

## THE BELIEVER BORN OF ALMIGHTY GRACE.<sup>1</sup>

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“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”—EPHESIANS i. 19, 20.

THE saving belief of the gospel, my brethren, is the first and most uniform action of the new-born soul. Hence, when the Apostle Paul here speaks of himself and brethren as “us who believe,” he refers directly to their new-birth or regeneration. “God’s power to usward who believe” means his “power by which we are made believers,” or in other words, are born again. And this is the power whose greatness he so exalts. Other wondrous displays of divine might were made in connection with the mission of Christ and his apostles; but of these Paul is not speaking here. Let him explain his own meaning. Two verses below he resumes the comparison of the text and says (ii. 1), “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” And in the fifth and sixth verses still more clearly, “Even when we were dead in sins he hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit

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<sup>1</sup> A sermon preached at Frederick’s Hall, Va., in Hood’s (4th) Texas Brigade, June 22, 1862, and published in tract form at the request of Gen. “Stonewall” Jackson.

General Thomas J. Jackson, during his forced march from the Valley of Virginia to the Chickahominy, halted his command, for the Sabbath, along the line of the Virginia Central Railroad, from Gordonsville to Frederick’s Hall, in the county of Louisa. He himself spent the sacred day at the latter place, in the hospitable home of N. Harris, Esq. I ascertained that the brigade of Hood, near us, had at that time no chaplain present, and offered to conduct public worship for them. This offer was courteously accepted by their General, and the afternoon of the bright Sabbath was chosen as the time, and a dilapidated country church, near the encampment, as the place.

These troops, having been attached to the command of General Jackson a few days before, were strangers to his person, and naturally anxious to see the far-famed soldier. This desire, with better motives on the part of some, brought the whole brigade to the appointed place. The little wooden church was packed, the

together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The thing which is compared to Christ's resurrection in the text is then beyond doubt the renewal of the souls of sinners.

This passage, therefore, exhausts the strongest expressions of human language, to assert the divinity and omnipotence of the power by which the sinful soul is changed. It is God's work, not man's. "They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John i. 13.) It is effected by "the greatness of his power." Nay, more, it is "the

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open grounds beside it crowded, and the fences and the very trees loaded with human bodies. To provide for the multitude without, General Hood proposed that the speaker should be placed, not in the pulpit, but in a side door, where a table was arranged for him. A long bench next this door was intended for General Jackson. As party after party entered the house, and finding no vacant seats elsewhere, were about to occupy this bench, General Hood arose again and again, and remarked: "That seat is reserved for General Jackson and his staff." This repeated caution seemed at length to beget in all minds the vision of a brilliant cavalcade, dashing up with the far-famed Stonewall Jackson at its head, and displaying any amount of military pomp and finery. After a few moments a "buggy" was seen creeping along, containing the General in a sunburned uniform, and a person in black. The two dismounted, and proceeded with their own hands to detach the horse, and tie him to a "swinging limb." After this, the General slipped quietly into the house and took his seat. Noticing, as he approached, one or two companies of Texans marching up in regular ranks, though unarmed, he said: "See there, that is what I like." After the close of the service, he saluted the officers near him, returned to the vehicle, reattached the horse with no other assistance than that of his clerical companion, and returned to his quarters. The great multitudes around him behaved throughout with the strictest decorum; and not a man betrayed the slightest manifestation of unseemly curiosity.

As we were returning, General Jackson said to me: "Your subject this evening was of great importance, and some of your views new to me. I wish all my men could read your sermon. I should be glad if you would reduce it to writing, when other duties permit—I know you cannot have time for this now, but hereafter, when operations in the field are less urgent—and let me have it. I will print it myself and supply my command." To this request I could only promise compliance.

The pressure of duties in the field, then protracted sickness, then the death of my revered commander, with a train of subsequent disasters, have long delayed my fulfilment of the pledge. It is, in my eyes, only the more sacred, that he is no longer upon earth to remind me of it. Having at length found another medium (through the Publishing Committee of our church, which prints it simply for the sake of the great truths of redemption it contains), I now present the sermon to the survivors of those for whom General Jackson designed it. I beg them to receive it as his message; his adopted testimony to the necessity and nature of the new birth. It comes to them as a voice from beyond the grave, as well as an affecting mark of the zeal and love of the departed Christian soldier towards their souls.

R. L. DABNEY.

*Union Theological Seminary, December 20, 1868.*

exceeding greatness of his power." And, as though to exalt the work to the utmost, it is likened to the most illustrious miracles which demonstrated the gospel, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

We are all in substance agreed, that a miracle was such a manifest suspension of the laws of nature as only God can work. Miracles were usually rare in their times; for had they become customary, their end would have been disappointed. Blessed be God, this divine work, the new birth, is frequent and customary wherever his gospel is faithfully taught. It is not palpable to the senses save by its effects. But neither could you have seen the subtle essence of Lazarus' soul reënter his corpse had you been present at that tomb of Bethany; you would only have known its return by its effects, when you saw the dead man come forth. Let us consider, and we shall see that the change of a godless, self-willed, worldly soul into a sincere, believing, joyful Christian, is as truly above the laws of his natural heart as the living again of a corpse is above the powers of matter. This text teaches us, then,

*That the saving change of the soul is God's own almighty work, and is, in that sense, supernatural.*

What is this change? Some, from shallow observation, answer: It is only the sinner's *change of purpose* concerning his duty to God. But the Scriptures answer, that it is a *change of the dispositions of heart*, which prompt and regulate man's purposes concerning this duty. Note, I pray you, my words, and apprehend the difference, for it is that between light and darkness. And this I promise to show before I am done, if you will give me your attention. That new birth, I repeat, which is necessary to salvation, is some deeper thing than the mere making of a new resolution by the sinner. It is the fundamental revolution of the very dispositions of soul, out of which his purposes were all prompted. Hence, it is not the work merely of reasonings and inducements presented to the mind, but of God's almighty power, through his Holy Ghost, quickening the soul to feel those reasonings and inducements.

Having explained my meaning, I present some probable proof

of it from this fact: that human efforts have by themselves done so little to remedy the moral evils which curse the hearts of mankind. In the world of matter, men's exploits have been marvellous, especially when they have combined their industry. They have bridged mighty floods, traversed the pathless oceans, pierced the entrails of the earth for her treasures, bent the winds and even the lightnings to serve them, and modified the face of continents. But how fleeting and scanty are man's moral exploits, where God, in the gospel of his Son, has not wrought through him? Where are his drunkards reformed? Where his vices abolished? Where his races civilized and redeemed, without Christianity?

Every instance of the permanent change of a hardened sinner to godliness bears, to the experienced eye, the appearance of a power above man's, because we see so few men make otherwise a radical change of habits and principles after these are fully formed. The wise observer of the world will tell you that few men, except under this peculiar power of Christianity, change their course after they pass the age of thirty years. Those who are then indolent do not become systematically industrious. Those who are then intemperate rarely become sober. The radically dishonest never become trustworthy. It is also happily true, that good principles and habits then well established usually prove permanent to the end of life. But, as it is easier for feeble man to degenerate than to improve, the few instances in which this rule does not hold are cases of changes from the better to the worse. When, therefore, I see, under the gospel, a permanent change of a hardened sinner for the better, my experience inclines me to believe that he has felt some power above that of mere nature.

But third: when we consider what the change in the new birth is, and what the heart to be changed is, we plainly see that the work is above nature. The soul of man has its natural laws as truly as the world of matter. In both worlds we learn these laws by the uniformity of our experience. Because all men have ever seen water run down hill, therefore we say that this is the law of its gravitation. And, therefore, when the waters of Jordan stood on a heap while the ark of God and Israel passed through its channel, men knew it was a miracle. The sun and the moon have always proceeded regularly from their rising to

their setting. Hence, when their motion ceased at the word of Joshua, it was plainly a miracle.

Now universal observation proves that *ungodliness* is the natural law of man's soul, as the holy Scriptures declare. Let me explain. By this bad word, *ungodliness*, I do not mean some series of sins peculiarly degrading in man's eyes, or some peculiar degree of enormous criminality. I mean that natural alienation from God, that obstinate reluctance to submit your wills to his righteous will, that native preference for the good things of this world over God and his service and favor, which you all feel in your breasts, and which, in the best of you, show themselves in the fixed purpose to break, for the present, some commands of your Maker, and to neglect at least some known duties. There may be much difference in the sinfulness of different men here. Some of you have no leaning to certain sins, which others pursue with greediness; social principles may make you despise them. But I know that I may make *this* charge against the most decent impenitent man here: you prefer the world to God; he "is not in all your thoughts;" you are alienated from him; you are determined not at this time to surrender your will entirely to his holy will; and you are resolved, with full purpose of heart, not to do at this time the whole of what you know to be your duty to your God. I have read you aright, have I not?

Well, this heart is, in different degrees and phases, universal among natural men, in all races and ages, under all religions and forms of civilization, whatever religious instincts men may have, and to whatever pious observances they may be driven by remorse, or self-righteousness, or spiritual pride. We perceive that this disposition of soul begins to reveal itself in all children as early as any intelligent moral purpose is disclosed. We observe that while it is sometimes concealed, or turned into new directions by the force of circumstances, it is always latent, and is a universal and controlling principle of conduct towards God. We find that it holds its evil sway in spite of all light and rational conviction in men's own minds, and of inducements drawn from conscience and heaven and hell, which ought to be omnipotent. Such is every man's inward history, until *grace* reverses his career.

Now I claim that these facts of experience authorize me in regarding this ungodly disposition in man as natural and funda-

mental. How do we learn more certainly that any other native trait or affection belongs to the constitution of his soul? It is plain that, since Adam's fall, ungodliness is as radically a native disposition of man's soul as the desire of happiness or the fear of pain. (John iii. 6.)

But here I remind you, that no man ever reverses or totally eradicates or revolutionizes any material or fundamental disposition of soul by his own purpose or choice; nor can any mere inducement persuade him to do so. Look and see. These principles may be bent, they may be concealed, they may be turned into new channels by self-interest, or by education, or by restraint. The same selfishness which in the season of heady youth prompted to prodigality, may in thrifty age inspire avarice, but it is never eradicated by natural means. Again I say, look and see. Hunger is a natural appetite. Should a physician tell you that he had a patient with a morbid appetite, but that by his eloquent pictures of the dangers of relapse and death from the imprudent indulgence in food, he had actually caused the man no longer to be hungry, you would tell him, "Sir, you deceived yourself; you have only persuaded him to curb his hunger; he feels it just as before." Suppose this physician told you that he had plied his patient's mind with such arguments for the utility of a certain nauseous drug that it had actually become sweet to his palate? Your good sense would answer, "No, sir; it is in itself bitter to him as before; you have only induced him by the fear of death—a more bitter thing—to swallow it in spite of its odiousness."

Try my assertion again by some of the instinctive propensities of the mind, instead of these animal appetites, and you will find it equally true. The distinction of *meum* and *tuum* is universal in human minds, and the love of one's own possessions is instinctive in men's hearts. Can you then argue or persuade a man into a genuine and absolute indifference to his own? This was one of the things which monasticism professed to do: monks were required to take the three vows of "obedience, chastity and poverty." Many devout and superstitious persons upon entering monasteries reduced themselves to absolute and perpetual poverty, by giving their goods to the church or the poor, and foreswore forever the pursuits by which money is acquired. But was the natural love of possession really eradicated? The noto-

rious answer was, No. Every one of these monks was as ready as any other man to contest the possession of his own cell, his own pallet, his own gown and cowl, his own meagre food. And for the commonwealth of their monastery and order they uniformly contended with a cunning and greediness which surpassed all others, until they engrossed to themselves half the wealth of Europe.

The love of applause is native to man. Can reasoning or persuasion truly extinguish it? These may correct, direct, or conceal this passion; they can do no more. The hermit professed to have extinguished it. He hid himself in deserts and mountains from the society of men, and pretended that he was dead to their praise and their attractions, dead to all but heaven. But he who sought out this hermit and conversed with him soon detected in him an arrogance and spiritual pride above those of all others; and the chief reason why he was content to dwell in savage solitudes was that the voice of fancy brought to his soul across the wastes which sundered him from the haunts of men, their applause for his sanctity, in strains sweeter to his pride than the blare of bugles and the shouts of the multitude.

I return, then, to my point. There is, there can be, no case in which mere inducements work in man a permanent purpose contrary to the natural dispositions of his soul. But ungodliness is a native, a universal, a radical propensity. Hence, when we see such a revolution in this as the gospel requires in the new birth, we must believe that it is above nature. This great change not only reforms particular vices; it revolutionizes their original source, ungodliness. It not only causes the renewed sinner to submit to obedience, as the bitter, yet necessary medicine of an endangered soul; it makes him prefer it for itself as his daily bread. It not only refrains from sin, which is still craved, as the dyspeptic refuses to himself the dainties for which he longs, lest his indulgence should be punished with the agonies of sickness; it hates sin for its own sake. The holy and thorough submission to God's will, which the convert before dreaded and resisted, he now loves and approves. Nothing less than this is a saving change; for God's command is, "My son, give me thine heart." He requireth truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts he shall make us to know wisdom. Saith the Saviour, "Either make the tree good and its fruits good, or else the tree

evil and its fruits evil." Such is the change which makes the real Christian. It is a spiritual resurrection; it is the working of that "mighty power of God which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

Indeed, a little plain reflection, of which any thinking man should be capable, will convince you that this conclusion of our experience could not be otherwise. It is unreasonable to expect any inducements you can offer from without to make a thorough change of the natural propensities of the heart of your hearer; and this because the natural propensities are the causes which decide already whether any objects you may propose to his mind and heart shall be to him inducements or repulsions. Is it reasonable to expect nature to work against or above nature? Surely not. Can a thing by its power determine or change that prior force which gives or deprives it of all the power that is in it? Can the effect change its own cause? Can the quality of the child determine what shall be the nature of the father who begat him? Just so reasonable is it for you to hope that gospel truth and inducements will suffice by their natural influence to change the moral nature of a sinner radically, when that evil nature determines already that the gospel is to his heart no natural inducement at all, but, on the contrary, intrinsically hateful. You see an engaging child playing in some place of danger; you wish to draw it away; and you crave to caress it and please yourself with its beauty and grace. Would you call to it, "Come hither, pretty child, and I will give you *aloes* and *quinine* to eat?" Will such an inducement fetch it to you? I trow not. Suppose, then, you exhibit the lure in more force; increase its quantity: intensify its odor and bitterness; cause the child to smell of it near at hand, and receive a more correct perception of its nature. Try whether by this means you can attract it to your arms. Do you not know that the more you press the bitter drug the more the child will recoil? And your good sense gives the explanation. You know that the child has beforehand a natural palate, whose laws determine that these drugs are intrinsically unpleasant and can only repel instead of attracting. If you had presented sweetmeats and ripe fruits, you might have succeeded in attracting. You see clearly enough here that it is preposterous to expect that the offer of bitter things will attract the palate to a change, because the nature of the palate has determined in advance that

they shall be only nauseous and repulsive to it. If there is any superior medical agent which will revolutionize the very law of this child's palate, so that the bitter shall now be sweet, and the sweet bitter, then you may present your drugs where that agent works, and they will attract. So holiness and submission of the inward heart to the sovereign will of God are now bitter to the taste of the sinner's soul; the more they are displayed the more will he recoil from salvation, until the same Divine Physician who healed the stroke of death in Jesus' body heals the perversity of his heart by his sovereign touch.

I argue, fourth, that the new birth is the exceeding greatness of God's power, because of the different effects which accompany the preaching of the gospel to different men, and to the same men at different times. Were the power only the natural influence of the truth, these diverse effects could not be explained consistently with the maxim that like causes produce like effects. The same gospel inducements are offered to a congregation of sinners, and "some believe the things which are spoken and some believe not." It is not always the most docile, amiable or serious mind that yields; such unbelievers often remain callous to its appeals, while some ignorant, stubborn and hardened sinner is subdued. How is this? If the whole influence were in the truth preached, should not the effects show some regular relation to the cause? Should not the truth prevail where the natural obstacles are least, if it prevailed at all? Why do we see cases in which it fails before the weaker and triumphs over the stronger resistance? It is because, in one case, "the exceeding greatness of God's power" is behind that truth, and in the other case, is absent.

But if you deny the sovereign agency of the Holy Ghost in the new birth, you have a more impracticable case to explain. It is the case of him who had resisted this gospel for twenty, thirty, or fifty years, and has yet been subdued by it at last. If the truth had natural power within itself to persuade this soul, why did it not effect it at first? If it lacked that power, how does it come to effect the work at last, after so many failures? This mystery is enhanced for you by two great facts: the one is, that the futile presentation of this gospel-truth for so many years must, in accordance with the well known law of habit, have blunted the sensibilities of the soul, and rendered the story of redemption

trite and stale. If you know anything of human nature, you cannot but admit this result. Repetition must make any neglected story dull. That which at first somewhat excited the attention and sensibilities, urged so often in vain, must become as

"Irkesome as a twice told tale,  
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man."

Familiarity and inattention must blunt the feelings toward such a story. The man who first approaches Niagara has his whole ear filled with that mighty, sullen roar of the waters, which shakes the very ground beneath his feet. The dwellers at the spot are so habituated to it by use that they forget to hear it at all! The ingenuous boy almost shudders at the first sight of blood, though it be only that of the bird he has brought down in his sport. See that person, when hardened by frequent scenes of carnage and death into the rugged soldier, insensible to the fall of his comrade by his side, and planting his foot with a jest upon human corpses, as he mounts to the "imminent, deadly breach."

The other fact which you must take into the account is, that while this sinner is growing more callous to sacred truth by its neglect, every active principle of ungodliness within him must be growing by its indulgence. Is any one ignorant of this law, that a propensity indulged is thereby strengthened? Need I bring instances to prove or illustrate it? How else does any man grow from bad to worse; how does the temperate drinker grow into a drunkard, the card-player into a gambler, save by the force of this law? It must be then that, while the sinner is neglecting the gospel, at the bidding of ungodliness, the love of the world, avarice, sensual lusts, self-will, pride, ambition, false shame, with every evil outward habit, are growing into giant strength.

This, then, is the case which you have to solve. Here is an influence, the natural force of sacred truth, which was fully plied to overcome the unbelief of the young heart, with every advantage of fresh interest. The tenderness of maternal love, the gentle and venerable authority of a father amidst the sweet sanctities of home, plied when the soul was still unformed, and in the plastic gristle of its childhood. But even in this tender heart the inborn power of ungodliness was too strong, the application utterly failed. But now, after this truth has been exhausted of its power by twenty, thirty, or it may be, fifty years

of useless presentation; and after this native ungodliness, too strong in its infancy, has been hardened by as many years of sin into the rugged bone of manhood, lo! the powerless truth suddenly becomes powerful! The stubborn sinner listens, feels and submits. Natural agencies cannot account for this. The finger of God is there. Let me suppose a parallel case. Years ago, suppose, when the trees which embower this forest sanctuary were lithe saplings, and I in the vigor of my first prime, you saw me lay hold of one of them with my hands, and attempt to tear it from its seat. But, though a sapling, it was too strong for me. Now years have rolled around, that tree has grown to a giant of the forest, and I return, no longer in the pride of youth, but a worn and tottering old man; and you, the same spectators, are here again. You see me go to that very tree, and attempt to wrench it from its place. You laugh scornfully; you say, "Does the old fool think he can pull up that sturdy oak? He was unable to do it before, when it was a sapling, and he was strong." Yes, but suppose the tree came up in his feeble hand? You would not laugh then. You would stand awe-struck, and say, "Something greater than nature is here."

And so say I, when I see the sturdy old sinner, hardened by half a century of sins and struggles against the truth, bow before that same old gospel story, which he had so often spurned. When I see the soul which was by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and which has been stiffening and growing more chill, under all the appliances of human instruction and persuasion, at the last, when the zeal and hope and strength of man are almost spent, suddenly quickened under our hands, I know that it is "the exceeding greatness of God's power (not ours) according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

Does any one attempt to escape this conclusion by saying that the new efficacy of the truth may have been derived from the superior force or eloquence of the orator who preached it on this occasion, or from the advantage of some such circumstance? I have two answers. One is, that there are no circumstances so auspicious, and no eloquence so persuasive as those which this soul has already resisted as an impenitent child. What eloquence is equal to that of the Christian mother, as she draws her beloved son to her knee, and tells him the history of Jesus'

love in accents tremulous with unutterable tenderness? Would that I could imitate it, while I beseech you to seek the new heart! The other answer is, that the plain facts and persuasives of the gospel are, in themselves, too infinite to receive any appreciable weight from the trivial incidents of a perspicuous statement and an eloquent tongue. In the simple story of the cross, with divine love there dying a shameful and bitter death for its guilty enemies, in the offer of a heaven of everlasting and unspeakable bliss, and the threat of an eternal and remediless hell, even if they be but intelligibly lisped in the feeble voice of a child, there should be a weight so immense that beside it all the enlargements of human rhetoric would be as naught. Ah, my brethren, man's skill of speech cannot weigh where Christ and eternity prove too light. It is as though that mighty mountain, whose ridges we scaled a few days ago, had been put in the balance against the mightier strength of your ungodliness, but could not counterpoise it. And then I come, and with my puny hand cast one little stone at the mountain's base, and say, "There, I have added to its weight; it will no longer prove too light." Such folly is it to expect that man can convert. Where the story of the cross has been resisted, naught can do it "save the exceeding greatness of his power."

Once more I argue, in the fifth place, from the uniform representations of the Scriptures. The picture which they give of man's spiritual state by nature proves the text. Your souls, before the new birth, are blind, "having the understanding darkened, because of the blindness of your heart" (Eph. iv. 18). They are "enmity to God" (Rom. viii. 7). They are "stony" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). They are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1). Do you object that these are tropes? Yes; but I suppose that the Spirit of all truth does not select tropes such that the figurative resemblance to the truths contained under them would be false. Now, then, can the blind eyes so admit the light as to open themselves thereby? Does obstinate enmity beget love out of itself? Does the stone imbue itself with softness? Does the dead corpse prepare its own resurrection?

Again: the images by which the Scriptures describe the great change are obviously chosen so as to teach that it is directly of God. It is a "new birth" of the Holy Ghost (John iii. 5). It is an "opening of blind eyes" (Psa. cxix. 18). It is a "new crea-

tion unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10). It is a "quickenings of the dead" (Eph. ii. 5). Again I ask, Does the infant generate itself? Does the wood shape itself for the artisan into the form of utility he desires? Does the corpse raise itself to life? Then must the infant work before it existed; the wood exercise intelligence and will, and the dead body perform the prime action of life before it is alive!

And to this agree the express testimonies of the Word in other forms: "I have planted, Apollos watered; *but God gave the increase*" (1 Cor. iii. 6). They "that believe on his name are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13).

Every genuine conversion, then, reveals the quickening power of God's almighty Spirit; it is a supernatural work. But if it is according to the working of God's mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, then it is as valid a proof that "the kingdom of God is come unto you" as though you witnessed a sensible miracle; it carries the same high responsibility to believe and love and obey the word of that kingdom.

But I pass by this corollary, to urge upon you, in conclusion, this one solemn thought: "Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." You will never work this new birth of yourselves; you are absolutely dependent on the sovereign in-working of that God against whom you sin hourly. Unless he condescends to stoop and touch your stubborn heart, it will remain ungodly, just as surely as the corpse remains dead. All the zeal of religious teachers, all your own self-righteous resolutions and vows, will be assuredly vain. But your whole life, your every act now tends to alienate that almighty hand, on whose touch your salvation depends. How complete is this dependence! How mad your rebellion! Will you not now cease fighting against your only deliverer, and begin to cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me?" (Psa. li. 10.)

I know the cavil with which impenitence excuses itself, and I know its emptiness. Will you object that my exhortation is contradictory to my doctrine? Will you tell me that if you are dependent on sovereign grace, and will never change your own hearts, then the only consistent effect of the teaching must be to

make you to fold your hands, and await in absolute apathy the almighty touch?

“Fold your hands,” I reply, while you passively await God’s help? Nay, your hand is stretched out every moment in active resistance to God’s will and grace. Talk not to me of passivity, when the very nature of your soul is active, and that activity is ceaselessly directed by a rebellious will against God and duty. I would that you could become passive from sinning. Nor is it true that the Bible doctrine herein chills or represses your exertions after redemption; for, in truth, you do not believe in your real dependence. Would God that you did; would that you knew it as well as I do, for then we should see you, instead of coldly cavilling against facts and duty and grace, crying mightily unto God for his aid. It is not according to reason or nature that your clear knowledge of your coming ruin, and of your absolute dependence on help from above for deliverance, should paralyze effort or produce apathy. Here is a man whose house is hopelessly involved in flames. He is within, in an upper chamber, busily collecting his treasures, and he supposes that he has the means of escape wholly at his own command, to resort to them whenever he deemed it imprudent to venture farther. This notion, as you well know, will tempt him to postpone his escape, to venture near the utmost moment, to listen to the attractions of his wealth which he would fain rescue.

And this is just your delusion now. But meantime the man casually looks at the stairway without, by which he expected to escape, and finds to his surprise that it is wrapped in flames. He sees that he has no means of egress at his own command; unless assistance comes from without he is lost. Now, what does nature or reason prompt this man to do? That moment there is an end of his rash delays. No longer does he tamper with the rescue; his dearest treasures drop from his hands, and he runs to a window and shouts, “Help, help, or I am gone!”

So do you cry to God. It is the very thing, the only thing, which a helpless sinner, who is guilty for his very helplessness, should do. “Save, Lord, or I perish!”

# THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH:

ITS NATURE, DESIGN AND PROPER OBSERVANCE.

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IT must be confessed that the Christian world now presents an anomalous condition touching the Sabbath. Strict Protestants usually profess in theory the views once peculiar to Presbyterians, and admit that the proper observance of the Sabbath is a bulwark of practical Christianity. But their practice does not always correspond with their theory. In actual life there is, among good people, a great uncertainty, with a corresponding confusion of usages, from great laxity up to the sacred strictness of our pious forefathers. It is greatly to be feared that those in the church who tolerate this laxity are increasing in numbers and influence. The civil law, which guarantees the Sabbath rest to all as a secular benefit and right, is enforced with more and more difficulty, especially in populous places; and this law is disregarded with increasing boldness by powerful corporations and by those who offer amusements and sensual enjoyments to the public. Hence the wisest friends of truth and good have taken the alarm. The aim of this treatise is to give some humble help in this good cause by proving the divine and perpetual authority of God's holy day.

It will appear singular to the thoughtful observer that the consciences of devout and sincere persons leave them room for such license in their Sabbath observance, while in all other things they show themselves honest Christians, sincerely governed by their convictions of truth and duty. The explanation is, that men's convictions touching the claims of the Sabbath are not clear. And this confusion of opinions is to be traced to a fact of which many, perhaps, who experience its injurious effects are not aware: that the Protestant communions founded after the great Reformation were widely and avowedly divided in their opinions on this duty. In our mixed population in America the descen-