Has he chariots?

"The clouds his chariots are, and storms  
The swift-wing'd steeds with which he flies."

Ps. 104, v. 3.

(a) Exod. 33, 20.

(b) Ps. 104, 1.

(c) ver. 2.

(d) Ps. 104, ver. 2.

Has he a retinue? "*He maketh winds his messengers; and a flaming fire his train.*"(a)

Thus is God *above* all majesty.

II. The Deity is here represented under a *second aspect*: a God *around*; all beneficence.

St. Paul, in addressing the Christians at Corinth, tells them, "*All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;*"(b) and it is true, that, to the believer, all things, even in the natural world, seem by faith to be appropriated. While to the infidel they are an unknown country, the believer takes possession of them by a moral conquest. "*He looks through nature up to nature's God;*" and wherever his eye reposes, he beholds some traces of the divine beneficence.

1. God is seen in *the structure of the globe*. Its rotundity aids the operation of the elements; and is the cause of the vicissitudes of day and night. Its various strata are all themes for pious meditation; for its metals contribute to our domestick comfort and security; its minerals are medicines; and its very beds of sand re-

ceive and purify the water that refreshes us. Its surface, diversified with lake and island, hill and dale, is thus fitted to preserve the atmosphere salubrious; to sustain the lives of the animal creation; and to promote the growth of whatever is comprehended in the science of botany.

This structure, these arrangements, are from the hand of God. It is He that "*laid the foundation of the earth:*" it is He, that "*covered it with the deep as with a garment;*" and "*set a bound that the waters may not pass over;*"(a) yes, "*this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable;*" there sports "*the leviathan;*" and "*there go the ships,*"(b) laden with their stores, to regale the appetite, delight the eye, and, through innumerable media, promote the happiness of man.

God has beneficent designs, when he nourishes the forest, from the humble shrub, to "*the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;*" for there "*the birds make their nests; as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house.*" God has beneficent designs, in the rugged mountain, and

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(a) Ps. 104, ver. 3. See note A. (b) 1 Cor. 3, 21. 22.

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(a) Ps. 104, 5. 6. 9. (b) vers. 25. 26.

the abrupt precipice ; for "*the high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies.*" God has beneficent designs, in the very springs, which he sendeth into the valleys ; for "*they give drink to every beast of the field : the wild asses quench their thirst ;*" "*by them the fowls of the heaven have their habitation ;*" and singing "*among the branches ;*"(a) they send forth, from a thousand warbling throats, their chorus of gratitude.

2. God is seen also in *the productions of the earth.*

It has been stated, as an adequate reason, if not an apology, for the impenitence of mankind, under the dispensation of the gospel, that its motives, being chiefly future and spiritual, are too remote and too refined, either to fix the attention, or to rouse the senses, of beings constituted as we are. But how do these considerations vanish, when we view surrounding nature. Here are motives without number, that appeal to us directly ; and appeal to us, moreover, through a sensible medium : so that, if *the revelations of a life to come* are, for the

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(a) Ps. 104, verses 16. 18. 11. 12.

reasons alleged, ineffectual, *these*, at least, should not be so.

The vegetable kingdom, by the goodness of God, has become to us an inexhaustible source of blessings. Consider the trees and plants, which supply us with daily food for our sustenance, fuel for our warmth, furniture for our accommodation, and clothing for our comfort. One affords its bark, another its roots, a third its juices ; the leaf of this is prepared for pleasure, and the flower of that for medicine ; here the fruit is gathered, and there the stock.

These various productions bespeak the divine beneficence.—It is God that gives them all. It is He, that, "*causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth ; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.*"(a)

3. God is seen also in *the vicissitudes of the seasons.*

There is emphatick truth in the observation, that "*an indevout astronomer is mad ;*" for

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(a) Ps. 104, 15.

surely no *rational* being can contemplate the heavens, and be aware of the influence of the sun, and moon, and planets upon the earth, and on each other, without being constrained to utter ejaculations of pious thankfulness.

It is the influence of the Sun, that causes the variety of the seasons: now decking the earth with the beauty of spring; now throwing over it the drapery of summer; now loading it with the abundance of autumn; and now covering its surface with the garb of winter. It is the Sun that cheers the earth, after the solitude and darkness of the night; rises in the east, moves onward in his bright course, smiling on the busy occupations of the world, and then declines, that man may be refreshed, for the renewal of his labours. The Sun acts upon the sea, and causes evaporations, which produce rain and dew, so essential to the nourishment of plants. The Moon also, is an agent of good in our behalf. She co-operates with the sun, in producing the tides, which facilitate navigation, and preserve from putridity the waters of the great deep. By her positions in the heavens, she conspires with the planets and the stars, to afford the sailor nautical phenomena.

This agency of the lights of heaven, and all the vicissitudes occasioned by them, bespeak the beneficence of God.—It is He that “*appointeth the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down:*” it is He that “*maketh darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth; the young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour, until the evening:*” “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: *the earth is full of thy riches.*”(a)

4. God is seen in the *manifestations of a special providence.*

The existence of all living creatures is at his disposal. If he sometimes chastens man for sin, it is but to afford him greater measures of his love; for he renovates the believer's soul, as he renews the scenery of nature, with superiour freshness, and purity, and beauty. Every beast of the field, every fowl of the air, every fish of the sea, and the whole race of man are depend-

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(a) Ps. 104, 19 to 24.

ent upon God for their subsistence. It is derived from him alone. "*These wait all upon thee,*" O Lord, "*that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.*"(a)

Thus is God seen, in the structure of the globe; the productions of the earth; the vicissitudes of the seasons; and the manifestations of a special providence: and wherever he appears are the traces of his love.(b) He is all beneficence.

III. But in the psalm before us, there is a *third* aspect, under which the Deity is represented. He is described, not only as a God *above*, all majesty; and a God *around*, all beneficence; but as a God *within*, all piety.

In our minds, there is a powerful tendency to assimilate, in some manner, to the subjects that claim our habitual attention. This is illustrated by the ordinary pursuits of life. An individual,

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(a) Ps. 104, 27 to 30. (b) See Note B.

who long continues to devote the chief portion of his time to an occupation in which he is interested, naturally forms combinations of thought, that fix deep and durable impressions; so that the phraseology, the corporeal movements, the mental operations, to which he is accustomed, will involuntarily betray themselves.

This assimilating tendency in the human mind, we are told, will constitute the great source of our future happiness. The habitual contemplation of the divine attributes, it is said by the inspired penmen, restores to the soul the impress of God, erased by sin: "*Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord;*" we "*are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord;*"(a) "*We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;*"(b) and it is assigned as the chief end of the great and precious promises given to believers, that they shall be "*partakers of the divine nature.*"(c)

This effect, however, is not confined to a future world, but is exemplified by believers upon

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(a) 2 Cor. 3, 13. (b) 1 John 3, 2. (c) 2 Pet. 1, 4.



earth. The case of the psalmist himself is appropriate.

His thoughts had gone forth in the contemplation of God ; he had ascended to heaven, and there he had beheld him above the clouds, enrobed in light, and walking upon the wings of the wind. He is lost in the apprehension of his majesty. He feels himself surrounded by the glory, which he contemplates ; so that he can no where direct his eye, whether to the orbs of heaven above, or to the scenery of earth below, but all is viewed through the same hallowed medium. He is transported in the purest inspiration, partakes of the divine nature, and transformed into the same image ; he breathes forth, in all the fervour of his piety, the devout strains at the close of his effusion : “ *I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live ; I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord.*” “ *Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.*”(a)

Such are the feelings, my beloved brethren, that we should cherish on the present occasion. We are a portion of a vast community, who are

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(a) Ps.. 104, 33. 34. 35.

this day occupied in the same sacred service. Yes, a population of more than one million, three hundred thousand souls, are now rendering to heaven an united tribute. It is a tribute of religious gratitude ; the motives, by which it is dictated, are briefly, but very properly set forth, in the proclamation of our chief magistrate.

Here is an appeal to us, as men, as citizens, and as a Christian people. We have been pre-eminently blessed by the bounties of God ; and we have but to meditate on our condition, to answer this appeal with proper sentiments. Permit me, then, to aid your meditation, by a few brief remarks :

I. Consider your *natural advantages and resources.*

Lay open before you the map of your state. See its immense compass, comprehending a territory of forty-six thousand square miles : on the North-West bounded by an extent of seaboard, that forms a range of more than three hundred miles ; here on the South, and there on the East, it borders on the neighbouring states ; and here its shores are lashed by the billows of the ocean. Observe the rich variety of its surface :

that noble river, taking its rise far in the North, and fed by tributaries, winding through all the eastern counties, affording vigour and freshness to the surrounding lands. Behold those beautiful sheets of water on the North East ; and in the West those numerous inferior lakes and streams.

See this ridge of lofty mountains, so admirably disposed by a wise Providence, to collect the moisture of the atmosphere, and having thus formed clouds, commission them to go forth, and shower their rain on tracts dependent upon these supplies.

Behold, on every side, your mines of wealth, and sources of prosperity. There are imbedded gypsum, flint, and salt, in rich abundance ; there are lead, plumbage, iron, copper ; here are slate, asbestos, marble, and every where are stores of limestone, and of granite.

Reflect upon your mineral springs, not only in the North, but in the East, and also in the West ; a source of health and all its blessings, to multitudes, who annually make them a resort. Reflect upon the nature of your soil, possessing within itself, treasures of manure ; and, by its ample rewards, inviting and urging the labours

of the husbandman. Consider your forests, once unvisited by the foot of man, and the undisturbed retreat of animals, our only knowledge of which is derived from relicks, that bespeak their great power, and enormous magnitude : forests, affording every species of timber, subservient to the most useful purposes.

Consider the products, not only of the forest, but of the ocean, and also of your lakes and rivers ; how abundant, how diversified !

Such are your natural advantages and resources.

## 2. Consider your *internal improvements*.

Cities, and towns, and villages, that challenge enumeration, evince what, by the divine blessing, has been accomplished for your benefit. Roads are made in every direction, and bridges built, for the facility of transportation, and the convenience of travelling. Along the sea board wharves and docks have been erected, for the accommodation of shipping : and in the interior, what has not the hand of industry effected ? See those gardens, those orchards, those presses, those fields loaded with an abundant recompense of all the farmer's toils.

And behold that noble aqueduct, a master-

piece of human art, not like the native rivers which it emulates, flowing in a channel, that may have been formed by convulsions of nature, or casual depressions of the earth; nor like them, a mere tributary of the ocean: but the great medium of communication between the waters of the East and West, commingling both, and pursuing a majestick course, for more than three hundred miles, through vast and fertile fields; its bed marked out by the genius of patriotism, and elaborated by the persevering industry of an enlightened and enterprising people.

The great work is now already perfected, and we exult in the anticipation of its benign agency; in conveying the redundant products of one part of the state, to enrich, and promote the happiness of another; and in transporting the means of national prosperity, from mines as precious as, by the goodness of God, they may prove inexhaustible!

Such is the state of internal improvements.

### 3. Consider the state of *literature and science*.

How many publick prints are daily issued from the press; how many periodical and other works, agricultural, medical, philosophical and historick; how many productions of a direct

tendency to ameliorate society, by refining the manners, reforming the life, and improving the heart.

The advantages of education are widely dispensed by a university, five colleges that are devoted to literature, and several to science;—more than forty incorporated academies, and a fund of a million and a half of dollars, aiding in the instruction of nine-tenths of all the youth in the state, from the age of five to fifteen years, and defraying the expenses of between seven and eight thousand publick schools.(a)

Such is the state of literature and science.

### 4. Consider the state of *Commerce, Manufactures, and the Arts*.

What an apparatus of companies for the facilities of trade! societies for the cultivation of each of the *mechanick*, and for the encouragement also of the *fine arts*! What useful and ingenious vehicles, that roll along our streets and float upon our waters! What an almost infinite supply of articles, essential in the conduct of domestick life, are yielded to us from as many various sources! And of the abundance, with which we have been blessed, we are enabled so to swell our exports, that in one year they have exceeded those of any sister state, and paid more

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(a) See note C.

than one-third of the national revenue.—Such is the state of Commerce, Manufactures, and the Arts.

5. Consider the *military prowess of the commonwealth.*

What ample preparations for defence against invasion! deposits, arsenals, magazines, fortifications, and batteries, with appropriate arrangements for arms and ammunition, and every species of warlike stores: here a harbour, deep, secure, capacious, as if designed to be impregnable: there an establishment for the education of officers that has been liberally patronized by the general government, and gives ample evidence, that it must long continue to send forth the pride of our armies, and thus become in its resources, what, during the struggle of the Revolution, it was in its bulwarks, a *strong-hold of Freedom.*

In the exigence of war, a militia of a hundred and thirty thousand may be called to arms; and with all the advantages of situation and supplies, crowned with the smiles of heaven, we may powerfully co-operate with the union to preserve inviolate those high prerogatives which the God of Nature has put into our hands; that our happy country, possessed of a firm footing on the land,

and on the sea, may assume the imposing attitude of the angel in the Apocalypse.

6. Consider the state of *Religion.*

The greatest liberty of conscience, consistent with the peace and safety of the people, is encouraged; and the professors of every creed are indulged in their national, sectarian, and individual peculiarities. Institutions, founded by the benevolent spirit of Christianity are every where fostered by the government: hospitals, asylums, alms-houses, dispensaries, and humane and charitable societies, for the benefit of all classes of the community, who may be contemplated in your respective objects:—*Sunday Schools*, combining with usual elementary instruction, the inculcation of religious principles; *Bible, Book, and Tract Societies*, publishing the Scriptures and practical religious works, at the cheapest rates, and distributing them gratuitously:—*Missionary Societies*, sending forth the associated blessings of the church and word of God; and, above all, places set apart for public worship, that are scattered over the whole face of the state; and in some cases by their magnitude and grandeur, and universally by their number and variety, proclaiming, not only along our shores, but throughout the interior, when on the recurrence of the Lord's Day, the notes

of a thousand pealing bells resound in our cities, towns, and villages, and among our mountains, hills, and forests, that we are indeed a people, who acknowledge the existence of an overruling Providence, and profess a belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My beloved brethren, the considerations which have been thus briefly suggested to you, are designed to aid your meditations; and, if properly regarded, they are so many indications of *the goodness of God*, for which, *as a people*, we should yield our best tribute of thanksgiving.

The blessings that we enjoy, we cannot claim as our right; nor can we command them at our pleasure. They are at the disposal of God only. It is in Him that we *live, and move, and have our being*. It is to Him that we are indebted for the endowments and faculties of our souls and bodies. For the very air that we breathe, we owe a debt of gratitude. But for the *mercy of God*, the noisome pestilence, as in times past, might have again stalked forth, to contaminate our atmosphere, and diffuse its taint around our persons, and through our abodes—terrifying, by its approaches, both man and beast, and shrouding the deserted walls of fashion, and the forum of commerce, in the silence and solitude of desolation.

Yes! it is the *mercy of God* that has restrained the pestilence; and, in its stead, bestowed on us every comfort and convenience that can be derived from natural advantages and resources; internal improvements; literature and science; commerce, manufactures, and the arts; military prowess; and all the social and personal blessings of religion.

It is our *Heavenly Father* that has given us health, friends, food and raiment; the knowledge and sense of our relative duties; the benign influences of the Spirit; and, above all, redemption from sin and eternal death, by the precious, unspeakable, all-glorious gift of his only-begotten son, our Lord and Saviour.

Oh! for the inspiration of the Psalmist! Oh, for an angel's lyre, a cherub's voice, a seraph's wing! Then would I mount to heaven, and, in the full vision of God's glory, I would, in all the transport of my gratitude, proclaim his praise. Adopting the strains of the sweet-singer, I would begin and end with "*Praise the Lord.*" Thus would I address my soul; and thus too would I invoke the sympathies of heaven and earth. I would employ the expressive word of the inspired original, and say, HALLELUJAH. It speaks the sentiment that occupies the courts

*above*; unceasing, choral, *heavenly* hallelujahs. The pious sentiment should warm the hearts of men *below*; and for their unnumbered benefits, they should give thanks, and answer HALLELUJAH. All that have life and being should join in the grateful tribute, until inanimate creation, that cannot *speak*, shall *echo* and *re-echo*, and the wide world resound one loud and universal HALLELUJAH.

## NOTES.

### NOTE A.

*"He maketh winds his messengers, and a flaming fire his train."*

This translation is offered upon the authority of the Jewish Commentators, JARCHI, and ABEN-EZRA. It is sanctioned also by JACOBI: (über die Psalmen, Jena 1796. p. 234.)

*"Du machst zu deinen Boten  
die Winde selbst, und brauchst  
zu deinen Dienst des Blitzes Strahl."*

Thus too MOSES MENDELSSOHN; (die Psalmen, Berlin, 1788. p. 246.)

*"Der Winde nimmt zu seinen Boten;  
Zu seinen Dienern Feuerflammen."*

The *Geneva French* version is the same: "Il fait des vents ses messagers, et du feu brûlant ses serviteurs."

## NOTE B.

To those, whose avocations allow them occasionally to enjoy a few hours for reading, and who desire to attune their minds to devotion, by contemplating the great goodness of God in the wonders of his Providence, two well-known and very valuable books may be particularly recommended :—*Paley's Natural Theology* ; and *Sturm's Reflections* ; a work, which appeared originally in German, and of which we have two good translations, one by the Rev. Dr. Balfour, and the other by the Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke.

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NOTE C.

In the year 1824,

The number of publick schools was 7,382

The children between 5 and 15 years, 373,000

The school fund, \$1,674,500

Much interesting matter, in relation to this subject, may be derived from the annual reports to the Legislature, by the *Regents of the University*.