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The Little Old Man

By OSWALD J. SMITH, LL.D.

President Wiseman was dead! Of that there could be no doubt. The doctor had pronounced life extinct.

But the president's fellow modernists were not satisfied. The twentieth-century ideas should be tried, they thought. And far into the night the question was debated.

"You know," began Doctor Easygoing, "the teaching of this enlightened day is that every man must be his own saviour."

"I agree with you," replied Professor Knowall. "If a man does the best he can, all will be well."

"'Salvation by character,' has been my motto for several years now," broke in Dean Compromise. "It is the only way."

"I'm inclined to think," declared Professor Uptodate, that if a man is baptized, partakes of the Lord's Supper, and faithfully attends the church, he will get through without a doubt."

"Of course," replied Doctor Easygoing, "but I'm a strong believer in confirmation. Let bap-

tism be followed by confirmation and heaven is yours for sure."

"Keep the commandments, say I, and you will be safe enough," ventured Professor Knowall.

"But the Old Book says that men are dead, 'dead in trespasses and sin,' I think it reads. Now how is a dead man to be revived?" inquired Doctor Doubtful.

"Why, that's just what we've all been saying," explained Dean Compromise. "Men are made alive by the ways already mentioned."

"We are agreed, then," responded Doctor Doubtful, "that eternal life is necessary. The Bible, I think, is clear on that point. We must have this new life if we are to dwell with God."

"Well, now", observed Professor Uptodate, "we have made wonderful progress. This is a great age. Are we not logical in applying our twentieth-century ideas to the corpse of our beloved brother, President Wiseman?"

"What would you suggest?" asked Doctor Easygoing.

"Let us try them," suggested Dean Compromise; "let us put our methods to the test."

And they did, but all to no avail.

"Well, now, what is to be done?" asked Doctor Easygoing in desperation. "We have done everything that any church does today and President Wiseman is not yet alive. Can it be that all these things are of no use?"

"Not at all, my friends, oh no, not at all!"

Everyone turned in the direction of the voice. and as they looked, a little old man came rapidly towards them. His hair was white, and his wrinkled face was wreathed in smiles.

"All very useful, very useful," commented the little old man, stopping short, and gazing with an amused twinkle in his eye on the despondent faces of the modernists.

"But the mistake you have made," continued the little old man in a squeaky voice, "the mistake you have made is in applying these things to a *dead* man. God never gave them for the dead, but for the living. A man must be alive before he can do any of them. They do not produce life, they come after as a result of life. 'Ye must be born again' are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Then what must we do?" inquired Professor Knowall, glancing at the corpse on the floor.

"Only life produces life," explained the little old man. "'I am the resurrection and the life,' said Jesus: 'he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' Get President Wiseman in touch with God's Son and he will soon be alive, for 'he that hath the son hath life'. Then he can do all these things, not to obtain life, but because he already has life."

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Doctor Doubtful. "I knew we were putting the cart before the horse."

"Yes," exclaimed the little old man, "that's the trouble. You were depending upon things to produce life that were never intended for that purpose. Why, there are tens of thousands of dead church members who have been baptized and confirmed, who have taken the Lord's Supper, and who are doing the best they can, thereby expecting to obtain eternal life and thus enter heaven at last. But, as Doctor Doubtful has well said, they are putting the cart before the horse. They must first receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, for 'he that hath the son hath life,' and then all will be well."

Oh, my friend, where do you stand? Can it be that you, too, are trusting in outward forms and ceremonies that can never impart life? If so, I warn you, you will die in your sins. "In him is life." Only Christ can meet your need. Take Him and Eternal Life will be yours. Will you do it? Do it, and do it—NOW.

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