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The Truth shall make you Free.—John 8: 32.

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Home-Talk by J. H. N.—No. 61.

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DAVIS'S 'SUPERIOR CONDITION.'

I feel inclined to criticise A. J. Davis a little. As I read his writings, I see he talks constantly about the '*superior condition*;' and if you examine thoroughly, you find that he professes to obtain his revelations and to have all his special insight, when in the '*superior condition*,' as he calls it. And that '*superior condition*' is not a permanent condition, produced by truth—by the victory of the spirit over the flesh, and moral and spiritual affinity with Christ and God; but it is a sort of fit—a pathological affair—a matter of the brain or nervous system, produced by causes that have nothing more to do with moral character, as I understand it, than sleep, or the causes that produce trance of any kind. He passes into the '*superior condition*' *occasionally*, and then he has splendid views of truth, and revels in the mysteries of the universe.

Now let us turn this thing over a little, and see how much this superior condition is worth—what it really amounts to. In the first place, it will strike any one at a glance, that it differs in toto from the superior condition that Christ

was in, and in this respect: Christ was *constantly* in his superior condition; i. e., he was constantly in a condition where he perceived things by the Spirit of truth, and was conscious of the will of the Father. There is no evidence that he was inspired by fits, or that he passed into some unusual state from time to time, to get his views of God and heaven, and to become a medium and mediator of truth. Whatever superior condition he was in, the whole narrative shows it was a *constant* condition. Now, what precisely is essential to such a superior condition?—i. e., a condition of receptivity towards God, that makes the person impressible to inspiration. What precisely is essential to such a kind of inspiration as Christ had? Plainly, nothing more or less than this: that his spirit should thoroughly prevail over his physical nature—that he should be really a spiritual being, in that sense of the word that the interior prevailed over the exterior—the spirit over the flesh. With that condition—assuming that his spiritual nature was the strongest, so that it controlled his carnal nature—then he was essentially in the superior or spiritual condition all the time; and it was not required that he should go into a fit in order to be open to God and the truth,

but he was open to them just as habitually as his lungs were to the air.

It is plain also that this condition—the predominance of the spirit over the flesh, which is the basis of permanent, chronic inspiration, in contradistinction from fits and trances—is not a pathological affair, not a thing that is wrought in the brain by such causes as produce sleep and intoxication. On the contrary, the essence of this condition is a *moral state*; it is a state of the prevailing of reason over sense—that which makes the superiority of a man over a fool or a brute, and changes an unbeliever into a rational, God-fearing man. I say there is where the very essence of that change lies—in what we call the second birth, or regeneration. Victory of the spirit over the flesh is regeneration, and is produced, not by physical causes, or in a mere scientific way, but is produced by obedience, submission to the will of God. And Christ puts his kind of insight in connection with this condition, in precisely the way I have placed it. He says '*If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine,*' i. e. if any man will do his will he shall have insight—shall pass into a superior condition, where he shall see the truth and know it—in other words, shall be permanently inspired. He connects this superior condition, with all that is heroic, noble and valuable in our characters, as persons that fear God and work righteousness.

In order to place a man in the superior condition, according to Swedenborg and Davis, and all that class of characters, you must first choose one that has the right temperament, and then magnetize him, or let some person put their spirit upon him; and if the case is one like that of Davis, he may pass beyond the ordinary conditions, and magnetize himself, or become subject to spirits altogether superior to himself. He may be magnetized by angels, or persons who have passed into the post-mortal state. Still it is all of the same nature. The thing must be done, according to these philosophers, as you would produce any

phenomenon in chemistry, by putting the right sort of materials together; and it makes no difference, necessarily, what the moral character is, except as it affects the persons' ability and disposition to attend to the matter, and give himself up to it. Righteousness, faithfulness, obedience to God, are no essential part of the matter; you may pass into the superior condition, according to this theory, equally well without them.

Whereas, we know that Jesus Christ, in his treatment of this subject, set men upon obedience to God—to find out his will, and do it. He set them on renouncing the lusts of this world—called them to forsake father and mother, houses and lands, and wife and children, and obediently give themselves up to the truth—and to seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness. These were the prescriptions that Christ gave, when he proposed to put people into the superior condition; and on these principles they did attain a superior condition, that was like his, permanent and chronic. They did not go into fits to find the truth.—Instances of the discovery of truth in a state of trance were very rare among them; and these occasions were entirely subordinate to that state which John assumes was a perpetual thing with them: '*Ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things, and need not that any man teach you,*' &c. And all of them were in this state; they did not have to pick and choose a particular temperament, or put them through a course of mummery, or place them under the necessity of shifting their state, in any such way as Davis talks about. It was the element they lived in all the time. They were in the superior condition as Christ was.

Davis says that when he passes into the superior condition, in which he can see every thing clearly, his spirit passes out of his body, as nearly as it can and return, and he passes into a state almost identical with that of the dead; and that when he returns into his body again, he can see nothing more than common

men. What does this demonstrate?—It demonstrates that his spirit has not overcome the darkness of the carnal nature—he is not able to see clearly in connection with the body. And the fact that he can see clearly in his trances, when he is withdrawn from the body, proves no victory at all. Suppose it true that Davis is able occasionally to pass into the state of the dead, and admit that they, disconnected with the body, are in a superior condition—a state of purity, if you please to call it, and blessedness, and clear perception: suppose this is true of the whole second sphere of disembodied souls—which is according to the general drift of Davis' teachings—and that he in his superior condition does pass into the state they are in—What then? Which way does the inference go? Shall we say, because they are pure, therefore he, in entering into their state, shows a real victory of the spirit over the flesh, and is in a really redeemed state, in the sense of being proof against evil and darkness? I think the proof goes the other way, and should infer that because his spirit, when it returns into the body, is not able to see and to soar, but its wings are clipped, and it comes under the power of darkness; and because, on the other hand, when it frees itself by a sort of fit from bodily consciousness, it finds no difficulty in rising to the clear perceptions of the second sphere: I say it is to be inferred that these spirits—the spirits of the second sphere—are no better than his. I am obliged to conclude, that put any one of them back into the body, and they would have no more control of themselves, no more power against evil, than he; they would fall into darkness and under the dull reign of mortality, just as he does. In a word, there is no victory of the spirit over the flesh in either case. That is my inference, and it is a pretty sweeping one.

We are not to judge at all of the value of spirits by seeing what they can do in a *clear medium*, but we must judge by seeing what they can do in the smoky at-

mosphere of this world. That will tell what is the amount and value of their attainments. I see that Christ could act clearly and well in combination with the body—he could work righteousness and be in constant victorious communication with God as a man in this world. For a spirit to pass into a state of clearness and peace, not by conquering the world, but by escaping from it, claiming only to find freedom and blessedness as it gets out of the body, is no test to me of the value of that spirit in real righteousness and improvement. I can conceive of the spirit of an infant, before it has come in much contact with good and evil, as innocent and pure in a certain sense, but is there any real reliable righteousness in infants? Not at all. We don't get that until we have received power from God to overcome the full strength of evil here, in combination with the body and in the face of the world, the flesh, and the devil. When a spirit in these circumstances has conquered, it then has a righteousness that will stand the test that is to come—it will stand the judgment. I assume then that the state of those spirits that Davis communicates with and represents, is at best no better than the condition of infants. It is true of them, as of him, that the spirit has not conquered the flesh; if they are ever to be saved, that victory is yet to be attained. Let their state of happiness and transcendental vision be as he says—(though it should be observed that he disagrees with Swedenborg about this, and Fernald one of his disciples has lately come out denying that the spirits of the second sphere are altogether so well off as he represents, and there is as much evidence one way as another;—) but take his description of their condition at par—I see no evidence, after all, that the spirits of that sphere have conquered the flesh. And if they have got the victory, not by conquering, but by withdrawing from it, they have not come into peace as Christ and the Primitive church did; and they will never begin to have fellowship with them, until they go back and do the thing over. Jesus Christ and

The Primitive church are the final standard—their experience is the perfect standard, which will judge all other; and their spirit will draw in and digest into affinity with itself all other spirits, or it will cast them out. Now, we are certain that Christ and the Primitive church, and all the spirits that are in communication with their sphere, have conquered in this very struggle of the spirit with the flesh, and fulfilled their obedience, not by going out of the body, but here in combination with it. They proved themselves able in all circumstances and all things to see clearly and do right.

Then, they have attained a strength of righteousness, thus defined, that in the process of judgment must bring all other spirits in by the same experience of faith and obedience as their own, or judge and condemn them. While the Primitive church stand, they will certainly judge A. J. Davis. The sons of God are more than common men all the time; and I say, the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ and the Apostles, will judge those that can be righteous and see the truth only by going into fits, or by passing out of the body into the state of the dead.

What is the final standard of righteousness? I think we can define it. Christ 'was made perfect through suffering; and being made perfect, he became the author of our salvation;' i. e., he digests us into himself. What was the precise perfection that he attained thro' suffering? He clearly defines it himself. He laid down his life for the church, according to the will of God. He set his face to go up to Jerusalem, clearly foreseeing and announcing that he was going there to die. He set his spirit to obedience, not only against all the briberies of the god of this world, but in the face of tremendous evil. There was a great strain of temptation of both kinds; there could be no greater;—but his spirit laid his body on the altar in obedience to the will of God. 'By the which will we are sanctified;' i. e., all who are sanctified

attain that same righteousness—that same will is put into them—they are perfected by being digested into that perfect life, so that their state is the same as Christ's, and they prefer the will of God to all the pleasures of sin, and are in condition to pursue it in the face of all the penalties the devil and the world can inflict. I say *the righteousness of the cross* is the nucleus of all righteousness, and presents the standard that will judge all. And a man, whether he is in the superior condition or inferior condition, in the body or out of the body, if he is not in this condition that carried Christ to the cross, he will not stand in the judgment.

This view of the contrast between the superior condition of Christ, and such people as Swedenborg and Davis, just indicates what is the actual difference in the tendencies, the practical tendencies, of the two systems. The main force of Swedenborg and Davis is laid out in wonderful manifestations, revelations, mysteries, &c., that are calculated to excite and gratify curiosity, stuff people with marvels, and puff them up with science; while the main force of Christ's presentations is to set men upon strenuous righteousness, obedience, training of the heart to the love of God; and the gratification of curiosity, the spreading out of magnificent marvels before men, is altogether avoided in Christ's practice. Their system is one that proposes to obtain all good by knowledge, science; and knowledge is only to be obtained in a state of trance, or by going out of the body—dying. We are to be saved they say, by a clear understanding of every thing; and can get this clear understanding only by leaving the body or going into fits. It is not to be obtained while in the flesh at any rate—that is an unconquered field of darkness. In the place of this, Christ's theory is that all good is to be obtained by *obedience*, and knowledge in the same way; and that knowledge is only valuable as it is a means of obedience and happiness. All good is to be obtained, not by the discov-

eries of our brain, but by receiving life that is better than our own; and all desirable knowledge is to be got at through the working of this life; and he teaches that this may be obtained in the flesh, i. e., without going out of the body. He set the example of it himself, and gave instructions by which multitudes did obtain it in that dark age. I confess I prefer Christ.

'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though I have all faith, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing.' What is charity? I say it is precisely the spirit of the cross—a spirit that cannot be obtained by knowledge, or by going into fits, or by dying. 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not, &c.; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' The whole tenor of this description, especially the latter part of it, shows you that charity is not the pleasant, serene state of mind that comes by getting out of the body. The thing that Paul describes, bears and endures all things, and thinks no evil, *in the flesh*, in the midst of all the things and influences that pertain to this life: you cannot do that by going into a fit. And these delectable, beautiful spirits that he converses with, there is no evidence that they are not like himself, destitute of this very thing. There is no evidence whatever, if they were to return to the body—to the 'all things' that charity is adapted to endure and conquer—no evidence that they would not despond, and go into something worse than fits. If so, they are candidates for judgment: no matter how many worlds they have visited, or how many stories they can tell, or how with the tongues of angels they may speak, if they have not the spirit that can stand in the midst of wrath and cursing of men and devils, they are not judgment-proof; the fire will burn their works, and displace their righteousness. The wooden box that you keep your money in, is good enough till the house begins to burn; it may be

a very pretty box, and sufficient in ordinary circumstances, but it will not stand fire. What you want is a fire-proof safe. We cannot get along in such a universe as we know this to be, without a fire-proof safe. I know of no fire-proof safe, but the one that Christ had—victory of the spirit over the flesh, regeneration, a permanent bent of the spirit to obedience, that neither angels, nor principalities can overcome—a will like that which carried Christ to the cross; and that we can get only *from* Christ, and in the way that he led the Primitive church—in the way of obedience, and not in the way of mere discovery and science. I counsel all to seek the superior condition, of the right kind, and in the right way; it is the only way to be saved.

But this system of sight-seeing—clairvoyance as exhibited by Davis—is saying to men what the devil said at the beginning, 'Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' It is the same old story. I don't see how you could manage better to mix up good and evil in one common essence so that they could not be distinguished, and make righteousness and sin seem all one, than by coming out with a revelation that a spirit passing out of the body, enters right into a state of happiness and purity;—that there is no personal God or personal devil; that out of this body it is all smooth.—The tendency of it is to make men feel that they need not concern themselves about the future state, and to encourage in them the very desperation of carnality—perfect abandonment to the lusts and pleasures of this world. For with such a view before them, instead of saying as of old, 'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die,' they would say, 'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we live. It is all good before us—we can't escape heaven.'

How much of all this seeing is really *true* nobody can tell—how much of it is reality, and how much of it is painting. For we don't know but they have the faculty in the spirit world, of presenting

things by what we may call painting; so as to make things appear just as real as in a panorama. Who knows but that they have the art of making panoramas? and if so, they may get up panoramas of worlds and planets, that with their practice in the art, would deceive the green ones. There is great artistic skill in the other world undoubtedly. They have learned there, to combine the panoramic art, with the theatrical, so as to have actual living performances, conversations, scenes, and every thing of that kind going on in their panorama. All those scenes that Swedenborg reports, and that Davis reports smell of paint to me.

SUBJECT CONTINUED—SECOND EVENING.

I will say a few words more about the superior condition, and will apply another test to Davis' fashion of representing it. If we are seeking the superior condition we want to get the right one, and not take up with any sham or counterfeit. I think it is very evident that there are different sorts, and some cheating in this as in other things.

Now go back to the very beginning of things, and you find that Adam and Eve, when first made, were in a certain condition as to perception, and after they sinned they were in another condition.—Which was the best? is the question.—The account is, that after they sinned *their eyes were opened*: there was a great expansion of their perception, or clairvoyance of some kind; and that was what Eve wanted. She desired the fruit to open her eyes, and bring her into the superior condition—make her clairvoyant. Now the question is, Which was the *superior* condition—the one they were in before this enlightening transaction, or the one they were in after it?—It is an interesting question. I think the circumstances connected with the two conditions in the account given, may determine for us which was the superior condition, and may be put as a pretty good test of Davis' pretensions to the superior condition.

It is observed previous to the fall, that 'they were naked, and were not ashamed;' and, after the fall, it is said they knew they were naked, and went to work and clothed themselves. Now which was the correct perception of things? which the right theory? in which condition did they see the truth most clearly—when they were not ashamed, or when they were? That will determine which was the superior condition. The result of their clairvoyance was, that they began to see mischief and indecency in the things that God had made. Their superior condition led them to see evil where they had not seen it before. Now which was the true state—their first simplicity, or the state of perception which led them to this discovery? I say they had the truth in their first simplicity, when they saw their bodies as good and lovely, and nothing to be ashamed of: that was the truth; but when they got their eyes open by eating of the tree, and fellowship with the devil, then they made a new discovery—found that God had made certain things evil, mischievous, devilish, and that must be covered up. Well, their discovery was no discovery at all; it was all a lie. So I say Adam and Eve were in their superior condition, and saw things more clearly, before they got their eyes opened by the devil than they did afterwards. They really came into an inferior condition then—a condition where they saw too much. If I am to go back into what is really a superior condition, I shall go back where I see things in the simplicity that Adam and Eve saw them before they sinned. I shall call it an inferior condition as long as I see any thing evil in God's creation.

The representation that worldliness in the sexual relation exists in the spirit world is enough to my mind, and to every mind that has not lost its simplicity, to demonstrate that the pretended discoverer is a quack, and has not, at least, seen the things that are next to God. In fact, I don't believe that any body can or will get their eyes opened to see

things as they are in heaven, short of understanding our social theory, in the breadth and depth of it. I don't know as I can put any better test of actual clairvoyance and claims of persons that they are in the superior condition than that question, How they look on the human form and the sexual relation? Do they see there the beauty of God?—what they can reverence and rejoice in? Do they see in the ordinance of the sexual connection a universal and eternal manifestation of the glory of God?—that every man stands in a paramount relation in the creation to universal woman, and that every woman holds the same relation to universal man, and that this relation cannot be absolved in any case, but is eternal? That I see clear as noonday; and I am bigoted enough to believe if a person does not see that, he thereby confesses himself not in the superior condition: he does not see things as they are at the center.

I have not the proper understanding to judge decisively in Davis' case, until I have read his writings, and he has clearly defined his position on this point, as I think he has not done; but I can judge Swedenborg decisively by these principles. It is the last thing on which spiritualists are likely to define their position, but it is the first thing on which they ought to. Now, we know perfectly well the way in which an inferior condition of the spiritual nature more or less obstructs clear perception on this subject; we know perfectly well that it is not possible for us to get clear perception on this subject, and rid ourselves of shame and exclusiveness by any superficial process. The trouble is not in our brain or pathological constitution; the difficulty in the way of seeing the truth is in the state of our love—the state of our life: there is the trouble. Persons run into exclusive love, and get their affections bent in that way, and it is impossible for them so see the truth until that love is crucified. The truth may be presented in double and triple demonstration, and may be hammered into

them; but until their life—their vital center—is crucified and made new, they will be dark and not see clearly. Your reason may tell you in a voice of thunder that there is no occasion for shame, but until there is a renewal of the inner man you will find yourself ashamed in spite of reason. So reason will tell you how perfectly foolish it is to love one woman or one man in a way to be distressing, and to exclude others from your heart; or to make you distressed if they receive others into their heart: reason may say so a thousand times, and yet you will feel in a way contrary to your reason; and in proportion as those feelings have strength and influence they will darken you, narrow your view, and prevent your forming any practical conclusions, except as you are compelled to by being steadily held to the truth by others. The spirit of idolatry in the world is actually a power of darkness, actually prevents a clear perception of God's things; and I shall not count any one in the superior condition till that power of darkness is destroyed in their hearts. There is no subject in respect to which it is so awfully difficult to exercise common sense and act it out as this. We know that we are tormented on all hands with not merely our own personal infirmities in regard to this matter, but tormented by spiritual influences from the unseen sphere. It is not ourselves merely, or the world around, that are to blame for the torment of false notions, shame and exclusiveness, that we suffer; it comes, to a great extent, from the principalities and powers in high places, that are conspiring to infuse and perpetuate false views and feelings on this subject. Now I take it that all the principalities of Davis' second sphere are tormenting us in that way, and that we are bound hand and foot, not by the world around us, but by the spirits in Hades. They are all bound on this subject, except those in the resurrection.

'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.' Christ and the Primitive church are in a sphere where they neither marry nor are given

in marriage—where they are naked and are not ashamed—where love is universal and eternal. It is from them we must seek clairvoyance; we must get into their superior condition. And the beings of all other spheres except where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, however much they may differ from the world in other respects, yet if they are alike on this point, they are substantially on the same level with the world. In respect to that which goes back of the fall, the real superior condition of man, they are mere worldlings. However much their character and condition have been changed, making them, if you please, entirely nondescript and unappreciable to us in every other particular, yet if they marry and hold wives, and live in the exclusive fashion of the world, they are just like people around us, as they have been ever since the fall. They are of the world in reference to that vital relation: their eyes are evil on that point, and they turn an ordinance of God into an ordinance of selfishness. I care not whether they are in the body or out of the body, on this planet, or in Jupiter, if they hold the old doctrine of shame and exclusiveness they are of the world, and I am called to come out from them. It seems to me that the power of darkness is right there—the exact boundary between the two principles is on that very point. When Adam and Eve got their eyes opened, darkness fell upon them; and all who have not rectified themselves there, are in darkness: the light that is in them is darkness, however magnificent it may seem to be.

A person looking through a magnifying glass sees things a great deal larger and nearer than with the natural eye. But is that person in a true condition of perception? Adam and Eve saw all earthly things a great deal clearer after their fall than they did before; but the question is, which is the truest and best, ordinary sight, or sight through a magnifying glass? There is life in the water which we drink; but is it worth while to see all the eels, dragons, &c., that we drink? What good would it do? People

that manufacture and sell water-filters are fond of shewing the living creatures that may be seen in water through a microscope. The devil has filters to sell, and so he is anxious to show all the awful things in nature through his glass. But the same condition that shows us earthly things through the magnifying glass, makes us see God and heaven through the other end, which puts them far off, and doubles the derangement.

I should derive from these principles this rule: that in order to get into the superior condition, we must come into communication with the superior sphere—and in that sphere they neither marry nor are given in marriage—they are naked and are not ashamed. We are sure of that from several trains of reasoning—from the declarations of Christ—from the original state—and from the nature of things. We are sure that in that sphere love is universal, and the love and modesty of this world are displaced. In order then to come into community with them, and attain the really superior condition, we must come out of the fashion of this world—out of shame and exclusiveness. How could we have fellowship with Adam and Eve as they were before they fell, in any way that is decent according to the fashion of this world? In order to do that, we must have our eyes closed so that we shall see no evil where they saw no evil.

I think we have given a pretty good test of the superior condition. Now for the means of attaining it. You may say that this state of enlargement and purity that will enable us to see things correctly in the paradisaical fashion must come as the result of our communication with the superior principality—and that on the other hand, our false state in this respect, forms a constant barrier to such communication. This is in some sense true, and yet there is approach and improvement, on this wise. Their influence on us at a distance brings us to some clearness of view in regard to this truth, and that brings them still nearer, and increases their influence. Thus the movement acts and reacts; they are moving toward

us, and we are moving toward them, and the result is not to be attributed exclusively to one or the other. Though the snow on the mountains contributes to prolong cold weather, yet the weather does get warmer, whether the snow melts on the mountains or not. So God's love acts on us, and will produce a change in us that will react again on him; and so the result will be produced that we shall come into full communication.

The Free Church Circular.

HARRIET H. SKINNER, EDITRESS.

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Correspondents will bear in mind that our Post-Office address is "ONEIDA CASTLE, Oneida Co., N. Y."

Mental Cultivation.

We are seeing more and more the value and benefit of a true cultivation of the mind. The spirit that God gives us by Jesus Christ, is not only 'the spirit of power and of love' but 'of a *sound mind*.' As the mind is the channel or medium through which truth enters the heart, we may regard it, by way of illustration, as bearing a similar relation to the heart in the spiritual man, that the stomach bears to the heart in the physical man. The food we eat is first received into the stomach where it undergoes a digestive process, by which the nutritious parts are prepared to enter the blood, and being conveyed to the heart, are thence distributed to all parts of the body. If the stomach is in a state of weakness, inaction, or disease, such that it is incapable of performing the office of digestion, the food which it receives will pass off without nourishing the body. So if the mind is in a weak, inactive, or diseased state, it is unfit for the digestion of truth. The truth that is presented or taken into such a mind, will only pass

through it without being dissolved (so to speak,) or conveyed to the heart and incorporated with the life.

Now it is by the right exercise of our faculties, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, that they acquire strength, and become capable of duly performing their functions. This principle is recognized by Paul, when he says, 'Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.'

Two things are manifestly requisite for the complete success of the gospel: first a 'good and honest heart,' as a soil for the word; second, a sound and well-ordered mind to understand and digest it. Where the first of these exists, the second will sooner or later follow. Hence Christ said in explaining the parable of the sower, that those who received seed into good ground, are they who in an honest and good heart having heard the word *understand* it, and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. We are exhorted to 'give earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.' It requires the same nicety of attention and power of discrimination to understand the gospel, that it does to do a difficult sum in arithmetic or solve any problem in mathematics.

A well disciplined mind is too often regarded as something to be attained only by a favored few—the peculiar distinction of professional and literary men.—But we believe it is within the range of

possibility for all who have the heart to seek it perseveringly. We do not expect to attain a cultivated *heart* at a single jump, but through a long course of attention and obedience to the truth. In like manner, *minds* that have run to waste, must be brought up from barrenness to a fruitful state, by patient cultivation. But the first step in order is to believe that our minds are susceptible of this training; that God designed that they should be under the control of the Spirit, and be trained to think and give attention in the right direction, and no other.—Who does not know that many spiritual distresses and diseases, can be traced back to some evil thought or imagination which entered the mind in an unguarded moment?—and who does not long for power over their thoughts? But to have every thought brought into captivity to Christ—which is only another expression for a well disciplined mind—is a prominent part of the hope of our calling. It is therefore certainly according to the will of God that we should have it before us as a definite object of pursuit.

Assuming that we write to those who have honest and good hearts, we exhort them to stir up the spirit of improvement that is in them, in the way of *cultivating their minds*. Any study that accustoms the mind to exact attention and application, and which has for its object the discovery and demonstration of truth, is valuable in this view. Such studies divert the mind from egotism, from attention to one's self, to the contemplation of truth; and thus induce a state that is favorable to inspiration. We feel free to recommend to all who value mental cultivation, to have some study on hand all the time, which requires patient plodding. Arithmetic, Geometry, Phonography, &c., are excellent studies to pro-

mote the object we have mentioned. There is something highly favorable to spiritual growth in the prosecution of some study which requires pains-taking attention. The common persuasion that persons who are past the age of natural youth, are too old to learn, we entirely repudiate; and we exhort all believers of the gospel to return to their beginnings, and commence the business of education, in the hopeful spirit of little children, yet with the purpose that 'in *understanding* they will be men.' S.

The 'Age of Reason.'

Sixty years ago, the infidel philosophers proclaimed the coming in of the 'Age of Reason.' They were full of enthusiasm about it, and Tom Paine wrote a book on the subject. I believe the Age of Reason is coming; but if we clearly define the idea, we shall see that the world were not then ripe, and that Paine was not the man to introduce such an era. The Age of Reason is the age when a man will not be abused for his inventions and discoveries. It has been notoriously the case heretofore, that new things—improvements in theory and practice—have met with opposition, and their authors, with scorn and persecution. That well known fact, demonstrates, that the Age of Reason has not come in any of the ages of the past. It cannot be said that the Age of Reason has really come, so long as truth has to fight its way against opposition and abuse, to the acceptance of the world. It cannot be said to have come, until there is freedom of spirit to accept and rejoice in new truth of every kind, from the highest sphere of spiritual truth, to the lowest mechanical. There is the difference between prejudice, and reason. Prejudice refuses to receive a thing, not because

it is unreasonable, but because it is *new*. Reason receives it as freely as it does the old, because it looks at its *truth*. Until any thing is accepted joyfully, whether new or old, because it is *true*, the Age of Reason certainly has not come. Look back to the age in which Paine lived, and you will see that there was then no preparation for this state of things.—Paine's own character, for one, was such as to preclude the Age of Reason. He himself, was a bigot; his spirit was not in a philosophical attitude, but was bitter and savage. Though he declaimed against bigotry in religion, he was himself notoriously uncandid towards the Bible, and things that he did not understand.

I believe as I have said, that the Age of Reason is coming. I can see that causes are working, and have been at work since Paine's time, that are fast schooling the world to reasonableness; and this change has been produced, not by ministers or theorists of any kind, but has been brought on by men educated in practical affairs, in the college of invention and practical truth. Men's minds have gradually worked into a state in which I can see plainly, that prejudice is very weak. They are coming to expect new things constantly now, and to feel that it is perfectly childish to treat them in the barbarous way the world has been accustomed to under the reign of prejudice, because they are new. There never was such a period of discovery as there is now; and men are learning to treat new ideas with respect and candor, however startling they may appear.

Paul prayed to be 'delivered from unreasonable and wicked men,' and in his case it is easy to see the propriety of it. At one time, forty men bound themselves together with an oath, that they would

neither eat nor drink till they had killed him; and this, not because his doctrine and course were untrue, but because they were revolutionary and new. He was dealing with a world of unreasonable men, under the full reign of prejudice and tradition; and the truth had to sail through bloody seas, to gain any foothold upon the earth.

I can feel very distinctly in respect to this country and England, that prejudice is falling away—that it has fairly had its teeth pulled out, and is growing old very fast. A spirit is taking the place of it, that will make any man feel safe in bringing out boldly whatever he has that is reasonable to present; and I acknowledge to the praise of God, that prejudice in particular, and in general, is being supplanted, and the world is becoming pretty reasonable. I think we shall not have to pray much longer to be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.—I think the progress of truth and discovery is destroying the power of prejudice and darkness, to a great extent. The unreasonable spirit in regard to slavery, it appears to me is turning right, and unreasonable and wicked men are being put down. If such a man as Greeley can keep his place in this country and in New York as a reasonable man, then we may safely say, that prejudice has lost its power, and the Age of Reason has begun.—*Home-Talk*, April 12, 1851.

A Shade for the Spirit.

I want to have Christ come between me and every creature. It is from the creature that all my troubles arise, and from the Creator that all my good flows. I do not feel competent to handle the creature myself, for every thing out of God is mischievous and dangerous. It is

not safe for me to stand on one side and deal with the creature, and to have God stand on the other side. I want Christ not only over me, but between me and all creation; so that I shall feel that all matter and spirit—all things that can affect me—all business and enjoyment that is creature-ward shall stand further off, and give place to Christ to come between me and them—so that I shall not be drawn away by them, but keep above them, and be able to use them in that clean way that Christ uses them. It is one thing to stand or walk upright on the ground, and use the earth, and another thing to crawl on the belly and get defiled with it. Christ's spirit is an upright spirit, and walks the earth without being defiled. The serpent crawls on his belly and gets defiled; the hog wallows in the dirt. Christ is a man who walks upright, with his head above all creation—above influences of every kind that go to attract in false ways—'Far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.' His head is in the clearness of divine majesty; and I feel that his spirit is accessible, and accessible to that extent that it can put me in the upright attitude, and make an end of my wallowing in the dirt, and enable me to walk like a man, with my head up, and keep clean.

It will not do to take in a small view of the matter, and seek to be saved from this and that bad influence. It is the whole creation that is working upon us like the power of gravitation, producing a sinking, clod-like tendency. The whole creation, in all its forms, tends to this. It touches us in a special manner perhaps, and brings that gravitation upon us through the specific passions of amativeness, alimmentiveness, acquisitiveness, &c.; but

these are only partial forms of manipulation. The whole creation is a great magnetizer, and I desire to wake up from the dream of creation & live unto God. That is the resurrection—to live unto God, and cease to be magnetized and deadened by creation. I feel that there is that in Christ that can give me this advantage over creation.

Creation standing by itself, and occupying the foreground of my thoughts, is a lie, the whole of it. We need not specify falsehoods and cheats in this thing, and that thing, in the ways of the world, and the subtilities of spirits: the whole concern out of which these lies emanate, is a lie, except as our back is turned to it and our face toward God. Turn the back toward God and the face toward creation, and the whole creation is a lie, and the father and mother of infinite lies. The whole philosophy that the world extracts from creation, with the face toward it, is a lie. The deepest conclusion that comes out of all that is seen, is, that mechanism—the working of material forces—is the principal thing, the one great fact of the universe. Well, that is a lie. Let any man take the regularity of the solar system as an expression of the deepest truth, as a specimen of the greatest facts, and he has a lie in his heart. When God "made the sun and moon to stand still" at the word of Joshua, that lie was detected. Let a man assume that fire is a fixed force, and the case of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego will prove his principle a lie. So a man may reason from the universality of death that it is a fixed force, and the cases of Enoch Elijah and Christ, will prove that a lie. Let a man turn his back upon God and read creation, and he will fill his heart with lies very fast.

Let us invite God to come in between us and every thing below himself. The

old doctrine is, 'Look through nature up to nature's God.' I want to see that reversed, and look through nature's God into nature. The eyes lie to us all the time, till they are reduced to the principle of truth. Your eyes tell you that you see me—but you do not see me with your eyes. What you see is not the life—the real being—the important thing in the matter, but only a covering, or semblance. New York is a great city, and you ask your eyes to report what there is there. They will tell you there are five miles of houses, and there are five hundred thousand men and women walking about, and docks and ships, and that is what makes the great city. But that is a lie: those things are only incidentals of the great fact that exists there. The fact is, there is a great mass of spirits living between two eternities, weaving the web of destiny for themselves and their children—weaving to a great extent lies, and going on to the judgment, in which those lies will be detected and exposed. This is the great substratum of truth about New York city, and the report of your eyes is false: it is a lie in this sense, that it is only a partial report—taken as a full report it is false. There is the great imposition that all creation practices upon us, attracting our attention as though it was the principal thing, which is not true. I pray God again to come between me and all creation, so that instead of seeing God through a glass darkly, and creation face to face, the thing may be reversed, and I may see God face to face, and creation through a glass darkly. I should like to be shaded from this glare—should like to have the shade of Christ's spirit always between me and the glare of creation.

We must get the receptive surface of our life so chastened by the astringent

properties of Christ's spirit, that it will not be in a gaping condition, ready to swallow every thing that offers; but will open itself to created good only when it is inspired to do so, and will have a proper faculty of selection and reception, and a power of digestion adapted to its reception; so that we can withhold ourselves from creation, and use it as we please with the discretion of Christ. Then we shall escape the torment of the involuntary working of passion chafed and excited by external things. This is the torment of life. Your houses are open, and you are exposed to unwelcome and troublesome visitors, that take up your time and abuse you. You want the privilege of retirement—to be able to command your own house, and have those who do come, come by invitation. Creation is intrusive; and easy, good natured spirits that are not chastened by Christ, are open to all manner of intrusions from it.

Life will be chastened by the spirit of Christ, and the truth of Christ. 'Sanctify them through thy truth.' Discerning of the real truth, so that it is pure and permanent in our minds, goes a great way toward chastening our desires. The mischief is that we mistake appearances for reality, and so cheat and poison ourselves. We desire real good, and when we are intelligent enough to know what is good and what is evil, we shall be in a chastened state. It is only when men are in an ignorant state, not knowing good from evil, that they choose evil. Beautiful appearances deceive us, only while we are *green* and liable to be deceived in that way, instead of seeking the reality. A man who is deceived by external beauty will cease to be deceived as soon as he comes to know what is under the cover of beauty. Many a snake is as beautiful as to color and symmetry,

as to the figures pictured on it—as a piece of ribbon. Ribbon is very pretty—but if you see a pretty piece of ribbon on the ground, and it turns out to be a snake, you will not be deceived but once, and you will hate it just in proportion to its beauty and power of deceiving. Well the whole creation outside of God, is a very great snake in general, and in particular. ‘This world is all a fleeting show.’ You may as well give it up, and not try to find any thing true but heaven; you will be cheated every time you try.

Christ is a physician, and he offers his spirit and life as a medicine and cure, not only of the heart but for cutaneous diseases. We must receive his spirit as a cutaneous application—not only receive his life into ours, but be anointed by him externally. The gravitation of Christ’s life is the opposite of that which torments us so. His life is always returning to the Father. I seem to see the Father sending it out, and the Son returning it to the Father: so that there is a continual radiation outward from the Father, and an equivalent converging radiation. There is a swift return of the life from its errand. It rushes back. It is sent out and pervades creation, and rushes back as swift as it went out. Creation is not our home; the bosom of the Father is our home, and we can go out on our missions in that spirit of swift return.—*Home-Talk*, Feb. 25, 1851.

Justifying the Truth.

We take great delight in the idea, that our only business is that for which Jesus Christ came into the world, viz., to bear witness to the truth. This reduces our responsibilities to a very simple thing: the ‘yoke is easy, and the burden light’—one that a child may carry. We are discharged from all care about our own salvation, and the thousand interests that commonly divide the attention. We are

to justify the truth, and give it place, and trust all our personal interests with that;—and it is a principle that our teacher early instilled into our minds, and which has been worth every thing to us, that ‘the truth is in favor of the best interests of every being’—that if we knew the whole truth we should not wish to alter it.

Two friends became associated in employment—their tastes and education were quite opposite; and they soon found themselves chafing, and slivers of disaffection working in, producing uncomfortable feelings, and tempting them to wish for a separation. But they knew there was a better way, and so they mutually agreed, not that they would give up to each other’s judgment, but that they would hold their own lightly, and let the truth come in and say what was right; they would stir up their loyalty to the truth, and let it carry away their personal feelings, and overrule their private judgment; and by this means they both had their own way, and enjoyed the process of harmonizing better than they would a state of natural agreement, because it was much more improving; they prized the circumstances that encouraged this constant reference to truth, and abnegation of self.

The purpose to honor the truth will cure the party spirit—one of the strongest excitements we are capable of. We do love to maintain any thing we are committed to; but we must get the feeling that we are committed to the truth and nothing else, and then we shall easily work out of prejudice and party feeling. When a person is in the judgment, looking over old accounts, and settling with the past, their best way is to go the whole for the truth, reckless of consequences; let their own justification go entirely, and seek to justify the truth: the truth will save their life if they will lose it for the truth.

We have found in our experience, in respect to overcoming any specific difficulty, that when we attain the point where we do not ‘offend in word’ about it—where we are saved from vain, insincere, or discouraging talk in relation to it, and have grace to speak the words of truth and soberness and faith, that the same is the point of salvation,

If this is the day of judgment, what is more appropriate than that we should take the character of witnesses for the truth, and

make it our business to uncover facts—facts in the gospel of Christ, in history, in the thoughts and intents of the heart?

CORRESPONDENCE.

Grand De Tour, Ill., April 20, 1851.

DEAR FRIENDS: Though a stranger, I take the liberty to address a few lines to you, and return my sincere thanks for your paper, which I have received the past year. I have had the privilege of reading most of your publications since you have been at Oneida, from which I have derived consolation and encouragement.

I believe that you have embraced the truth as it is in Jesus, and believing, I rejoice in hope that the day-star which has already risen, will shine on until superstition and bigotry shall be forever extinguished beneath its glorious rays. I have long felt a desire to enjoy with you the blessings and privileges of community life, to be watched over and guided by those who would be interested in my spiritual improvement, but at present I am alone. And yet I would not murmur; I know that God knows every trial I endure, and permits it; and will in his own time and way, release those who put their trust in him. I can claim the soul-cheering promise that 'all things shall work together for good to them that love God.' I love his righteous laws, and the people who are governed by them, and worship him in spirit and truth; and I often feel the blissful assurance that I share their sympathy and love, and that I shall not always remain a stranger and pilgrim, but become a fellow-citizen with the saints, and be united with the household of God.

Remember those that are in bonds as bound with them, and Oh, cease not to pray until the last yoke of oppression is broken, and the servant no longer is obliged to bow down in the house of Rimmon his master's god.

Yours in love, A. C. DAVIS.

Turin, March 25, 1851.

While reading the last Circular, the remark from an old friend in my native

town, 'that faithfulness on his part required him to make his own estimate of its real value to him, without being governed by the price \$1,00 for 26 Nos.,' the thought struck me, that it would be impossible for me to estimate, in dollars and cents, its real value to me; and if I could, my ability would forbid my returning a suitable compensation. I have often felt, while reading a few sentences, I have received that which, to me, was worth far more than the nominal price. As it is the only external communication I have with those with whom I am one in spirit, in my isolated situation, I feel that its weekly visits are precious indeed. Feeling indeed that the best return I can make is to aid others in enjoying the privilege of perusing it. I enclose a little of what the Lord has given me, wishing you to send the Circular to Mrs. Phoebe Moore Williamsburgh Mass. if she is not already a subscriber: if she is, do with it as the Lord directs.

Yours, &c., E. BARNES.

Putney, March 7, 1851.

DEAR SISTER: I think I have been advancing, though slowly, in the love of truth—my affections have been disciplined, and my rejoicing is more in God than in outward blessings. I feel that the affections of my heart center in God. I am daily encouraged with new hopes of being made every whit whole; that is, Christ is giving me victory over habits that have been a clog to my spirit. Reading the piece in the Circular on the power of habit, was a great help to me; it set home the transformations of character there must be in me, and in all, before they can become meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I rejoice in the favor of hearing from you weekly; I believe the truth you are freely offering will prove the savor of life to all who will receive it. Have we not reason to believe that truth is about to make a mighty conquest in the world? Will not thousands, ere long, see its superior excellence, and receive Christ as a whole Savior. How many are dissatis-

fied with the present state of things.—The state of the churches is the cause of much lamentation; violence and oppression are calling forth the sympathy of those who are desirous that truth and equity should reign in our land. We that have had our eyes anointed with eyesalve that we can see, and have been made willing to part with every thing else for the truth, now see clearly the folly of those who would impede its progress, or think to establish it in any other way than by breaking their allegiance to the devil. I wish to come out openly and decidedly, in favor of truth. I feel that the truth has made me free: why not use freedom in its defense? I feel that my strongest affections are enlisted in the cause of truth, but my surety of its final triumph lies in the declaration of God, that it shall fill the whole earth. Now we have a double source of rejoicing; we can rejoice even in the opposition truth meets with; for opposition calls forth investigation, and the criticism truth meets with will serve to establish it. God permits his word to be tried, even as silver is tried; but the more it is opposed, the more completely it prevails. So it was when Christianity was first planted, and the reestablishment of God's kingdom on earth, will not fail to rally every opposing power; but it is destined to prevail, and surely will. In this I do rejoice, and will be glad. We can look on, and see the present state of things, and rejoice; for we behold in it a prelude of bright and glorious days. Yes, we see the dawning of a glorious day, when Jesus Christ alone shall be exalted. He will then be acknowledged as king of nations, the benefactor and lawgiver of the whole earth.

In regard to the union I have with the Oneida Association, I feel it to be spiritual, and a source of strength and comfort. I can rejoice and be thankful for the daily and almost hourly proofs of my heavenly Father's care. I watch and note the evidences of his care which are visible, and doubt not but inconceivably greater are those which I am not capable

of recognizing. I think I should be benefited with faithful criticism. But I will endeavor to have a thankful spirit for the blessings God is bestowing upon me.

From your friend in the bonds of Christian love,
CLARISSA HOWE.

To Correspondents.

—We suppose that we do not need to apologize for not publishing invariably all communications sent for the Circular. Though we are far from being overrun with them, and wish to continue by all means our invitation to our friends, to exercise themselves unto edification, yet, of course, no one would advise us to publish any thing that in our judgment is indifferent, or for any reason unsuitable. We are all accustomed here to have our work criticised, and then *try again*; and we recommend this fashion to all the true-hearted, every where, in all things.

—Sometimes subscribers send us the names of persons, to whom they wish to have the Circular directed; and we do not always find those persons accept it as a favor. We should dislike, ourselves, to be bored with the visits of a paper that we had not invited; and prefer not to be guilty of the rudeness of annoying others in this way. So it would please us, if those who send names for the Circular, would first be very certain of its gracious reception, or else inform those to whom they wish it sent of their request. We are privately of the opinion that a *good appetite* is altogether essential to profitable reading, and have no disposition to urge those to eat who are not hungry, while we are glad to use all hospitality to those who are.

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