

MISSIONARY MAGAZINE;

OR

EVANGELICAL INTELLIGENCER.

THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S

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OR

EVANGELICAL INTELLIGENCER:

FOR 1805.

WILLIAM P. FARRAND, EDITOR.

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NO. IV.

MODERN MISSIONARY SOCIETIES.—CONTINUED.

THE CONNECTICUT MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

The Missionary Society of Connecticut was instituted in 1798; and, since that period, has uniformly and successfully pursued the objects for which it was formed. Its attention has been principally directed to the promulgation of the gospel, and the establishment of churches, in the new settlements in the northern part of Vermont, in the north and west parts of the State of New-York, and in the northwestern parts of Pennsylvania. Very considerable attempts to instruct and christianize the savages have been made, and the friends of the undertaking have much cause to rejoice for past success, and to be encouraged to future exertions. Wherever Missionaries from this society have gone, they have met with very favourable reception; great attention has been given to their preaching: and the hearers have generally expressed great obligations to their brethren in Connecticut for the pains which they take for their salvation. In many parts, schools and churches have been established, the children have been instructed and baptized, the Lord's Supper administered, and the Missionaries have much cause to hope that, by the blessing of God upon their labours, *many souls ready to perish have been brought to a saving knowledge of divine truth.*

BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

Verse 9th, of the 11th Chapter of Ecclesiastes explained.

In a discourse addressed to young people, which I had the opportunity of hearing some years since, my attention was particularly arrested by the manner in which the preacher explained and applied those words in the 11th of Ecclesiastes 9th verse; ‘Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.’ ‘Your time of life,’ said he, you are disposed to think might exempt you from attentions so serious, so correct, and so diverse from the tendencies of nature, as are those of religion. For this you refer to the words of Solomon: ‘Let the young man, &c.’—Such as you fondly presume, is the instruction alike of nature and of wisdom inspired: but, as to the way, which we recommend, that is not *the way of your heart*, nor does it fall within *the sight of your eyes*. You see neither beauty nor interest in it; and the thought of it, instead of cheering, depresses your spirits—Ah! my young friends, what pity it is, you should thus deceive yourselves! be assured such was not the meaning of that inspired son of wisdom. Solomon, the wise was not a minister of sin. For proof of this, let me only direct your attention to the sequel. But know thou, that, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.—If those words ‘*the way of his heart,*’ ‘*and the sight of his eyes,*’ in the quoted passage, is to be taken in the sense, that is, the vicious sense, you suggest, he must have spoken ironically; and the sequel must be understood as pointing to his real, though implicated meaning. If I may be allowed so to paraphrase the passage, it would be, as though he had said;

‘The season of youth you conceive to be a season more proper for other attentions than those of penitence and religious demeanor. You conceive it to be a season which nature has kindly allotted for all pleasurable indulgence, how vain or vicious soever; and, under this view, you are disposed, as it would seem, to treat with contemptuous indifference every monition of wisdom to the contrary—Well, since you are to appearance, so obstinately determined on this wayward course and habit of thinking, what shall we say? or what can we do with any hope of reclaiming you? What, indeed, but give you over, as it were, to the impulses of your own, so much wiser, or as you imagine, better founded conceptions.—Go

on then, deluded as you are ; make a full experiment of this your joyous progress ; assume with boldness the privilege you claim, and give a fair unbridled loose to all that vice and folly to which the spirit of your age may prompt you. Say in thine heart, there is no God ; there is no future retribution, no judgment to come ; the Bible is all a cheat ; and Heaven and Hell are mere chimeras, priestcraft, a painted bugbear to keep in awe the weak and superstitious. Happy libertine ! what have you to fear ? sing and dance and drink ; game, curse and swear ; and plunge lawless into every scene of debauchery and riot.—But, hold, methinks I hear you say, this is almost too much—we fear you are not in earnest—True, my young friend ? I am not in earnest : it is all an irony, ‘ for know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.’ Yes, gay, thoughtless, and presumptuous, as you are, the time is fast approaching, (and an awful time it is,) when you shall see, and with anguish unutterable feel, the nature and the operation of these things ; and whatever you now may think, your conscience, then fully informed, will dreadfully forestal, and with conviction irresistible justify your doom.’

This, I must acknowledge, is a very impressive explanation of the passage ; and the ironical form of speech here supposed is not without example in other parts of sacred scripture ; particularly in that well known address of Elijah to the prophets of Baal, in 1st Kings, 18, 27. ‘ cry aloud, for he is a God ; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked ;’ Yet I cannot conceive it to be a correct interpretation of the inspired author’s meaning in this place. It implies, in my view, an abridgment too indiscriminate of the propensions and privileges appertaining to the early stages of life. The young have natural propensions and privileges, and those peculiar to them which are not all vicious, and on account of which, simply considered, they cannot be supposed to be obnoxious to condemnation in the judgment to come. From those, Solomon, who, we know, was no Cynic, was not, I presume disposed to debar them. Such indiscriminate restraint, if we may judge from the whole tenor of his sacred writings, he considereth as unnecessarily discouraging, and as productive of effects on their minds the reverse of those which in his admonitions he had in view. Indeed, the analogous verse succeeding seems to me sufficiently to justify the opinion, that the passage is to be understood, not in an ironical, but literal sense : ‘ therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put

away evil from thy flesh.' The true meaning of Solomon in the place I conceive to be as follows : ' we allow you, the innocent manners and indulgences, which are proper to your age. But, by all means, let *them be innocent*. Let them be such as shall bear a favourable reference to the judgment to come. The claims, which nature has given you, it is doubtless your privilege to assert ; and in these claims we most freely indulge you. Remember, however, the claims which we refer to, are claims, with which nature, not as now, corrupted, but in its state of original purity and rectitude, has endowed you. They are such as accord with the principles and tendencies of nature in that state ; and consequently, with the rule by which in the future judgment all the deeds done in the body shall be tried. Let your conduct, therefore, under this indulgence, be at all times regulated by a becoming reference to that future account.'

I would only observe, that if the instructions and the discipline of parents, or guardians of whatever description, and of the ministers of religion, were always conformable to this, which I apprehend to be the true sense and meaning of the inspired preacher in the place, we should probably see more of the happy fruits of their well meant endeavours among the rising generation. Nevertheless, if the explanation I have suggested shall appear to any candid and well informed reader to be incorrect, or in any respect inconsistent with scripture and truth, or the designs of religious education, I shall be much obliged to him for any communication through the medium of this Magazine which may tend to rectify my mistake.

A. B.