

Their habits of life correspond with the tone and character of their minds. They have no pleasures, no associates. They do not study. They do not sing, write, or enjoy life in any way, except the delight they may have in tormenting those around. They toil for sustenance, and as their land is sandy, and no sunlight, there must be great labor to enable the earth to bring forth enough to sustain them.

When one of these spirits has a desire to leave that sphere, and by that desire and its effects is awakened to come nearer the earth, he does not lose the disposition which placed him in that sphere all at once. It is by these spirits that the accounts, garbled and untrue, of the world beyond your earth are given, through some medium with whom they have come in contact.

They delight in error; and you can imagine what that condition must be, when the soul recognizes no God, but a being as themselves—what their unhappiness is, who can not appreciate either love or truth—what their minds must be, when their whole enjoyment is the wickedness of evil and the production of error.

Do they suffer? Yes, when their minds receive the light of truth, when by its rays their whole nature is laid bare, when they can understand how much they have lost, how much they must regain.

Are they unhappy? Yes; after having left those dark spheres, they daily and hourly feel how much their affinity retards their upward progress, and draws them downward toward those spheres again, when they know how little they can appreciate what is before, when they know the nature of those with whom they associate.

Perhaps there is no greater unhappiness to the soul of man than the full conviction that his heart is evil, and that he is daily and hourly struggling to overcome its tendencies.

Thus it is with them, and I must leave to your minds to imagine what I confess I am unable to describe.

Section Twenty-five.

Friday, May 20th, 1853.

This evening, in my library, after some conversation, the Doctor's hand became affected, and it was written:

My dear friends, I hardly know how to address you, and the endearing terms of affection with which my heart overflows will scarcely be satisfied with the formal word, friend. Brothers, then, companions, fellow-laborers in the cause of love, truth, and progress, I hear you and understand you; and especially you, dear Judge, do I appreciate in reference to the subject of your wishes. Could I make you to know, by absolute evidence, how much I study the deeper workings and sentiments of your soul, there would not remain in your mind even the shadow of regret at any thing which takes place which you suppose may be misunderstood. Sweedenborg knows every thing in relation to both circumstance and feeling, and he is ready to unite with me in saying that the sympathies of his spirit are tendered to your own, and that the struggle in your heart will prove more of a blessing than you can now possibly appreciate. Such conflicts with past agony are the agents which disengage all that is of alloy in your nature, and bring forth to the understanding of your own consciousness and the minds of your friends the pure gold of your nature, purified as in a furnace seven times heated. Let, then, your feelings be calm, for placidity is an attribute of God. Look forward and above all petty annoyances that interrupt your mental progress, and be assured you will soon be qualified to look down on every thing that irritates and vexes, as one who is on a high mountain on the scenery at the foot, and wonder why the distance makes every thing so diminutive.

BACON.

I then told him that I had received an invitation which I proposed to accept, to address an assemblage in Connecticut next week; and said that I thought of adopting, as the subject of my discourse, the questions I had discussed last summer at Troy; namely, why spiritual intercourse had not come before, and why it had come now?

It was written:

Yes, but in addition teach them that the object of spirit-intercourse is to purify and elevate the nature of man, and that one great feature of these revelations is to disabuse the mind of errors, which have been engrafted on their hearts, as the results of an overweening faith in the doctrines erroneously inculcated as of God, and as found in the Bible.

Teach them that there is no such thing as understanding God separate from his works; that the human mind, the result of natural combinations and material organization, has not the ability to penetrate beyond the circle of organic connection; that, as every thing which would illustrate God is mixed with the creation of his hand, and as every thought has its source in the thousand impressions received from the direct influence of material combinations, it can not realize spirit distinct and separate, and therefore the thousand shapes in which God is presented, the various elaborate devices to picture him as a spirit, entirely fail to impress the mind with the idea of what he is and how he acts unconnected with the personation of his existence in the world which he has created. Then as man can not realize God without these aids, he can not realize the true intent and purpose of his laws in regard to spirit-intercourse without investigation and calm dispassionate examination.

Lead them to the higher doctrines taught, as far they will be benefited, and tell them that the perfect man is a type of the being who fashioned him, as he is an emblem of the eternal principle of truth and love.

As the Christ says, I came not to destroy, etc., so we come not to destroy or subvert any doctrine which will afford to man a hope predicated on bases which are distinct from the fabrications of man.

We have as much earnest desire for man's happiness on earth, as had the apostles of old or the ministers of the present day, and we labor to insure his soul after death happiness eternal.

We desire that his life on earth should be happy, and teach you that when man's whole conduct is just and pure he must be so. As the un sinful heart recognizes no congeniality in any thing which produces evil, so no man can be unhappy whose mind embraces the good of existence and rejects the evil.

We teach you that when man begins to learn what he is capable of accomplishing, he will not remain satisfied until he has fully understood how much there is in the eternal connection of life with immortality; that the soul when conscious that it possesses inherent attributes, which have been confined, aye, trammelled, by the stern emanations and dictation of ideas taught as true, and that these inherent powers when left to themselves, when granted the freedom of unbiased thought, will throw off all bonds of sect or denomination; then, then does it feel the first glow of honest exultation that its ultimate destiny is limited to no pulpit or the faith taught at its altars. But that a life of purity, of love, of earnest and sincere struggle here, gives it a claim on the world to which it of right belongs; that no being can be happy after death, no matter how much he believes or what he believes, who has not fulfilled the obligations of his nature.

Why has God placed man under the control and influence of laws which generate a thousand circumstances in which he participates *volens volens*? Why are the imperative demands of life made to attract around him other demands which apply alone to his feelings, his passions, or his desires? This is not orthodoxy, I admit, but it is divesting the present of its mysticism, and it is opening the future to the full gaze of man's mind. It is the dower of his descent, the prerogative of his birth. Do you cavil at the so-called truths of a priest of Rome or a clergyman of England's

church, the truths which they profess to teach and which differ so widely in their application and in their foundation? If not satisfied with either of them, you seek for other sources where you may rest, and drink the water of life. Go you, then, to those who profess that in their heart's change they have found the Alpha and Omega of their researches. What then? Have they made God a man, that they should surround him with the petty sentiments of their own natures, and drag him down to earth and force him to revenge his wrongs or to punish man eternally for violating laws which he has founded? How have they represented the God who is unapproachable by human thought? How have they described man, who is a part of that God himself? For what conceivable or inconceivable purpose could man have been created—to live under the effect of laws governing an organization which responds to the influences of the same laws in like materials around him? How hold him accountable for obeying the irresistible force of affinities which exist in matter as well as spirit? True, the spirit's affinities he can direct, but his material nature is bound by the iron band of laws over which he has no power. Thus, then, it is taught, God must be the creature of the same circumstances, and because he is a God, must manifest passions as the attributes of his spirit which emanate alone from material organization.

But when, after all, you compare the doctrines which to reject is heresy and to deny is infidelity with what the promptings of your soul tell you is the truth, you then separate the two existences which identify man—his material part and his spiritual nature; you then look with astonishment on the crude fashionings which ascribe to God the feelings and passions of man's material part, and yet deny to him what is essentially and alone the germ to which he belongs.

According to such teachings truth is a comparison: to-day it is truth to believe Methodism, to-morrow Romanism; but you will find that the answer to your question of last

night is this (and it was answered by Swedenborg, who requests me to write it to-night), that the effect of these revelations as truth, is to direct the mind to the recognition of one God and his laws, and that the belief will be universal when the teachings shall have been given so explicitly as to enable man to comprehend what we mean. There will be no difference of sect or denomination, and there will be no division on the great fundamental principles which we hope to be able to give through you.

I called his attention to a portion of the next to last sentence, which seemed to me obscure.

He answered:

I think Swedenborg did not understand your question; but at any rate I will consult him, and ascertain. I answer, yes; but the effect of our belief on the heart will be to establish a universal doctrine, which shall have no shades of difference, but be accepted as a unit. The time will come [and on hearing the teaching read, I saw what he meant] when the effect on the heart will be to bring all men to believe on God, on love, on progress, without any subdivision, without any shades or distinctions, and thus this change will be evident, as it will differ so essentially from all religion which has before been given to man. You must recollect that Swedenborg was teaching, or intended to teach, you its effects in the future, though he used the word *effect* in the present time. That, I am confident, was his idea.

A change which involves doubt or includes discussion can not be radical. The change I refer to is the soul's recognition of its ultimate destiny. There can be no doubt on this point, there can be no discussion, there is no difference in the belief of any true spiritualist, that the ultimate destiny of the soul is progression, that it commences on earth, and ends only when the body becomes so purified that it is fit to enter the celestial spheres.

Your idea is a comparison of present change in belief,

but there are so many colorings and aspects to that belief, that there is no belief about it. When I spoke about a change, I referred to that which would be produced in the whole understanding, including not only the action presently, but that which extends beyond the grave, and divests death of all its terrors.*

* As early in my researches as October, 1851, the following teaching was given, which it seems to me will not be unillustrative of these remarks:

"Your attachment to your preconceived notions is very unfortunate, and much retards your progress, because it does not leave your mind open to the reception of truth. When any new truth is unfolded to you, you do not calmly investigate it and ask your reason if it is right, but you apply to it the standard of your preconceived notions, and if it conflicts with them you are at once prepared to battle it, not because it is unfounded in reason, but because it does not agree with what you have previously thought. And this arises from the fact, that you have not in reality the belief you think you have. If you had a firm and unwavering belief, if you knew you were right, you would not care what was said in conflict with it. But you have not. You have persuaded yourself that you believe certain things. You think you ought to believe, and you resolve you will. But not being sure you are right, any thing which tends to show your faith to be unfounded annoys you, arouses your combativeness, and takes away from your mind that even balance, and that susceptibility to the reception of truth, which is so essential both to intellectual and spiritual progress."

Section Twenty-six.

Sunday, May 22d, 1853.

This evening, at Dr. Dexter's, in the presence of all the circle but myself, this was written out:

WHILE we are listening to thoughts from the spirit-land, and wonder at the developments made of what have been mysteries, have we, when our hearts have been filled with joy at the description of the beautiful abodes of the just, and the happiness diffused like air through all the higher spheres of the spirits' dwelling-place, have we ever asked ourselves the question—for what purpose are these teachings? Why have spirits left their homes, their pursuits, their affections, their upward flight toward the ultimate point of their existence? Why have they come to us, and why have they taught us the higher truths of spirit-revelation? Why have they selected us as the recipients of spirit-bounty?

Is it not that your own natures should be made to correspond with the pure and holy existences of those good spirits whose habits, life, and progress we have described? Is it not that you should struggle to elevate your own internal natures, and divest yourselves of those characteristics which mark you as still bound in the fetters of error?

How hard have you struggled? How much have you succeeded? And how long will it be before you shall have cast off all that cloaks your true feelings, and manifest the true condition and action of your life? How long will you battle with causes which you suffer to influence you, and not purge yourselves of all unrighteousness?

These are grave and important inquiries, which should be put to every heart, and earnestly too, sincerely too, in the spirit of truth, of love, and of strong desire to answer truly the responses of our own hearts, before our friends who know, and the God that made us.

In a spirit, to-night, of affection, that brings you near my soul, and with a love that brings me to you for the high object of doing you good, do I greet you in the name of God.

SWEEDENBERG.

I do not imagine the moral condition of the spirits of the lower spheres differs materially from the moral condition of the unprogressive man in your world. They may, it is true, have moments when their spirits yearn for the brighter spheres beyond their dark plane, when conscious of its birthright, the soul awakens to a sense of its own degradation, and realizes its true situation; but they live and act as unprogressive man does, daily performing their accustomed round of malicious action, and carrying out the designs of their blunted perceptions; and it is not till some event, out of the ordinary occurrences of life, arouses them completely, and opens their understanding to the reception of truth, that they begin to progress. There is so little difference in the whole action of spirit-life from your life, except that one step forward has been made (I do not refer to the higher spheres of course), that the correspondence is almost exact. Their remorse, when made sensible of their wickedness, must be more keenly felt than by man. Here they can have the tangible evidence of truth, of the beauty of holiness. With you, much of course must be appreciatory.

But when the spirit is awakened to a full view of all that is before him, with the bright spirits of friends and relations near him, with all that can assure him and support him, then it is that the full consciousness of his degradation crushes him like a weed; his agony is indeed overpowering. It is the terrible workings of repentance in spirit divested of the grossness of materiality.

As far as my knowledge goes, the just comparison is not to be found in the lives of the dark or lower spirits. I mean the just comparison of the sufferings which the spirit endures when in the bonds of wickedness, or, rather, when not fulfilling the object of his induction into the spheres. They live as if they did not realize any thing beyond their own misty dwelling-place, as if they were incapable of being impressed with the good and true. But the just comparison is to be found in those spirits who are occupied in their advancement, whose efforts are made to rise from sphere to sphere, where mind and thought are filled with the hope, the glorious hope, of ascending toward those bright abodes where there can be no sin, where there can be no retrogression. When they commit a fault, then it is that the true suffering for sin is witnessed. You behold them in an agony so sincere, so dignified, so elevated, so soaring, so self-sacrificing, that it seems as if the soul itself was in travail, and would give birth to a purity and love almost divine. And I apprehend it is always those who have made some progress in goodness and truth who suffer, for how can the heart which has become hardened by sin suddenly realize all the holiness of truth and all the beauty of goodness? Simply when a man for a long course of years has lived in the exercise and under the directions of his perverted passions, and his heart, his mind, his spirit, and his thought have during that time declined any participation with what is good, and have cast off all association with either God, or those men or means which would have directed his mind to the contemplation of his attributes; and accustomed to think wickedly, he acted so, and thus his mind and tastes, his very nature in the whole, sought for present happiness in those things which were evil. Now, suppose he is suddenly impressed with the idea of sin, and the conviction is overpowering, so much that he determines to live henceforth a good life, do you think his appreciation of the good, the noble, the generous, of charity, of truth, of benevolence, of beauty, of error, of man—yes, and of God, can be

an appreciation which unfolds to his soul the startling comparison of what sin must be and is, when, indeed, he has made the contrast with those virtues? No, this is impossible. Nature, or God, never develops any thing at once or immediately. Every thing has its beginning, its increase, its progress, and, may be, its decline. But to man, this sudden upturning of all that applies to his nature and to his habits is, in my opinion, equivalent to a new construction. But when the heart that has constantly contemplated the goodness of God, the emanations of his hands, and the gushing tenderness of his love, when it for years struggled to subvert all that is of error or wrong in its very imaginings, then when convicted of that wrong, it bows its soul in very misery before its own weakness, it looks only to God for help and assistance.

Thus, I say, the progressive spirit suffers more of what may be called Hell, than even the degraded spirit, and can only begin to suffer when it begins to rise.

Every spirit has some daily duty. They work for the benefit of themselves and the good of all. They are divided by their own wishes and tastes into all those classes which emanate from the various necessities and conveniences of community. But their labor is comparatively light, and their time is occupied a good deal in the higher labors of thought, social intercourse, visiting, and study. In addition, they develop beauty whenever and wherever they can, and thus they bring themselves nearer to truth by impressing on their souls the idea of its nature. From the sparkling star which twinkles in the distance, to the full blaze of the noonday sun; aye, from the little pebble to the lofty mountain, whose jagged rocks turn toward their Creator, from the vilest creeping evidence of life, through all and every part of creation, to the man who is at its head, God has made and fashioned every thing as beautiful, and taught us to consider the works of his hands as good.

Spirits visit much, and it seems as much a part of their lives to visit their friends, as it is faithfully to perform their

other obligations. Thus they visit their friends in the sphere to which they belong, or the sphere below them. But their longest visits, and those considered most a duty, are those which they make to their friends on earth. That occupies no little portion of their time, and while with you they are accomplishing some one of the specific duties which are required of them in the sphere to which they belong.

When visiting a sick friend, they stay as long as it may be consistent with their feelings, or the state of the disease. And when a death occurs, they are ready to receive the spirit. When a friend is depressed in feeling, or has some great trouble to overcome, or when he or she has suffered from the wrong of other friends, or when about to do wrong, or when about to do good, then it is that they flock around, and by their impressions aid, or try to direct, as may be proper.

But the time is passed almost, and I must leave. Good-night.