



THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

ON one occasion a friend found Michael Angelo gazing, like one inspired, upon a roughly hewn block of marble. When he asked him why, the sculptor replied, "I am thinking of the imprisoned angel I am going to set at liberty." By ten thousand patient touches he accomplished his great design, and the angel released came forth in beauty to be admired by the world. There is something better than the released angel—a depraved man renewed by the powers of the Holy Ghost; transformed, not into the figure of an angel, but into the Divine image, made like Christ. This is one proof of our holy religion not often enough insisted on. The Gospel alone of all religions proposes to regenerate men and to make them new creatures.

I state only a historical fact when I say that in the time of the Cæsars the apostles preached a new faith, grounding it upon the claim of the regeneration of mankind, and if that is true, then Christianity differs from all other religions that ever existed, and in it a new beam of hope dawned upon the darkness of the world. Such being the claim of Christianity, I am not surprised, when I look into the writings of such a man as Celsus, to see that he asserts that no such reli-

gion can ever prevail, as it undertakes to regenerate the wicked, to make men over again, which is impossible. If it be impossible, then indeed must Christianity abandon its claim; but if it be possible, if again and again it has been done, then is Christianity Divine.

Never was there a dialogue as short as that of Christ with Nicodemus that contained so much. Nicodemus was startled by the very fact that is contained in Celsus' proposition. "How," he exclaims, "can a man be born again when he is old?" Very solemn is Christ's answer: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." On that fact—that the Gospel could regenerate mankind—was its Divine Founder willing to stake His claims.

Perhaps you recollect how the Christian fathers answered the infidel argument. They said: "Come into our assemblies, and see whence we came; how the old hate and savagery have died out of our lives. Come and see how we recognise as our neighbour any one that needs our aid; how we forgive our enemies and do good to our persecutors. Come and see whether the Gospel has made transformations among us or not." It is simply a question of fact. If the Gospel can take depraved men and make them new