

**PUBLISHED BY THE TRACT ASSOCIATION OF
FRIENDS, AT THEIR DEPOSITORY,
No. 304 ARCH STREET,
PHILADELPHIA.**

**THE
TEACHING OF THE SPIRIT,
EXEMPLIFIED
IN THE HISTORY OF TWO SLAVES.**

This is an annotated edition of the original text of *The Teaching of the Spirit, Exemplified in the History of Two Slaves*, published in 1870 by the Tract Association of Friends in Philadelphia. No editor or author is listed or has been identified for this tract. Original spelling, punctuation and page citations have been retained; minor typographic errors have been corrected.

This electronic edition has been prepared for the Antislavery Literature Project, Arizona State University, a public education project working in cooperation with the English Server, Iowa State University. Digitalization has been supported by a grant from the Institute for Humanities Research, Arizona State University.

Editorial annotation by Joe Lockard. Digitalization and annotation research by April Brannon. All rights reserved by the Antislavery Literature Project. Permission for non-commercial educational use is granted.

Introduction

This brief 4-page religious tract was typical of religious anti-slavery literature produced by the Society of Friends. The [Tract Association of the Society of Friends](#) published a wide variety of pietistic literature, beginning in 1816 and continuing until the present day; it is one of the oldest continuously operating publishers in the United States. The great majority of the Tract Association's literature was on spiritual and theological topics, but during the antebellum period there were regular publications of religiously-oriented appeals against slavery. For further information, see Edwin Bronner, "Distributing the Printed Word: The Tract Association of Friends, 1816-1966" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 91 (1967) 3:342-354.

The Teaching of the Spirit employs witness accounts of Quaker missionaries traveling in North Carolina and Virginia to exemplify the Friends' doctrine of quiet spiritual forbearance in the face of worldly tribulations. This pacifistic anti-slavery that emphasized spiritual self-integrity as opposition to slavery was in the tradition of Benjamin Lundy, a leading early nineteenth-century Quaker opponent of U.S. slavery. Such views sought, as in this tract, examples that demonstrated the spiritual nobility of slaves, Indians, the poor, and others whose oppressed social conditions were lightened and lives strengthened through manifestations of the divine spirit.

The present text lists no author and employs only identifying initials for Quaker witnesses, perhaps in observance of Quaker emphasis on spiritual and social humility.

— Joe Lockard

[page 1]

THE work of the Holy Spirit is often seen in a remarkable manner exemplified in the poor, the illiterate and the oppressed among men. The martyrs and primitive converts were enabled by it to rejoice in tribulation, to count it all joy when they suffered persecution, to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to forgive their enemies, to pray for them that despitefully used them, and to breathe forth for such, even whilst suffering the agonies of a cruel death at their hands,— ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.’¹ The spirit which supported and instructed them, has not been withdrawn from the church, and we may occasionally observe it abasing those of the highest, or elevating those of the lowest conditions in Life. In quietude and in humility it instructs its followers, strengthening them under multiplied sufferings and wrongs, to bear all, and to forgive all, in hope to obtain through faith and meekness the crown of life in the end. It is to set forth true religion operating in the poor, despised, and degraded slave, to show the spiritual nature of that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, and its perfect adaptation to the lowest and most destitute condition in life, that we have been induced to prepare the following anecdotes, the truth of which we have verified.

Some years ago, E. H., a female minister of the Society of Friends, paid a religious visit through some of the Southern

¹ Acts 7:60.

States. Places of public entertainment in those districts being rare, it not unfrequently happens that travelers are obliged either to trespass on the private hospitality of strangers, or to refresh themselves and horses by the road side, with such provisions as they may have brought with them. It so occurred to E. H. and her company whilst in North Carolina. They stopped by the side of a wood that their horses might feed; and during the detention thus occasioned, she discovered a small log hut in an adjoining thicket, which so forcibly attracted her mind as to induce her to visit it. When she reached the door she discovered an old coloured man, apparently about seventy years of age, sitting on a bench making shoes. Accosting him in a friendly way, she said, 'I think I will come in.' He immediately arose and presented her with a bench to sit on. In the course of the conversation which ensued, he informed her that he had a wife and five children, but that they were all separated from him, and that no two of his children were together, and none of them with his wife. The Friend expressed to him a little matter in the way of religious exhortation, at the conclusion of which he asked her if she would like to hear him give an account of himself. On her replying in the affirmative, he told her, that about twelve years before it had pleased God to visit him. That previously he had been very wicked, and that his master was cross, and the overseer cross. That having closed in with the visitations of Divine mercy, God had sweetened his bitter cup and rendered his rough path smooth. His bitter cup, he said, was parting with his wife and family, and the rough path was his slavery. At the mention of his bereavement he was much affected and his tears flowed freely, but he did not murmur or complain. During the whole of the conversation the old man kept diligently at his work. The Friend now inquired if he lived alone? He said, "yes". Nobody lives with me;— yet I am never alone. God never leaves me; 'cause I close in with visitation. He never leaves me. He changed the heart of massa to me; he changed the heart of overseer;— all 'cause I closed in with visitation." Observing him to make use of several texts of Scripture, the Friend said, 'thou canst read I find!' he replied, "no, I never read a word; but ever since I closed in with visitation, God helps my memory. Massa lets me go to church once in five weeks, and I can remember what the minister says, till I go again." In the course of the conversation he informed her that the overseer cut him out his work, which was a pair of shoes a day, and that as he usually was at his task by day

[page 3]

light, he often had it done before night. On her asking how he spent the remainder of his time, he said,— "well missus, I will tell you; I shut the door and go in that corner and wait upon God." "In what way dost thou wait upon him?" "Will missus believe me?" "I will believe thee." "I sometimes feel here" (laying his hand on his breast) "something that tells me to sing a hymn,— then I sing a hymn; sometimes I feel something that says you must pray,— and then I pray; and O missus, if the white people knew what good times I have in prayer, I tell you they would come and join me; and sometimes I feel that I must wait upon God in silence. Missus knows about that." On her inquiring after which of these different kinds of spiritual exercises he felt strongest, he replied — "Why missus you will think it mighty strange, but I feel the strongest when I have waited upon God in silence." The Friend then made some remarks designed to encourage him to continue faithful to his blessed inward guide. On her concluding, he arose from his seat and took her hand saying "Missus, we don't know what's behind the curtain. I did not know God would send you here that we should have such good talk;— may you meet me in heaven."

The next anecdote was related by W. R. a minister of the Gospel who visited this country from England a few years ago. He had been to North Carolina, and on his return to the Northern States, he tarried for the night at an inn, in Virginia, the landlord of which was a slave-holder. In the morning when the usual hour for proceeding on their journey came, his companion was not to be found. After waiting sometime, W.R. commenced a search for him, and at last discovered him discoursing with a coloured man at the stables. As W. drew near he felt that there was an unusual degree of solemnity about them, and on reaching them he found that his companion was bathed in tears. The latter afterwards informed him, that having felt an interest for the man, he had entered into conversation with him, whereby his feelings had been affected in a very remarkable manner. He had found him to be a slave belonging to their landlord; a poor, downtrodden, and severely used man, yet a humble, confiding, and dignified christian. The severity with which he had been treated, led him to use no invective against his oppressor, but as a christian he longed for his present peace and everlasting salvation. In the course of the conversation being asked if

he could read, he replied that he had been anxious to learn but could not accomplish it. This circumstance had for a long time given him much trouble;— but one day whilst engaged in his ordinary labour, he had an intimation, which was as a voice informing him, that he could read as well as others. By this he was much comforted, as he gathered therefrom that his own particular duties, and the will of the Most High concerning him, were as clearly unfolded to his mind as if he had been enabled to read them in a book. It was by obedience and close attention to that instruction thus pointed out to him, that he had witnessed a growth in christian experience, and that perfection in the spiritual graces which was manifest in him. "The heart must be kept clean," he said.— I love every body, and feel at times as if I could embrace every body. My master abuses me, but it would not do to hate him; — I love him, — I pray for him. If I was to hate him, I should be as bad as he is, — but I love him, I pray for him" This was the doctrine unfolded in the secret of his soul. It is the genuine fruit of the Gospel, and in the purity and love it inculcates, may be found the spirit of the angelic song, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.'² That which instructed this illiterate slave that the heart must be kept clean, is the only power by which he could be enabled to effect it: That which bid him love his enemies, was that by which alone the natural aversions and resentments of our nature could be overcome; and that which led him to pray for them, is the one fountain from which all the streams of true and effectual prayer must flow. The heart of the listener had warmed as the slave spoke, he greeted him as a brother beloved, and felt that, poor and afflicted as he was, ignorant and deluded as others might esteem him to be, he had indeed truly attained to eminence in the school of Christ.

THE END

² Luke 2:14.