

MISSIONARY MAGAZINE;

OR

EVANGELICAL INTELLIGENCER.

THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S

MISSIONARY MAGAZINE;

OR

EVANGELICAL INTELLIGENCER:

FOR 1805.

WILLIAM P. FARRAND, EDITOR.

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VOL. I.

APRIL, 1805.

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.*

and the lovely body was left untenanted by its immortal inhabitant !

Now we hope, she is numbered among the redeemed of the Lord ; and her lot is among the saints of God, in bliss ineffable and full of glory.

MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST.

Christianity was revealed for the benefit of mankind in general ; the greater number of whom have neither leisure nor capacity for enquiring largely, and with precision, into all the grounds of its credibility, especially those which demand the aid of much learning and argumentation to set them in their convincing light, and defend them against the objections of infidels. Yet, it was necessary, that this religion should be accompanied with evidences, even of the extraneous kind, sufficient for the rational conviction of every unprejudiced and candid individual. Of this kind no proof could be better adapted than that arising from miracles. It is a proof in the first instance addressed to our senses ; exhibiting at once, by an immediate divine interposition, the testimony of its author, who cannot be suspected of falsehood, and such to those who were present at the time and on the occasion of the performance of those miracles, such to us, at this distance of time, on examining them by a few easy and obvious mediums, is their force and authority, that they justly demand our faith without any farther reasonings. A true miracle is a work, which not only appears to be, but which in fact is, above the power of any human or other created being to perform ; a work, effected out of the common course and regular method of providence. Or, in other words, effected in a manner different from or above the operation of causes acting agreeably to the common laws of nature. Now, there have been many works called miracles, which appeared to be, but really were not such. Of this kind have many strange things been effected by priests and imposters, in different ages of the world, with intent to deceive the credulous multitude. The means and agency by which they were performed were so held out of view, as that they seemed to have been brought about

by some superior, even omnipotent, power ; whereas on examination they have been discovered to be gross impositions, effects, either solely of human, or, in part of diabolical art and exertion. Such were those exhibited by the ministry of the Egyptian sorcerers to invalidate the divine commission and authority of Moses. It is not, therefore, only their appearing to be true miracles, that renders the works of our Saviour a just ground or reason of our faith in him : it must also appear that they were not wrought by the concurrent agency of an evil spirit. But how doth this appear ? It is a question of the utmost importance ; for if those miracles were the effects of diabolical power co-operating with the word and will of Christ, Christ is not to be believed ; he must have been an impostor and his religion false ; but, otherwise, he must have acted by virtue of a divine power and commission ; and all those doctrines, for the confirmation of which he wrought the miracles, must be true, and we are bound as rational creatures to believe them on his testimony.

Now, there are three very plain and easy methods by which we may arrive at a very satisfactory solution of this question. The first is : by inquiring into the nature and tendency of the doctrines, to which the miracles were meant to give credit. If they be in themselves impious, or if they any how tend to derogate from the honour of the supreme and all perfect Being, and to promote any form of unrighteousness in the world, then the miracles which were intended to validate and promote them, cannot reasonably be supposed to be of God. But if, on the other hand, the doctrines do really tend to advance the honour of God and the practice of righteousness among men, the miracles are then unquestionably divine, and he who revealeth them, may be believed with the utmost safety. Now, such, even the infidel is constrained to acknowledge, is the religion which Jesus Christ revealed and inculcated. To exalt the divine perfections ; to lead men to the practice of the most perfect virtue and piety, and to destroy that of vice and irreligion, the grand interests of the kingdom of Satan, is the obvious, and, in the impartial reason of every man, undeniable tendency of the whole. To this method of distinguishing between his own miracles and all those which may be effected by diabolical power, our Lord himself has directed us in the 12th chapter of Matthew ; ‘ when he had healed one possessed of the Devil, blind and dumb, all the people were amazed, and said, is not this the son of David. But when

the Pharisees heard it they said, he doth not cast out Devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of Devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them: every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself, shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?’

The second method is: to inquire into the character of him by whom they have been performed. If he be a bad man, if he appear to be actuated by any sinister motive, or to have in view any evil design, there is good reason to conclude, that the hand of God is not with him. But infinitely far from such a character was that of the author of the miracles in question. He was, in a word, holy, harmless and undefiled. His whole life and behaviour perfectly corresponded with the law of human rectitude, and with every profession he made concerning himself, so evidently to all who knew him was this the case, that, on a certain occasion we find him demanding the faith of one of his disciples on this ground, even in one of the most mysterious doctrines which he taught, John 14, 11. ‘Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me,’ and then adds, ‘or else that is, if you have any doubt, whether you may entirely trust my simple word, ‘believe me for the very work’s sake.’

The third method is, to inquire whether any superior miracles were wrought in opposition to those in question? When miracles are opposed to each other, with the intent to establish contrary doctrines, then he, whose miracles are evidently superior, is to be believed, the other not. Thus Moses was to be believed in preference to Egyptian sorcerers: because his miracles exceeded theirs, and so manifested a superior power; which power could be no other than divine.

And, for the miracles of our Saviour, they were so far from being exceeded, that there were not any wrought to confront them. This is somewhat remarkable, when we consider the alarm which his pretensions and his ministry seem to have given to the powers, both of earth and of hell. Doubtless their opposition would have been manifested in this, as well as in the various other ways recorded, had not the adversary, for wise ends, been restrained, or had not our Saviour’s miracles been such, as could not, with any probability of success, been counterfeited, or rivalled by Satan without abilities superior to those which naturally belonged to him.

Much more might be said in reference to each of these methods of trying the validity of miracles; and much in answer to the objections which infidelity has insinuated against them. But my object was briefly to consider the subject, being sensible that its extensive discussion, would demand more pages than can properly be devoted to any one article in the Magazine. Besides, I wish only to advance a few thoughts on the subject, which may be useful to some serious inquiring persons. From what has been observed, it may, however, sufficiently appear to every candid reader, that the miraculous works of Jesus Christ, taken in connexion with the proper and obvious tendency of his religion, with his entire probity and perfect moral character, together with the unrivalled power he manifested in those works, are a just reason and adequate ground of faith in him.

If you shall think proper to give these observations a place in your useful Repository, I may, in your next number, point out some of those doctrines which his miracles were most directly and expressly intended to confirm,