

Irvingism—Miracles and Apostolicity.

It is the prerogative of Deity alone to "bring light out of darkness," or, "a clean thing out of an unclean;" and it is occasion both of awe and gratitude to find Him so frequently exerting this majestic power of goodness in causing that the different forms of dissent, notwithstanding their serious errors and deplorable schisms, shall generally maintain with great prominence some one important scriptural and catholic truth. Thus Irvingism maintains, in theory, with a scriptural clearness that shows very many amongst ourselves the necessity of catholic unity, the true character of the visible Church as the one Bride of Christ; the reality of priestly functions and of sacramental grace to the faithful, and many other such practical and blessed truths do they, by the overruling Providence of God, very distinctly put forth. Thus, for wise ends, has He ordered it, doubtless chiefly that His really elect Catholic Church may be stirred up to remember those truths so necessary to her own perfection, but which in these latter and evil days she has well nigh let slip. This, however, affords no guarantee that the Eternal sanctions the disciples of Irving in their schism, or that He will preserve them from falling into very serious error; the contrary is the fact, and the fault and sin are their own, if they have wilfully or carelessly forsaken those clearly defined foundations, upon which alone can the one, covenant, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ be founded.

Concerning two of their principal apologies for having done so, we are about to make a few observations, and the rather as, from want of a right knowledge, some of our own people, and probably some of our readers, are apt to be troubled with doubts and fears thereupon;—we allude to the supposition that the Church of our own time is incomplete, because *neither her priests nor people have any longer the power of working miracles*; and because *she has not got a fourth order of Ministers, called Apostles, superior to all the rest*.

I. And first as to the alleged deficiency of the Church, because miracles are no longer performed in her. It appears to us, that the persons making this objection, lose sight of the great design of miraculous powers, by forgetting that they were given as proofs of the Divine commission which had been entrusted to the in-

dividuals possessing them; or, as evidences of the truth of certain doctrines and teaching; and *not primarily for the benefit of the individuals on whose behalf they were at the time exerted*.

That miracles are no longer required as evidence of the Divine commission of the christian priesthood, or of the truth of the doctrines of our most holy faith, is sufficiently plain. Christ and his apostles both taught, as the Church has ever believed, that the Dispensation which He brought in is the *final* one, as respects this world;—that the Apostolic Church and our own form portions of those same "last days" of which so much is said in the New Testament as having succeeded to the Antedeluvian, Patriarchal, and Jewish Dispensations. Upon us therefore, as says St. Paul, "the ends of the world are come," we have no further dispensation to expect, no new revelation to look for; consequently we need no miracles to authenticate a fresh race of teachers, or to establish a new code of doctrines. And the Ministry of the Christian Church her divine Master clearly identified to the end of time, by establishing an open and visible Apostolic Succession, through ordination and laying on of hands, by themselves and their successors without interruption; a succession this, much more easily known and proved than that of the Aaronic priesthood by natural generation. Consequently miracles are entirely unnecessary, so far as the ascertaining who, in these days, are the truly commissioned ministers of Christ.

And as regards the doctrines of the Gospel, being founded on the Bible and the teaching of the Catholic Church they have an accumulated and unanswerable amount of evidence to their truth and authority, altogether independent of, and indeed far superior to, any present individual miraculous acts.

Why, then, having fulfilled their office, should there be any fond and fleshly yearnings for the return of miracles in the Church? Better, far better would it be, to be earnest in testing the really miraculous efficacy of the Ordinances of the Church of Christ, as channels for imparting His grace daily to those who faithfully seek Him therein.

2. Perhaps, however, our mistaken Irvingite friends, and indeed others, may vindicate their belief in the modern necessity of miracles on the ground that the relief of the afflicted and