[Sarah Valentine to Edward V. Valentine, October 15th, 1859]

... I wish I had some news to tell you but can not hear of any which would interest you much. I must not omit to tell you though how much I think of you in the Church meetings, particularly in the services which we held at St. James’ church every morning a quarter before seven o’clock. How truly has God seemed to keep his promise at these meetings, “that when two or three are gathered together in His name then He is in their midst.” The different ministers make addresses and pray sometimes from the Prayer Book, sometimes use their own prayers, but always fervently and with unction from the Spirit. Yesterday in Convention which was held at St. Pauls’ there was a debate about consecrating more than one Bishop to go to the West where the people are very destitute of religious instruction. At last the vote was taken, that two should be elected and sent, there was such a feeling of excitement and no doubt gratitude to God for thus disposing...

[Sarah Valentine to Edward V. Valentine, December 16, 1859]

...To-day Mr. Minnegerode exchanged pulpits with Mr. Peterkin. Ma was delighted with the sermon—the text was, ‘Why halt ye between two opinions.’ The hymn was your favorite one, ‘Awake my souls stretch every nerve.’...

[Sarah Valentine to Edward V. Valentine, March 9, 1860]

...Pa and I take much interest in the New York Herald about the time for the European news to arrive. I like to read the account of the speeches in the English parliament, on the subject of slavery. I suppose you have heard that this august body is when they can arrange their plans satisfactorily to themselves going to abolish slavery in America. Lord Broughm is I believe the leader of this party, but I am afraid the parliament will soon discover to their chargin that this immense bank of ashes (which is the result of the fire kindled by their countrymen from the materials purchased of certain Dutch gentlemen sailing up the “James” a few years ago) will remain removable beneath the most vigorous attacks of this otherwise useful household appendage. Indeed from the liberal use which Europeans make of our cotton under the flaming circumstances, it would seem that they were ardent admirers of that great conflagration, which adds so much to the siftings in the Southern States. How much more generous their conduct than that attributed to the wily Russis! These lighted with the incendiary torch their own homes in Moscow, that the enemy might find no luxurious resting-place: the other merely feeds this
fire unweariedly with cotton babs, to keep himself and those he loves—from freezing. Alas poor African, these are they whose souls, filled with an unchecked love of gain, are weeping far away at thought of Thee,—of all thy anguish and endurance. But they reason to themselves that sensibility though a heavenly trait, must not prevent their striving for a livelihood. Acting on this impulse taught them not by need, but lowest avarice, they find that manufacturing whip-cords for the use of Southern planters, is the surest road to fortune. Not actual whip-cords but something not less to the purpose, efforts unweariend to enhance the value of those southern products, the very greatness of whose demand, (if their eyes were not so filled with sympathetic tears) they might easily perceive could only tend to add more labor to the slave. But though the action of these modern Howards indeed do tend to make the so-called slave, a slave indeed, yet we know full well that God whose Spirit like His sunshine falling on the unjust heart of self-made masters, will not permit the feeling hearts of distant weepers to work against the comfort of this exiled race. God rules the soul of Southern men as well as those of others who despise them. He alone it is who tells in His own Sacred Word those duties which are only ours. God in the prolongation of time, we feel can have but one design. It is the salvation of immortal souls. Oh if we were at this moment permitted to sum up in Heaven those souls around the Great White Throne, that from the captive body fled to thank the Providential Power that led them out from heathen lands to bask in His on "marvelous light!" God hath in a mysterious union forever united the master and slave. Man may not, man cannot put them asunder. Ah when the great day on which all hearts shall stand revealed arrives,—we shall not tremble at the thought that we enslaved our brother, but if we have neglected to observe the meaning of that providence that led us thus to act, then shall we find ourselves indeed "unprofitable servants" to the best of Masters. Irrevocable then will be our doom. Ah do not those on whom this mighty work has fallen, seem to meet the prayers instead of imprecations of world. Has any man for one moment calculated all the treasures living in the mighty Ocean? Then he has comprehended all the jewels of the immortal soul, but in the stormy night that broods so darkly yet above the waves of human life now wildly tossing on the shore of Africa. God with an outstretched arm stills in the our land these blasting storms, and bids us fearless plunge beneath the tranquil waves, in search of wrecks, those gifts of His washed from the human heart. By faith we rise triumphant from our noble work, and see the jewels that it cost us many tears to win, placed in the royal diadem of Him, Who though "equal with God," once labored here on earth for us. "The preparation of the heart" of this people, God has with us already accomplished. He now declares to us "the harvest is plenty," "Work while it is day," and as if to comfort us in this solemn mission he declares, "behold I am with you always, even onto the end of the world. Oh our Father that thou art with us, the miracles performed in Thy name, not most certainly attest. Christians have been raised up whose devotedness to this cause, declare plainly to all interested in it, that God is in our midst. That colored people have so far thrown off the clothing of humanity, as not in some instances to make a cloak of religion would be a most unlooked for circumstance in this world, but that they are uniformly the most pious set of persons to be found in any state, or rank of life, I believe no one acquainted with them will deny. This is the more remarkable from
the fact of their leading lives of almost unalloyed happiness.--a circumstance which in other cases almost invariably tends to an opposite effect. But like a watchful astronomer, we must permit no phenomenon to surprise our gaze, for the very fact that we sit on the Observatory as a waiter and watcher indicates that we believe that soon will be revealed to us “the secret things of God.” Not brother have I not talked enough to you of “Africa in America?”

But it is a subject of the deepest interest to me, and I am sure your interest would be much increased if you could attend the meetings held Sunday evening in the lecture room. The colored people are first taught and then Mr. Dashiel preaches to them. The room us usually crowded. I have a class which is sometimes composed of twenty-six scholars. There are not only children but gray-haired men and women, who seem deeply interested. To keep this interest sufficiently alive, that they may be profited is I do assure you no light work. Just imagine to yourself, a class of twenty-six persons whose ages, temperaments, talents, peculiar situations, all differ and above all with hearts formed on the same bad model with their teacher's—waiting eagerly to receive from me instructions for a journey heavenward. I declare sometimes I have felt that it was a task for which I was totally unequal, and my very heart would seem to sink with the weight. But then I remember that “Paul may plant, Appollos may water, but God alone giveth the increase,” and also that “God's strength is made perfect in weakness.” As soon as I am enabled to cast this burden of self-sufficiency overboard, I find I am in a fit state of mind to “feed the hungry.”

The it is that ideas, suggestions, and thoughts come uncalled for to my mind, and in the use of which I find the hearts and minds of those to whom they are applied just ready for their reception. To doubt the efficacy of such teachings, would be to deny the manifest Presence, of the Great Inspirer of thoughts. It is not always that I have evidence so clear of working out God's plans on these occasions. Sometimes I feel that perhaps the want of novelty, or clearness in describing on my part may be a source of weariness of religion in those I teach. However, all things must eventually be known. A few Sundays ago an old colored woman (sufficiently advanced in years to have been my grandmother) took a seat in my class. To tell you the plain truth I was dismayed. You know though very pious they often have peculiar notions, which they cling to tenaciously. I had not the most remote conception of her views, and was fearful of coming in collision with some, which though harmless in themselves, lead on to error I would not for the whole universe have said anything that would in future keep her from coming for instruction, and yet I was resolved to compromise on no ground, which might induce in her wrong views. Now you will perhaps laugh at my making so much of nothing, but I assure you I think the situation at that time one of more solemn import than that of an earthly mission to a foreign court. I was "ambassador for Christ.” No dying mortals like myself waited for the happy adjustment of some vexed question of human rights, but angels assembled around the throne of God waited to catch the words of reconciliation which the Great Sovereign had sent me here to offer. Where do you suppose I took my position? Just on the Rock of Ages and from this indestructible monument of God's eternal love, I caught a knowledge of His Presence. I said “Aunty I have just been telling these children (so that she might not think I imagined her) a subject for instruction in a
Sunday-school), that the sin of Adam, has made them sinners also, from their very babyhood, and that God has declared that “the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die;” now I asked them if this was the case, how were they ever to get into Heaven; and they told me that if they were born sinners, and God hated sin, that they knew they could not go there.” I told her I then asked them why they went to church, or came to Sunday-school but they could only laugh with perplexity. I had asked them if they had never heard in the Bible a remedy for this; One who dying for them had saved them from death. They then knew what I meant. I said “Aunty you know who this was;” she immediately with a smile of real pleasure said, “Oh yes Mistress I trust I know Him for many years, Oh yes marm dat I does know Him.” I found her a humble Christian, and we talked much together. I told her that I had said to my class, that God had called me that very evening to talk with them of Him, and that I should be called to give an account of how I had done this work. The old woman immediately gave me an idea which I had not thought of, she turned to the class and said, “Yes honey and they got to give thar account, for not ‘tending as they ought, stead of trifling and playing.” They know very well of the fall and redemption of man, but when I put it before their minds as I told you of, though it perplexes them for a little while, yet the impression made is much more lasting. Now I have scribbled enough to you.