

THE FREE CHURCH CIRCULAR.

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

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The 'HOME-TALKS' and 'REPORTS' from Brooklyn, which compose so great a share of this paper, are contemporaneous, conversational lectures by J. H. N., discoursed in the freedom of the family circle, and reported for the benefit of the Association, and the readers of the Circular.

Home-Talk by J. H. N.—No. 65.

[REPORTED FOR THE CIRCULAR, MARCH 9, 1851.]

EGOTISM.

I compare egotism to a soap-bubble. Here is in the first place a drop of fluid—it is a homogeneous substance, and very small. You begin to blow air into it, and there are two substances now; the air inside, and the same drop of water encircling it. As you blow you get more and more air inside, but the water is the same as before, although it keeps growing larger, thinner, and more transparent. You blow and blow until there is a large body of air enclosed, and finally the bubble bursts. Remember that there is just as much water in the bubble the moment before it bursts and goes to nothing as there was at the beginning.

Now to run the comparison through, we will suppose a purely carnal man who has nothing to do with the spirit of God. His egotism is in a pure, condensed state, like a drop of water before any air is introduced into it. Well, he turns his attention to religion, and the spirit of God begins to come into him. I do not see but all experience goes to demonstrate

that the spirit of God in its first operation in the man does actually blow up egotism; as it gets in, the same film of egotism, the *I*, expands, grows thin, transparent, and almost imperceptible, so that it is actually greatest just before it breaks; the more the spirit of God gets into the man, the more he swells, and the more subtle, beautiful, and bewitching his egotism becomes, up to the point where it bursts. And the comparison broadly carried out, will lead to this: the man's state just previous to his actual crucifixion and identification with Christ, is worse than ever before. Egotism is larger—that is, the whole of the original drop of water is there, and is in a vastly expanded state, a state of subtlety and transparency that makes it far more attractive than when in its condensed form.

Well, with this platform to support our imaginations upon, don't you see that after one has been long exercised by the spirit of God so that there is a great deal of air inside, and he is thus blown up to the fullest extent of egotism, if then the judgment brings his spirit into the periphery outside of the inner element, into the surrounding film of water—do you not see what an awful judgment it would bring upon him? In

his perceptions previous, he has looked at the solid sphere—that is, at the combination of air, which is good, and the outside which is evil; and looking at the thing in that state he has a degree of self-complacency. But suppose that his mind is called off from what God has done for him, and from seeing the inside, so that he sees nothing but the film of egotism which surrounds it: I say *there* is the spot where he sees himself the most wicked.

I will state my own experience in confirmation of the view which this illustration presents. When I was first converted to the church, I received the Spirit of truth—the same spirit that is now upon me—the Spirit of the God of Israel, the God of the Bible; and it wrought in me good things for two and a half years. It worked out in me love of the truth—zeal for righteousness—and that to a large extent; so that a great deal of the time, and especially the latter part of it, I felt myself filled with the fruits of the Spirit. And yet when ‘judgment was laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet,’ as it was before I received Christ as a savior from sin, during the week before the bubble burst, while my eye was on the outside of the globe, I never had such an idea of the corruption and uncleanness of my spirit, as I did at that time. I saw that notwithstanding there had been a great deal of God’s work upon me, yet that there was an *I*. I felt as though I was the prince of devils; and appeared to myself wholly abominable. At that point, the bubble burst and went to nothing.

There is an example, in my own experience; and I am inclined to think that every one will sooner or later pass that point of experience. They will find that the spirit of God inside of egotism,

and combined with it, does not diminish its substance, but only expands and refines it, till it goes to pieces by the pressure; and that the man, as to actual character, is worst just previous to his becoming best. That is to say, if the process was stopped right there, and the character was fixed—petrified in this state of inflation, the man would be the worst possible, where he had the most of the Spirit of God, and the most of the works of God in him, short of the bursting of the bubble egotism. In that view, I should say that the man who is simply inflated by the Spirit, is worse than he was before. Then in another point of view, it is not so; because the nearer the man is to bursting the film, the nearer he is to being better; and considered as a preliminary state, he is nearest to the *best* condition possible.

I take it, that God’s way of saving men, is to inflate egotism until it bursts. I do not know as there is any other way to transfuse a man into thorough union with Christ, than by letting egotism work out its own destruction. And if the grace of God is pushing directly for the point of destroying egotism, and that is the best way, to inflate it as you would a bubble till it bursts, then it is the true way for us to consent to it, and help forward the result. I understand that God gives a man his Spirit, and lets him go to work and build up self-righteousness, till he has got such a sense of the *value* of righteousness, such a perception of the beauty of it, that when he sees that there is no righteousness in himself, his heart bursts—he passes out of egotism into Christ. And at the same time that we turn our attention when God calls it, to the folly and weakness of the egotistical bubble, we shall have to take care that we properly appreciate the interior

spirit that inflates it, and the works of God inside of it; and turn our attention to them so as to be contented with them, and not stake our peace upon the continuance of the bubble, but on the contrary, learn to drive at the same point that God is driving at; that is, to burst and destroy it.

Well, I know that there is a metaphysical difficulty in the way of egotism's annihilating itself. It cannot be done. We talk about a man's killing himself; but if you will analyze the idea, you will find it is not self acting upon itself—the identical thing acting upon itself—it is the spirit acting upon the body. The spirit cannot kill itself. The centre can act upon the circumference, but the problem is for the centre to act upon the centre, and that is something that is not done in suicide. There is the same difficulty in the way of egotism's killing itself, that there is in the eye's seeing itself; the thing required, is of the same nature that it would be for a man to lift himself by the straps of his boots.—Catch that idea in the vice of your mind and see if you can conceive of the centre, the real I, doing anything to itself. Can it be the subject of its own action? Is there not the same absurdity that there would be in my left hand's taking hold of itself? My left hand can take hold of my right hand, and my right hand of my left: but my left hand cannot take hold of itself. No more in the nature of things, can egotism in any way act upon itself.

Well, we call upon people to surrender their egotism, to repent of it, and clear it out; and in one view of the matter we are calling upon the *I* to take hold itself, and fling itself off: we are calling upon the man to lift himself by the straps of his boots. What do we

mean? We do not mean that absurdity. What do we mean when we call upon people to repent of egotism, and destroy it? I understand the meaning to be, that what individuals can do in the matter is to submit to the action of another being, and allow it to be destroyed. We do not call upon the man to pull his own tooth, but we ask him to sit down, and let another do it for him. We do not ask him to cut off his own leg, but we ask him to put himself in the hands of the surgeon, and to request the surgeon to bind him. We ask him to take into the account his power of resistance, and to ask the surgeon to mind nothing about his crying. We say that it would be morally impossible for a man to cut off his own leg, and probably impossible for him not to resist another in doing it, if he is left free; but he can put himself in the hands of one who will secure him, and so do it faithfully.

Well, this view of the matter reveals the necessity of salvation, and the grace of God. It shows the absolute impossibility of our saving ourselves. Somebody must save us. It brings to view the meaning of those texts which declare the purpose, and election, and sovereignty of God in the matter—texts such as this: 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.'

I do not know but this principle is, to a certain extent, applicable to Christ. He did not crucify himself: he put himself into the hands of the surgeon. He set his face steadily towards Jerusalem, and did not try to escape any thing; but from the time that he put himself into the hands of the Jews, and passed into the power of Pilate and Herod, he was spiritually passive. He did not crucify himself, and there evidently came a point in which his experience was what

he did not anticipate—'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me'—a point where, seemingly, he would have checked the operation, if he had been in his own power—a sort of *wondering* at least, if not dissent from the act of the Father. There was nothing rebellious in his feelings, but probably they were such as would have disqualified him for doing what was done there. It required the Father to do it. We may suppose that if his spirit was crucifying his flesh, & the whole man was dying, there was a point in the operation that he could not do himself. 'Through the eternal spirit he offered himself unto God.'

That, I know, is frequent experience, and one in which I find myself from time to time, when I am in front of suffering and sacrifice which I am conscious that I, personally and individually, am not qualified for; the most I can do, is to put myself into God's hands, and ask him to put me through it—there I have peace with him. He does not expect me to love that which is repugnant to my individuality, but he expects me to love the truth *more* than I love my individuality, and in obedience to the truth, to be willing to be put through every thing which the truth requires, without reference to my individuality.—Now it is not possible for me to love truth that is unfavorable to me, and which involves my reduction and suffering, as much as I would that which is favorable to me. God does not want I should; but he does want that I should love that which is unfavorable to me, better than I love falsehood; and that I should have reference to his mind about it, and not to my individuality; and choose that he should have charge of that truth which is unfavorable to my individuality, admitting that I am disqualified for admin-

istering it myself. God does not expect me to be very eager to find out my own faults; i. e., to go about it with the appetite that I would go about eating and drinking, and it is not possible—but he does expect that I will let him take charge of that, and be willing that he should show me my faults, and be willing to see and love the truth about my individuality above all things. There is a proper distinction between the term individuality, as I use it, and egotism. Individuality remains after egotism is dead. Christ had individuality which made him shrink from suffering. Paul's individuality was manifest in his beseeching the Lord thrice that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him. God did not find fault with him for his praying, but he did not consider him qualified to administer in his own case: he reserved the right of administering upon it himself. I don't think it tends to candor in us to try to get rid of our individuality, and set up a theory that all truth is equally palatable to us. It is a suppression of what is inherent in our nature; and if we do suppress it there will be manifestations of it. It will still continue to act, and so breed hypocrisy.

Well, H— says there is something hard in his spirit. I should apply all that has been said, to that hardness, and think of it as a film of the bubble. As you now see it, it covers the whole sphere, and it is a damnable thing which alloys and renders in a sense worthless all that is past. You see it working in all that is past. Well, I would say to myself, that film must give way—it never can and never will destroy itself, and the only possibility of its being destroyed is by the mercy of God. And there comes in the mercy of God. If he left you where you are, you would be the worst character you ever knew. So you are at

the mercy of God; and although you cannot destroy your own egotism you can submit yourself to the mercy of God.— And truth will bear you out in believing that God is at work upon that very thing now, and will wear it out. It is a process that requires time; and the fact of the revelation of it, shows that he is operating upon it, and he is able to burst it; but it will be more and more hateful until it does burst.

We are at the mercy of God; and it will not do for us to allow all the labor we are having among us to excite us to our proper action, to hide from us that truth, that we are at the mercy of God; that if we do turn the machine, the influx is to a considerable extent, governed by something higher than any mere law—by an intelligent, living will. And the best operations of the divine electricity, do not come by turning the crank. 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' A woman cannot have a child by herself—she cannot have a child unless some man chooses to cooperate with her. And certainly the begetting of that within our souls which makes us sons of God, is not inferior in dignity to the production of natural children. We cannot beget ourselves to eternal life, and no man can beget us to eternal life. 'Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God.' That throws out in the first place, natural birth—not born of blood: in the second place, it throws out our own purposes—not by the will of the flesh: in the third place, it throws out man's agency—not by the will of man, but by the will of God.

The Judgment-Day Principle.

'Every man shall be rewarded according to his works.' This is the principle of the market, and the principle which governs every thing. If I meet with bad butter in the market, I do not go back to inquire how it became so. The people who made it may have a thousand excuses; but that matters not to me. I cannot buy bad butter, and I take the thing as it is, without going into the causes of its character. This is the way we deal with each other, and it is also the way that God deals with us. He will set to work to save us, if there is any thing good in us, but he will not take bad butter. 'Every man shall be rewarded according to his works.' No one will be allowed to say, the devil, or society, made em thus and so. If society, or any of the members of it, have perverted me, that is one of the things they will have to answer for—it is among the works that *they* will be rewarded for.— But that will not remove the fact that I am perverted. God will take me for just what I am worth. If I am not good he will not say that I am good, because some one else made me bad.

It is very important that every body should get themselves established upon this ground, remembering that there is a right, and a wrong way, of looking into the causes of evil. If we look into these causes by way of throwing the blame upon others, and justifying ourselves in an antinomian spirit, it is just as though we should make bad butter, and try to sell it for good, by pleading our bad luck. If we look into the matter with a view simply to ascertain precisely the cause, that we may remove it; this is right and good. But bear in mind that whatever may be the influence of others, and however

great our sympathetic tendencies, however open our susceptibilities, God will take us as he finds us; and 'every man will be rewarded according to his works.' Every item of behavior—every action of the spirit, even in the darkest hours of the night, has its proper result and reward: they are all laid up in the archives of God's memory, and will have their appropriate judgment.

The system of *trade* calls into exercise a principle that is very necessary in a right sort of character, and faculties that are very important in our dealings with God and with ourselves, in preparing for the day of judgment. The principle that I refer to, is that of *rigorous estimation of things according to their real value*. The inducements of trade set the seller upon exaggerating the value of his articles, and covering their defects. But this produces a reaction in the other party, and the tendency of the buyer is to underrate and set things below their proper value. He is at least under constant inducements to look into things and see that they are good; and to pay no more for them than they are really worth. The reaction is a good one to this extent, and ought to be cultivated in every body. The exaggeration only, on both sides, should be discouraged. I think there is a large class in a medium position, who in the strife of trade, attain to a correct estimate of the reality, and learn to refuse all gaseous representations. They learn to look into things with precision, and estimate them exactly. They learn to say No, to all inducements to deceive themselves. That is the spirit that God wants to see cultivated. It is of great value; and the school of trade with all its evils, is I think educating people in this line—breeding dogged adherence to the truth. I think

there are those in the school, merchants and book-keepers, having a basis of honesty and principle, who are bred to great power of adhesion to the truth, and great ability for looking into the reality of things, and resisting the deception of appearances. The principle of the day of judgment is, that 'Every man shall be rewarded according to his works;' that is, according to his actual work. This is the manner of estimating things, that is cultivated in trade. Men of business do not apply these principles to their relations to God and the day of judgment; but they will have to do so at last. The same person who now insists most rigorously on taking things for no more than they are worth, will at the same time go before God, and, acknowledging himself worthless, ask to be taken on the ground that he is not to blame, but has been unfortunate and cheated by the devil. But such persons will find that God has the same adhesion to truth and the same integrity which they admire in worldly transactions, and will take them exactly for what they are worth.

If you say that principle cannot be true of things before the day of judgment, in the dispensation of mercy and grace, I say that it is true even now. You come to God and say you are worthless—that all your works are evil, and there is no good thing in you; and ask him to accept you. Well, he does accept you, but observe, not according to *your* estimate of yourself. He sees that there is something good in you, and his acceptance of you is therefore a fair business transaction. 'He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.' Why? Because he saw *material* in it that was good: and raw material is good, as well as the manufactured article. It has not the *same value as the manufac-*

tured article: raw cotton is not worth so much as manufactured cloth, because you cannot wear it; but still it has a certain value as raw material. So men have a certain value even as sinners, and in the day of judgment they become a manufactured article. In the beginning God pays for them as raw material. It is a fair business transaction from beginning to end. There is no cheating one's self in it—no legal fiction about it.

This view of the matter puts salvation on very satisfactory ground. When we first come to God, we see that we are worthless, and deserve destruction; and that is the best estimate we can put upon ourselves. But we offer ourselves to God, and he accepts us; not however on the ground that there is nothing good or valuable in us. While there is no deception on his part—no covering up of facts in a deceitful way, at the same time he knows us better than we know ourselves, and sees that he can make savable beings of us. If we are valuable to him, then *his* hope is ours; and we enter into sympathy with it, and expect to become worthy of him, and acceptable to him. That kind of hope is not founded upon anything we have done, or expect to do, but is founded upon God's expectation for us, his love toward us, and is a stable one. If our hope is founded upon our own perceptions of our past works it is liable to be beclouded; but if it is founded upon God's perceptions of us, and his love covering us, then it is an 'anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, and that entereth into that within the veil.'—*Home-Talk*, Jan. 15, 1851.

Woman's Dress.

The following sensible remarks on Woman's Dress, we cull from a communication in the *Water Cure Journal*.

"If the man who lives to dress, instead of dressing to live, has neither wisdom, dignity

nor honor, then why not so with woman? Pardon the frequent use of the word Woman. It is a good old-fashioned term; an especial favorite of mine, though now so fallen into disuse, that a modern minister 'is said to have said' in a sermon, that the '*ladies* were last at the cross and first at the sepulchre.

But to the point—why man's apparel should be plain, simple, durable, comfortable, the same suit fit for all times of day, and all sorts of occasions, and woman's the opposite of all this, is to me a mystery. *His* will endure sunshine and showers, without material injury. Hers is often well nigh 'ruined' by exposure to the dews of heaven, or the smiles of a cloudless sky. One protects the *wearer* from the weather,—the other the *wearer* must protect from the weather. What a damper on one's 'feast of reason and flow of soul,' to be in a constant 'worry' lest your fancy silks, perhaps purchased at a cost you could ill afford, shall be spoiled or soiled on their first excursion of pleasure.

Many seem to fear that the beauties and graces of the sex will vanish like the 'morning cloud and early dew,' and in their place only a gross affectation of manliness, if she attempt any radical reform in dress, or engage in any avocation hitherto peculiar to man. The fact that woman's dress is frail, inconvenient, unhealthful, a tax on her time to make, put on, change, &c., and men's the opposite of all this, it in nowise follows that, to improve her garments, she must adopt his entire.

Another evil, is that of keeping such a vast amount of clothing constantly on hand. It all demands care and must be looked over and over, to select the dress most suitable for the time, and then, from a host of trimmings, some must be culled to match the dress and the occasion.

How one can want half a dozen dresses for cold weather, and a dozen for warm, is to me a great mystery. Surely one would think with Mrs. Swisshelm, that one would want a fire to relieve an overstocked wardrobe occasionally, if there were no other way of getting rid of such a nuisance.* Let one have a suit for the season always at hand, always in rig, and then one can be ready to obey any summons on short notice. Let it be of some durable material; for it not only costs money to buy, but that which is still more pre-

* A holocaust of this kind, has been seriously meditated in the Association, and is not at all unlikely to occur yet, in the case of the bandbox trumpery that proves inconvertible into every-day, work-day, play-day use. And actually, one of our members, in a spirit of righteous zeal against an influence that was beguiling some of the young from their simplicity in dress, took the richest dress she had, and committed it to the flames in their presence, with most decided effect. Fire is a great purifier, and burnt offerings are acceptable. (Ed.)

scious, to select, to fit, to make. Then one feels so much more at ease, and at home, in a garment that you are familiar with. To me a dress is like an old friend, the longer worn, the dearer it becomes, until, like some other faithful, but well nigh worn out servants, it is still cherished for the good it has done.

Among the labor-saving inventions of this age, pray let one appear in the shape of a suitable attire for woman.'

The wish expressed in this last paragraph is one no doubt, which thousands of women in our land heartily sympathize with. Why then should not the 'Woman's Rights Conventions' which are becoming so frequent and enthusiastic, take up the subject of Woman's Dress; her right to freedom from the tyranny of fashion—her right to consult nature and comfort—her right to be something definable by a better characteristic than 'an animal fond of dress.' There is, at the present moment, we believe, a convention of Woman's Right advocates, at Akron, Ohio. We humbly think, that if they would leave the vexed and *verring* question of equality with man, the right to vote, &c., &c., and aspire to fit themselves for companionship with man in all noble undertakings, by throwing off the tyranny of Fashion in dress, and the insincere etiquette of Society, they would exercise an undisputed *right*, and strike a blow for freedom, that would lead to 'loosing every band, and letting the oppressed go free.'

c.

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HARRIET H. SKINNER. EDITRESS.

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The Chosen People.

We think it is quite a natural and general impression, that after God delivered the Jews into captivity, and along at the time when their history in Scripture closes, he dropped the special relation to them which he had held before. The

ark of the covenant was gone—prophet and seer were no more—they were at the mercy of the Gentile power; and we are apt to think, that at the same time God withdrew his special interest and labors from them, and their history was after that probably too unimportant for record. But we believe that God had a continuous purpose to educate the Jews, and prepare a soil for the seed that Christ should bring, and so we are sure that whatever change of policy he adopted from time to time, he continued his labors with the same interest, and trained them with suitable discipline to the last. As was said in a late Home Talk, he suffered the *show* of power to pass into the hands of Gentile kings—gave them the charge of external governments; but he had the higher object in view, of putting the Jews to school, and evolving a spiritual kingdom from them, which he faithfully pursued till the time of Christ. And we suppose that the secret history of the Jews, from the captivity to the time of Christ, would present as great a display of God's presiding power and wisdom, as any thing previous; only that the nature of the operations would be found more spiritual and interior.

With these views, we were much interested lately in reading in 'Milman's History of the Jews,' a description of their spiritual state, at the interesting period when God's special dealings with them, ceased to be reported. We regard the facts in a very different light from what the historian does; understanding from them, that God had fairly accomplished what he designed from the beginning, the object of separating out the Jewish nation from all the world, curing them of idolatry, and attaching them to his law, so that they were ready in a peculiar manner, to be put to school for a

more interior course of lessons. The effect of their captivity seemed to be to disengage them from every thing that diverted their attention from God. At the time of Christ's appearance, the nation were comparatively spiritualized—in a state as much more elevated than the rest of the world, as God had taken more pains with them. And it was necessary that 'the way of the Lord' should be prepared. It is true that the generation which crucified Christ exceeded in wickedness, but at the same time the element of goodness which it contained was equally unprecedented, and if the heaviest curse was visited on that generation, so its glory is unrivalled—the hundred and forty four thousand that were sealed then, will forever excel in brightness.

The passage to which we have alluded in 'Milman's History,' is the following :

"The jealous and exclusive spirit, which induced the Jews to suspect, or at all events to repel the advances of their neighbors, if not their kindred, is scarcely reconcilable with the mild and liberal rules of conduct towards the stranger resident in the land (from which the proscribed race of Canaan were alone exempted,) contained in the Mosaic law, as well as in the prayer of Solomon on the dedication of his first temple. Yet this was one indication of that singular alteration in the national character of the Jews, which displayed itself after their return from the captivity. Prone before, on every occasion, to adopt the idolatrous practices of the adjacent nations, they now secluded themselves from the rest of the world, in proud assurance of their own religious superiority. The law, which of old was perpetually violated, or almost forgotten, was now enforced by general consent to its extreme point or even beyond it. Adversity endeared that, of which in prosperity they had not perceived the value. Their city, their native soil, their religion, became the objects of the most passionate attachment.—Intermarriages with foreigners, neither forbidden by the statute, nor by former practice, were strictly prohibited. The observance of the sabbath, and even of the sabbatical year, was enforced with rigour, of which we have no precedent in the earlier annals; even to the neglect of defence in time of war. In short, from this period commences that unsocial spirit, that hatred towards mankind,

and want of humanity to all but their own kindred, with which, notwithstanding the extent to which they carried proselytism to their religion, the Jews are branded by all Roman writers. Their opinions underwent a change no less important; the hope of a Messiah, which had before prevailed but vaguely and indistinctly, had been enlarged and arrayed in the most splendid images by Isaiah, previous to the fall of the city; it was propagated, and even the time of his appearance declared, by the prophets of the exiles, Ezekiel and Daniel; it sunk deep into the popular mind, and contributed no doubt, to knit the indissoluble tie of brotherhood, by which the Hebrew people were held together more closely. National pride and patriotism appropriated not merely the lofty privilege of being the ancestors of the great deliverer, but all the advantages and glory, which were to attend his coming. In whatever form or character they expected him to appear, king, conqueror, or even God, in this the Jewish race agreed, that the Messiah was to be the king, the conqueror, the God of Israel.

From this period likewise, the immortality of the soul, and the belief in another life, appear more distinctly in the popular creed, from which they were never perhaps entirely effaced, but rested only on vague tradition, and were obscured by the more immediate hopes and apprehensions of temporal rewards and punishments, revealed in the law. But in the writings of the Babylonian prophets, in the vision of dry bones in Ezekiel, and the last chapter of Daniel, these doctrines assume a more important place; and from the later books, which are usually called the Apocrypha, these opinions appear to have entered fully into the general belief. They formed, as is well known, the distinction between the Pharisaic sect, the great body of the people, and the Sadducees, the higher order of free-thinkers. In other respects, particularly in their notions of angels, who now appear under particular names, and forming a sort of hierarchy, Jewish opinions acquired a new and peculiar colouring from their intercourse with the Babylonians. [Book 9.

Not our Own.

A person will find relief from temptations and darkness, just as soon as they can raise a sincere consciousness that God owns them. The power of Satan has full sweep toward us when we get out of that idea, but it cannot follow us behind a simple and sincere acknowledgment that we are not our own, but are the

property of God. For if we are not our own, we have nothing of our own to care for: if we are God's property, he has placed us in our present circumstances to look after his things, and we have no concern with any thing else. In this position, taken with right apprehension of spirit, the evil one cannot touch us. Suppose he comes with the suggestion that I am in difficult circumstances—surrounded with evil that I cannot cope with, and that I must succumb; or even if he comes still nearer, and attacks me with accusation, and blackens everything in my inner experience as well as in my circumstances, I answer, if this is all so, I cannot attend to it; I am not my own, but belong absolutely to another; and I have no power to leave my owner's business. The suggestions would be exceedingly pertinent if I belonged to myself, and I should feel bound to look at them; but as it is, they are no more to me than they are to any body else: you must go to my owner.

This acknowledgement of God's right in us, turns every way against selfishness, and raises us into the liberty of seeking only the things which are Jesus Christ's. It is as valid and effectual against discouragement and accusation, as it is against pleasure-seeking. If God owns me, his interest is pledged to take care of me. I know that he will not place me in circumstances that are too strong for me, and so endanger his own property. 'No man shall pluck them out of my Father's hand.' And the consciousness of this relation to God, while it narrows my responsibilities to the simple one of doing his will, also invests me with perfect assurance against all circumstances that would interfere with this end.

Further, my owner has a right to give

me such experience as he pleases; and I have no more occasion to turn aside and occupy myself in adjusting that, or disputing with the devil about it, than I have to do any other private business. The devil's object is gained, if under any pretense he can call us away from our business, and make us resume possession of ourselves. The egotism in which he works this result, frequently takes the form of conscientiousness and improvement-seeking; but even our own improvement is subject to the great principle that God owns all things, and must be followed in the spirit that seeks the things that are Jesus Christ's. Otherwise it is a disguised effort of egotism to maintain itself, when it is God's purpose to cast it down. A person who is in a perpetual fret about their own state, as well as one who is self-satisfied, will make no improvement. Both of them are seeking their own, and forget that they are owned by another. The highest assurance that we have of perfection and eternal rest, is in this fact; and to always realize and understand it, is a sure way out of trouble. G.

Philosophy of Non-Resistance.

No. 2.

It will be a great help to us in attaining to the patience and heroism of Christ, to understand the *reason* and *spiritual philosophy* of his non-resistance, and look into the meaning of this long patience of God, and endurance of Christ. We are tempted to ask, Why are we not saved quicker? and what this long process of labor and strife with the powers of darkness means? We see there is no question but God *might* take us right out of the world—no question but that he could immediately destroy our enemies all round about us, and set us on high above

all fear of them ; and we are apt to rather wonder in our hearts that we are required to submit so much and so long to the devil's works. We see ground for the terrible temptation which came on the Primitive church, when some raised the question, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' I want to do justice to God in this matter, and understand him, and not lay the long-suffering and endurance of the church to his want of resources, nor to his indifference and slackness, but perceive distinctly that he has a good end in view. When we see what his object is, we shall heartily cooperate with him, and endure with patience and submission, all that falls to us.

In the 2d of Peter, 3d chapter, the apostle labored on this point, seeking to establish the hearts of believers, in the endurance of the sufferings they had to go through ; and his reasoning is, that they should 'account that *the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.*' This season of endurance of suffering on the part of those who belong to God, is for the salvation of man. God is not straitened in his resources, but his eye is on the salvation of many ; being not willing that 'any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' It is simply then, an expression of his benevolence, and of his desire to *save* as many as possible. 'The long-suffering of God is salvation.'

To begin with Christ. It is perfectly evident that his sufferings from first to last, were voluntary ; and so far as he was concerned, there was no sort of necessity for them. In the first place, there was no need that he should have come out of heaven. In the second place, after he came out, he might have been king of the world—God's omnipotence was at his disposal ; and much more he

could have protected himself in the common enjoyment of life. He said, 'no man taketh my life from me ; I lay it down of myself.' His death was the last act of endurance and submission, and was a specimen of the whole ; it was not a forced act at all—he could have called upon the armies of heaven, and swept his enemies with the besom of destruction. Why then did he submit to all this ? I think we can understand why ; and if so, why there was so much suffering and endurance in the Primitive church, and why such things are going on now. If we can find any ground why that submission was profitable and rational, so that the Son of God *chose* to go through it, we can become ourselves contented with it, and sympathize with him in the intelligent patience he had.

I want to analyze the idea, and see how the 'long-suffering of God is *salvation* ;' for there seems to be the secret of it. It appears that while there was no necessity of Christ's getting into this situation of suffering and difficulty, and no necessity of his remaining in it, or submitting to the abuse of the world, in itself considered, yet there *was* a necessity of his suffering all that he did, if he would *save men*. If the simple object had been to destroy the wicked, to ruin the devil and all his works, that could have been done without protracted and extreme suffering on the part of Christ. There was physical force enough in God, to destroy the world as he once did, by a flood. He could have made an end of the devil's power by a blast of his breath ; but that was not his object. His object was, as we may say, to disembowel the devil, and get the souls of men out of him. 'The son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'

Now in order to understand the neces-

sity of suffering, for the accomplishment of this purpose, we must remember that men are identified with the devil, and that salvation is a state of love towards God which cannot be effected by physical force, but can only be brought about by *attraction*—by a seizing of the attention of man until he gets an intelligent view of the character of God. ‘One man can lead a horse to water, but ten men cannot make him drink.’ The point in this case is not to lead the horse to water, but to make him drink. The object to be gained is, to get at man in his brutal state, full of the devil,—under the control of his spirit and power—and dealing with him as an intelligent being, open his eyes to see the beauty of God, and make him drink; and that thing cannot be done by a blast of God’s wrath, nor by physical force in any shape or form. How then can it be done? The only way is, for Christ, the representative of God, to introduce himself into the very midst of the devil’s habitation, and paying no attention to the devil’s hostility, direct the whole magnetism of his life, to seizing the attention, and attracting the love of his victims away from him. After getting admission into the house of the tyrant, for him to devote himself to quarreling with him, and make that his business, would spoil his game; for in that attitude, he could present nothing to the victims which would attract them and make them sympathize with him and God. Their sympathies are with the devil, and as they are identified with him, they feel every blow that falls on him. Christ’s point after he gets into the habitation of these victims, if he means to save them, is to get access to their hearts. Now supposing that there is, as we see, a spiritual necessity that Christ should get into their hearts, and

make them love him, then it is absolutely necessary that he should go into that habitation in an attitude of non-resistance, and excite their pity, and melt their hearts, by submitting to every thing that the devil can do, and convince them by every possible means, that he is after *them* in all the fullness of love. In that view, we can see the necessity of Christ’s sufferings, and can see that ‘the long suffering of God is salvation.’

Salvation is a thing effected not by violence, but by *baiting*. Suppose, as the story is told, a fisherman should get out of patience with his bad luck, and should thrust his rod into the water saying, ‘Bite, damn you!’ Would he catch any fish? If the object is to destroy the fish, there is physical force enough in the man to thrash them; but if the object is to catch them, the man must rely for success, not on force, but on attraction: he must drop in his bait, and manage it so that the fish will bite of their own accord; and even after he has hooked one, if it is large, he will have to manage skilfully to get it out of the water. In saving men, there are just such conditions required as in fishing—patience on the part of the fisherman, and good bait. If men are to be saved, i. e. put in motion towards God, of their own free choice, from a perception of the beauty of God, which is salvation, some one must perform the function of bait, as to hanging in the water, and on the hook, waiting for the fish—some one must have the patience and heroism, non-resistance and endurance, necessary for that operation.

It is the praise and glory of the cross of Christ, that Christ was not under any physical necessity whatever, to do what he did, but simply under the necessity of love. He went to work and submitted quietly and patiently to the conditions of

the work he had undertaken. He submitted to be suspended in the depths of the diabolical abyss, as bait for men, manifesting the love of God, unresisting in the midst of exciting appeals to his combativeness and whole sensitive nature, following his reason and carrying out faithfully the calculations previously made for him by God, even unto the death of the cross. Entirely disregarding the appeals to self-assertion and combativeness, the whole voice of his soul in that terrible crisis, was love to men. 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' He was then in the presence of two parties; one including the devil and the whole reprobate spirit, and the other a party of good and honest hearts, victims of the devil, and for the present identified with him. They were all for the time being unjust, but Christ died for the unjust; 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.' He says to himself, 'There is no one to thank me at present, for what I am doing, but I will carefully see to it that I do not quarrel with one party, in order to save the other.' If he had gone to quarrelling with one party, as it was perfectly natural he should, he would have lost the whole. This is illustrated in the parable of the wheat and tares. The man's servants said unto him, 'Wilt thou that we go and gather the tares?' but he said, 'nay; lest while ye gather the tares, ye root up the wheat also.' There was the patience of Christ. In his crucifixion and suffering, he was determined not to quarrel with the devil, but submit to all that he could do to him, in order to save his captives. There is his continence and self-control, and his subjection of passion to true reason.

Now, passing from Christ to the Primitive church, 'through much tribulation they entered into the kingdom of God.'

You may say that all they suffered, was necessary to their education; but I do not know as it is right to lay all their experience to the necessities of their education; for 'Christ, though a son, learned obedience by the things that he suffered;' yet no one will say that his education was not good enough before. He was a glorious, blameless spirit, and might have been the glory of heaven forever, if he had never come into the world; so that his education in the world was, so to speak, a work of supererogation, not necessary to his perfection and glory. He said, 'for *their* sakes I sanctify myself.' His sufferings then were not necessary to the perfection of *his* character, but only necessary with a view of saving men.—Something of this kind may apply to the Primitive church. I am by no means certain but there was a circle in that church, who had thoroughly submitted to God, and if God had taken them out of the circumstances which were continually soiling them, they would have grown right up into all that is good and beautiful, without any trouble. But they went through a long period of suffering; and I have no doubt but that God held them there, not merely with a view to perfect *their* education, but as he did Christ, that he might save the world. Paul intimates it, when he speaks of 'filling up the sufferings of Christ which were behind.' In this point of view, I would say of the Primitive church as I have said of Christ: that it was not necessary for their sakes that they should be in those abominable circumstances. They might have been taken immediately to heaven, and all tears wiped away from their faces; but for the same reason that the Son of God was sent from heaven and endured the cross, was the church kept in the world forty years, enduring

suffering, that they might attract as many as possible to the beauty of God. Salvation cannot be brought about by mechanical force, by any mere emanation of physical power, but it must come by the will's being put in motion by the law of attraction; and the attainment of that result presents a problem not to be solved in any other way than that in which God has solved it—the saving party consenting to be bait, and enduring the necessary suffering. This is a principle we may apply to ourselves, and stop all this questioning why God does not set us up, and destroy our enemies, or take us immediately to heaven. God wants to save men; and in order to save them, he must train a people to 'overcome evil with good'—to mind nothing about the devil and his abuses, but set right down 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,' and endure all that is necessary for the object. It is given to us to take part in this great design, and for God to set us up in great pomp now, would spoil the game—we should not catch any fish.

We must understand this idea, and get contented with our situation, and count it an honor to be thus employed. For sixteen years I have been in a condition where, when I have settled back on my inner life, I have known that if God would place me in favorable circumstances, he could make me a perfect being; and I know he could let us have our way in the world, if he chose, so that 'not a dog should wag his tongue against us.' We have seen enough of his power and resources to know that: but if we set our heart on the object that he has in view, we shall do as Christ did, who 'endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him.' He endured all that was necessary to attract his bride, and draw her away from the devil. And

we are set about that very thing. We need the patience of fishermen, for it is a long, slow process; but we will hold on our course, attending to self-improvement, showing the world without combativeness the better way—getting no thanks for it perhaps—yet by and by we shall attract men, and conquer the world. By paying no attention to the devil, keeping our hearts bright with love and usefulness, we shall finally draw out of him all that is good for anything. And nothing but just such patience and depth of love can disentangle a soul from the devil. To get access to the minds of men, imbruted as they are by the devil, and enveloped in the murky atmosphere of his spirit, without quarrelling with the devil, is a pretty nice affair; and it requires an exceedingly bold and prominent expression of love, and a great deal of patience in setting it forth: these conditions are fully complied with in the cross of Christ. *There is bold expression of love and long patience; and the patience of God holds out yet, and it is necessary that we have long patience, that as many as possible may be saved.*

I want to justify the ways of God, and have no quarrel of heart with him,—get contented with our tribulations; and there is no other way to become contented than to take this high view of the matter, and, as Peter says, 'count that the long-suffering of God is salvation.' Then suffering will not work discouragement; but so long as we take a small-hearted view of it, we are apt to lay our sufferings to the poverty of God's resources, which is contrary to faith, and an unsatisfactory attitude of spirit. We must live in the attitude that Christ was in, who had ample resources, but did not choose to use them, for good reasons. If you are all the time wanting twelve

legions of angels, and cannot get them, your suffering is unsatisfactory. You want to see the necessity of suffering in the case, and then freely and cheerfully submit to your circumstances, as Christ did.

The sum of the whole matter, is what we came to the other evening. Christ's policy in conquering the devil, and spoiling his goods, is to face combativeness with the spirit of non-resistance, and bring to bear upon it a spirit of peace that is stronger, and will hold out longer than the devil's wrath; i. e., wet his enemy's powder, and make himself attractive to his captives; and he does both these things in the same act. The non-resistant, loving spirit, on the one hand wets the devil's powder, and on the other hand, seizes the hearts of his captives. When he says, 'now is the judgment of this world, now is the Prince of this world cast out,' he says it in view of the fact that he was about to bring to bear a stronger power of love, than all the power of the devil's wrath. That the two spirits of peace and war were coming to the clash, and he knew he should wet the devil's powder, and in the same act, make himself gloriously attractive to his captives, and thus bind the strong man.—*Home-Talk, Oct., 1850.*

Love, without Dissimulation.

Have you a friend, reader, that is so near to you that the *Truth* does not come between you and that friend? Have you those around you whose honor you prize or whose displeasure you fear, more than you love and reverence the *Truth*? In short do you suffer the truth to be suppressed on any account? If you do, you are an enemy to yourself, an enemy to your friend and to the good of all concerned. Only as you surround yourself by the 'fiery element of honesty,' can you

be safe from the contagion of evil. You are in danger from those who cleave unto you by flatteries; from those, the fear of whom is a snare to you; from your bosom friend and most indifferent associate. Any friendship that does not admit the truth to come in and salt it, is a corrupt thing. Love and criticism must go together, in the present state of human character.—There is no relation good that cannot freely invite the *Truth* into its most private sanctuary.

We will keep the Truth between us and every one we have any thing to do with, is the motto that we are learning to live by. Then there is no danger in the attractions of friendship. The truth will keep all unions pure and sweet. Then the fear of man will not be a snare to us.—If we cleave to the truth and keep it between us and others, we may defy the seductions of flattery, and the frowns of offence, and only by this course are we safe from the deceitfulness of our own passions.

It is a selfish, pleasure-seeking spirit, that shrinks from telling a friend the truth, when he might improve by it;—we do not seek that friend's good, but we seek our own enjoyment in his approbation. The true spirit is willing to lose favor and be misjudged if it can serve another by sincerity; and at any rate it will have nothing to do with love which is a debtor to dissimulation.

CORRESPONDENCE.

☞ The following letters are little more than pleasant greetings, but our readers will think it a privilege thus to shake hands, if no more, with far-away friends.

Olio, Wis., May 23, 1851.

DEAR FRIENDS:—I have been much interested in the perusal of your publications which were so kindly furnished to feed my hungry soul. Thanks to you for such an abundant and delicious meal. Although there are some sinewy chunks that I have not been able to masticate to my satisfaction, but I have

no time or disposition to stop and *growl* over them. I lay them carefully by, thinking that perhaps they may become soft and palatable as I gain strength, and my eyesight becomes more clear, that I can discern the true bread by the light of life.

I have long since learned not to call things 'common or unclean,' because they do not agree with my ideas of etiquette. Many things at one time appear harsh and unattractive, and as light and knowledge unfolds itself, they glow with all the beauty of truth to the understanding. Hence those progressive spirits, whose minds are reaching heaven-ward, are those which furnish the most palatable food for my mind.

I feel much interested in the prosperity of your Community, and hope that in a few more years, there may be many similar ones in the States, who shall be able to show practically to the world, that the children of God love one another more than they love gold or worldly honor.

When I commenced this letter, I intended to fill the sheet; but home affairs forbid, and I let this go, to let you know that I am interested, and feel grateful for past favors, and that I am your progressive friend,

ALBERT ROUNSEVELL.

Lyons, Mich. Feb. 23, 1851.

DEAR FRIENDS:—I often wish I could speak with you. The Bible says, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' I find my love is growing stronger for your Association, and publications.—When I first received your Circular, I thought it partook of so much zeal, that it would grow insipid; but I find the 'salt wherewith it is salted has lost none of its savor,' but on the contrary it is growing stronger, and more palatable.—I feel thankful that the 'stone that is cut out of the mountain without hands,' is spreading, and filling the earth with such great velocity. It is plain to be seen, that the 'stone the builders rejec-

ted, has become the head of the corner;' neither can the gates of hell prevail against it; and whosoever will build upon that rock has a sure foundation.

I feel thankful to God for the light that your Association has thrown around me. But as you do not like lengthy letters, I will now close by bidding you God speed. Yours &c.

LAURA B. SMITH.

Galveston, Texas, May 18, 1851.

DEAR FRIENDS:—For each and every blessing I enjoy, I find a strong, heartfelt desire to thank God for his unceasing goodness and kindness to me; and language utterly fails me in an attempt to describe the amount of blessings that have fallen to my lot since I have been in Texas. And to you my loved ones, I am extremely grateful for the Free Church Circular. I find in it a spiritual wisdom that evidently is not of this world, but cometh of the spirit that God giveth. The criticisms have been a source of much instruction to me, and I should think that their effect would be highly beneficial to all who read them. A late article, 'Gratitude *versus* Glorifying,' I find most excellent to my taste; and allow me to say, I rejoice greatly in the privilege I enjoy in reading your little sheet. I send you for A. M. Desmuke, one dollar; which you will please place to his credit. Please excuse this short letter; the steam-boat leaves sooner than I was aware of. Farewell.

HIRAM CLOSE.

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