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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1867.

### SPIRITUAL RECOVERY.

But let none deceive their own souls; wherever there is a saving principle of grace, it will be thriving and growing unto the end. And if it fall under obstructions, and thereby into decay for a season, it will give no rest or quietness unto the soul, wherein it is, but will labor continually for a recovery. Dr. John Owen.

It is a great pity there are so few robust Christians, who maintain their spiritual health at pretty much the same point, regardless of the varying circumstances and unfavorable aspects around them. Multitudes that bear the Christian name are ever swaying between decline and convalescence, the former generally very rapid, the latter, very slow. Some indeed are only poor, confirmed invalids, near relations to Mr. Bunyan's Ready-to-Halt and Feeble-Mind, who cannot get on without the help of all the Great-Hearts and Valiants in the Church at their elbows. Wise and abundant provision must be made in the pulpit and the church generally for spiritual recovery. We cannot afford to neglect so large a class as the wandering, the cold, and the backslidden. Especially at this season of the year, we are constrained to pay attention to the wants of this class, whose recreations often have benefited their bodies at the expense of their souls. While their outward man has been renewed, their inward man has perished day by day. They come back to the sanctuary much as the man in the Gospels went into the synagogue, with a withered right hand, and the first work of mercy to be done for them, is to restore it whole as the other.

1. It is inconceivable that there should be any true Christians content with this low spiritual state. In every soul touched by Divine grace, there are yearnings after a higher, healthier condition, even at the best state reached on earth. No true Christian, save when blinded with fanaticism, dares sit down contented with his own attainments.

This is indeed a hopeful feature of the diagnosis. There is room for cure. But we want more. There must be cure. The Christian must feel the necessity of recovery. He must come back to God and that promptly. He dare not trifle over the matter. Without a prompt and positive recovery, the decline must go on. Imperceptibly perhaps, the world the flesh and the devil will continue to gain on him. Covetousness will extend and deepen its dreadful kingdom in his heart. Temporal interests will assume grand proportions in his judgment. His religion will dwindle away to hollow forms. Like the foolish virgin, the oil will be nearly if not quite gone from his lamps, and he slumbering and unconscious at the great hour when the bridegroom comes. He must recover, or be doomed to perpetual doubt of the grounds of his hope and of salvation at last. He must recover, or bear his profession of religion as an onerous vow, a round of duties barren of enjoyment.

The interests of Christ's kingdom call loudly for the immediate convalescence of the invalids belonging to its armies. It is necessary that the hospitals at the earliest possible time should return their inmates to the front where the battle is raging. Every Christian is wanted there and wanted now, in full vigor, in complete armor, strong in faith, earnest in prayer, clear in vision, warm in sympathies, bold, enterprising and patient in plan and execution and endurance. There are heavy tasks to be done, there is hardness to be endured, there are shrewd brushes with the enemy to be met; there is fatigue, there is cross-bearing, there is temporary defeat:—we want no pining invalids for this. Our arch-enemy, the devil, seems never much out of health himself, or rather the very ailments of himself and followers are of the nature of a madness and a rage against all good, so that the sicker they are, the more fierce and violent are they in their course.

Behold, O Christian, a perishing world. Lift up your eyes and see even in Christian countries, the field white to the harvest! See multitudes of your fellow-citizens even, unprovided with accommodations for worship; see multitudes of young and old, caring naught for themselves, who make no appeal to you save to let them alone, who fall in with your humor of inaction; but whose very indifference on the brink of per-

dition is the strongest of all appeals for your prompt and earnest and prayerful interference; for whom the divine Saviour, most freely gave himself in a life of shame and a cruel death.

There is work for which only wide awake, well recovered Christians are needed here and now. There are in this city and State of ours,—and in not a few other States of our Union, good laws to be sustained against the assaults of the licentious and the irreligious in our community. There is our excellent Sunday liquor law,—which fell upon our city last spring like a blessed miracle of manna out of heaven. There are the grand old Sunday laws of our Commonwealth, so nobly vindicated by Judge after Judge upon that seat of honor, the Supreme bench of Pennsylvania, and by none more effectively than Judge Strong in this city a year ago. For the support of such laws and for guarding the traditions on which they are founded, we need a wide awake and vigorous piety; we need Christian constitutions with sound knee-joints and with the spinal column clear of all nervous debility. There is work to be done in which half-hearted Christians are of no service; but are likely to be a hindrance.

2. The conviction must rest in every mind that such recovery is practicable. There is ground indeed for penitence and self-reproach, but for despondency there is positively none at all. It does indeed seem that when nations and entire church organizations fall away, the way of return is hedged up. The Jews are still wanderers from the truth which they rejected in Christ. The Romish church, from present appearances, will be crushed by the force of outward vicissitudes, ere it gives any sign of a return to the simplicity of the Gospel. The Protestant churches on the continent are recovering but slowly from the rationalism of the 17th century. Yet they are recovering. And even upon the lustreless candlesticks of the Seven Churches of Asia, the tapers are being re-kindled, and a glimmer of the old starlight is beginning to appear. And there are difficulties in the way of every individual Christian's recovery; there is a hardness of heart, a worldly chill upon the affections, a perversion of the taste from spiritual to carnal objects, a deadness in prayer, a sluggishness, a palsy, a *vis inertiae* which seem like mountain weights upon the soul. Sometimes unbelief, arising from communion with unbelieving persons and literature and from neglect of the Bible and good books and prayer, seems to be cutting one by one the very nerves and sinews of his spiritual being. But there is no need to lose courage. Only perfect beings are without such fluctuations. The Bible is full of calls to the backsliding to return. No other class is addressed with such tenderness; is pursued with such importunate entreaty. Afflictions are sent to recal you; and the very arrangements of Providence are designed for your recovery. Though you have fallen like Peter, like him you may be restored to comfort and to great usefulness.

But the final comprehensive ground of confidence is the freeness and power of the Holy Spirit. While we forget Him there is nothing so natural as despondency. Without Him we can do nothing. Remaining corruption will be too hard for us. We shall lie helpless, motionless, with only a name to live. All our plans for recovery will be nugatory. When we do good we shall find evil present with us. There is an imperious law in our members, warring against the law of our minds and bringing us into captivity, from which only the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can set us free. Let us rejoice that this indispensable spiritual agency for recovery is ours. Despond only in yourself, and that you may be the more thoroughly turned to dependence on the Spirit. Believe in His love and His willingness, only equalled by His almighty power. It is He, who speaks through the gracious promises of the word: "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely." Perhaps the clearest recognition in all the Old Testament of the existence of the Third Person in the Trinity, is in the heart-broken utterances of the penitent David, when he is returning to God: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me—uphold me with thy free Spirit." And down to our day the Holy Spirit is the great refuge and hope of the backslidden Christian.

Hope in Him, believe in Him. Know that all your seeking after Him is vain, unless

He is with you already in the search. Believe in Him; and if He still seems absent, then with a deeper conviction of your hardness of heart and helpless condition without Him, only the more earnestly and unreservedly renew your dependence on Him.

And how glorious and how blessed is His coming once more into the longing waiting soul! How like water poured on the thirsty ground! How like spring-tide with its bursting fullness of life and of beauty to the frozen earth! How like the flush of youth, thrilling through aged and palsied limbs! What fresh aspirations for holiness, what new endurance under the cross, what enhanced vigor for work, what new triumphs over self and the world, what nearer views of Christ, and simpler trust in His grace and deeper gratitude for his work! It is heavenly wind blowing upon the garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. "I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

May the condition of the Church speedily correspond to this inspiring description!

### NEW MODES OF EFFORT AND A BLESSING UPON THEM.

In a spirit of enlarged hope and confidence in the Holy Spirit, the Young Men's Christian Association of this city have taken a new and bold step forward in the work of reaching the masses outside of Church influences in our city. The chief place of worldly amusement in Philadelphia, the Chestnut Street Theatre, stands directly opposite their rooms, and for six nights in the week plies a vigorous game with the youth of the city in opposition to their excellent Christian enterprise. But for the *seventh night*, they, at least for a season, have secured that great building as a positive and a powerful adjunct to their work. We give in another column, a full report of last Sunday evening's services in this Theatre, which, it would seem, were a marvellous success in every point of view. There, where night after night, great audiences have been entertained with representations, which, from time immemorial have been regarded as destructive of virtue, a still greater audience was held in breathless and solemn attention by an earnest Evangelical discourse on the Judgment Day. There, where placards are needed upon the walls, warning the unruly gatherings in the week against disorderly conduct, not an indecorous whisper or movement could have been heard. There, where the music and motions of the voluptuous dance have called out the applause of the sensual crowd, rolled up great volumes of praise to the power of Jesus' name, and thence, whence so many go forth to haunts of vice and dens of perdition, went scores of humble penitents to mingle with God's people in social worship, and to ask their prayers and guidance in setting out on a life of obedience, faith and piety.

Every friend of the work of city-evangelization must rejoice in this new agency, and in the blessed results with which the very first service was attended, especially since the very class of persons aimed at appears to be reached. And while the presence of the usual worshippers at churches is not sought or desired, the earnest prayers of all God's people, in behalf of this new and bold inroad into Satan's Kingdom, is devoutly wished. On next Sabbath evening, Rev. J. Walker Jackson, of the M. E. Church, will preach, and on the following Sabbath, Rev. Dr. Newton, of this city. It is expected that Rev. Newman Hall, of London, will on some early occasion occupy the place.

We noticed, too, that another famous place of amusement, in Eleventh St., near Market, was open for a Temperance meeting on the same evening, when stirring addresses were made by Thomas M. Coleman, Esq., and others, in behalf of our Sunday Liquor Law. Such indications of the activity of the friends of Law and of Reform, in the very centres of gaiety and dissipation, are most encouraging. Let us raise high our expectations and remember the gracious promise: "According to your faith be it unto you."

### SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS' INSTITUTE.

Last week witnessed the first gathering of teachers, children, and friends of Sabbath-schools in this city, for the specific purpose of imparting and gaining information on improved methods of giving Sunday-school instruction. Former conferences have been more for discussion and comparison of views; this was rather to learn from experienced men and acknowledged leaders, the methods by which they had attained success. It is impossible for us to say more of the meetings than that they were fully attended, and the interest sustained throughout; that Ralph Wells' Infant Class exercise on Wednesday evening was the centre of interest for the whole occasion; that Rev. Alfred Taylor's black-board exercises were very successful illustrations of the value of such an adjunct in Sunday-school teaching; that Prof. Osborn interested and instructed his hearers greatly upon Sacred Geography; and that Rev. Mr. Peltz's views on Adult Classes were of the highest practical value. Of course Mr. Phillips, the sweet singer, was as delightful as ever, and the two thousand children who filled the vast edifice on Wednesday afternoon had a most happy and profitable occasion, singing under Mr. Phillips' direction, and hearing admirable addresses. The Question Box seems to have been entirely omitted. We should not omit to mention the address of Mr. Wickersham, the excellent Superintendent of our State Common School System, who endeavored to impress the teachers with the necessity of bringing up the standard of Sunday school instruction to an equality with that given in common-schools. Without doubt, there is great need of thorough instruction from some quarter, upon the Books and principles of Christianity for those who do not expect to make theology a profession, and the Sunday-school is, just now, almost the only place where an attempt to attain this end is made.

### SOMETHING REALLY TO BE DONE AT LAST!

Our Evangelical friends in the Protestant Episcopal Church, comprising some of the best men living, or that ever lived, are, we believe, at last growing tired of the imputation of a want of courage to which their anomalous position exposes them, and which is strengthened by contrast with the increasing boldness and arrogance of the ritualists. We are to understand that their past inaction, like that of Garibaldi in regard to Rome, has been apparent rather than real, and that they have all the time been waiting for the right moment; for the hour of action to strike. Our excellent cotemporary, *The Protestant Churchman*, in a late issue says:

"The time has come when truly Evangelical men must stand shoulder to shoulder, and bravely and fearlessly meet the issues, which High Church intolerance, Ceremonialism, and Semi-Popery have forced upon us.  
The aid of the cowardly and time-serving and place-seeking, we neither look for nor desire, but we do expect and ask the generous and hearty support of all who believe that *THE PROTESTANT CHURCHMAN* truly represents the aims and sentiments of the Evangelical party in our Church.  
But it is not simply to the approval of this paper that we call our Evangelical friends. They must stand together, ready for the opportune moment, when the yoke of bondage to High Church interpretations of Canons, and to Ecclesiastical despotism shall, without violating a single article of this Church, be cast off forever, ready to assert their spiritual freedom, to proclaim the Gospel everywhere and under all circumstances, to do Christ's work in Christ's way, and to acknowledge the ministerial commission of all who, in every branch of the Christian Church, have been called to preach Christ crucified.

Let petty differences be buried, and let us all have one soul and one mind, and then—if there be no other remedy—there will be power and numbers sufficient to re-assert, at the right moment, the principles of the Reformers in a truly Reformed Church, which shall be Episcopal, and yet unmistakably Protestant."

We trust that in these strong words our cotemporary is not simply talking to the air. Thousands of Evangelical Christians in other denominations, are, for the sake of truth and righteousness, anxious to know what power the Evangelical party really possesses as against the High Churchmen. They have long ago grown weary of wondering why, if they possessed any power, the party have shown so much reserve in wielding it; and on the whole, they strongly incline to the opinion, that nothing is really left the Evangelicals but an exodus from the pale of the Church, like that of Dr. Chalmers and his associates in the memorable and fruitful movement of 1843. Only thus, as it seems to them, can "a truly Reformed

and a truly Episcopal Church" be looked for. But if it can be reached by any other means, in God's name, let it be done. It is high time our brethren, from their dimly lighted chambers, saw how late in the day they are with their promises to do something when "the opportune moment" comes.

Since writing the above, we find in the last number of the *Protestant Churchman*, the following programme of the objects to be attained by this grand movement:

I. The right of preaching wherever there are souls willing to hear the message of the Gospel.

II. The right of recognizing the ministerial character of those who exercise the office of the Evangelical ministry outside of the Episcopal Church, and to do it in the usual forms of such recognition, unrestrained by canonical restrictions.

III. The right of using some expression alternative of "regeneration" in the Baptismal office, which will not be misunderstood, and which will express what was meant by the word "regeneration" when the Prayer Book was compiled.

These are good objects and worthy of a coup d'etat; and quite as much, perhaps, as we have a right to expect; but it does seem a little strange that the restraint of ritualist extravagance, now so glaring and so rapidly on the increase, is not even hinted at in the programme.

PROF. CHARLES HODGE AS A NEW SCHOOL THEOLOGIAN.—We had the opportunity, last spring, of pointing out the affinity of Dr. Hodge's views with those of our own Theologians, particularly his dissent from the realistic sense of Question 16, Shorter Catechism, and his opposition to the realistic theology generally. We have now the pleasure of chronicling a new and very important indication of the same fact, found in his famous article on the Cincinnati Assembly, in the last number of the *Princeton Review*.

In this article he distinctly repudiates the rigorous construction of the Confession against which New School men, from the beginning, have set up their protest; he leaves room, by fair implication, for dissent from particular expressions and aspects of doctrine, in the Confession, and declares openly that the acceptance of "the system of doctrine" contained in the Standards is all that is really required in adopting them at ordination. He has his own views of what that system is, and has a perfect right to them. He goes further and demands that the system which Charles Hodge finds in the Standards should be authoritative and final; or at least that the limits within which he thinks that system alone is found, should be accepted as impassable by all the orthodox elect of the Reformed Churches of Christendom. Nevertheless the case remains the same. He puts the New School principle at the very basis of his argument. He makes a broad concession and then undertakes to guard it. We take the concession; let him look to the consequences. As to the third sort of subscription, which, he says, makes the Confession to signify nothing more than the essential doctrines of Christianity, so that those who adopt it could just as easily and consistently belong to any other evangelical denomination, it is a mere man of straw. We don't believe that the Cumberland Presbyterians would regard themselves so loose as that sort of subscription would imply. The charge is one of the grossest that has ever been made against a respectable body of Christians, and we think the odium of it is likely to stick to its author as long as he lives. Even the *Presbyterian* of this city does not venture to sustain it.

OUR CHICAGO CORRESPONDENT under date: Chicago, Sept. 20, 1867, says:—"The religious event of the past week with us, has been the visit of Rev. Newman Hall, D. D. His preaching and lectures in several of our churches, and occasional addresses at other places, have been listened to by large and deeply interested audiences, and the general impression left upon the religious community is of the happiest kind.

"The will of the late C. W. Starkweather, of this city, just published, makes large bequests to the Bible Society, the A. B. C. F. M., our own Com. of Home Missions, and to our Publication Com. for the benefit of Sunday Schools. It will, however, be some seven years before these legacies will become available."