

success of the gospel ; but were rendered necessary only by the specific circumstances in which the primitive ministers of the cross were called to act. The moment we desire this position we are surrounded by an ocean of difficulties and objections. If miracles are to be clothed with converting powers, then why did not the saving effects of the gospel bear a direct proportion to the frequency and impressive character of these events ? This, every one knows, was far from being the fact. If miracles are to occupy this position in the work of saving sinners, then the gospel is an imperfect scheme without them ; it is not itself "the power of God," but only made so by the collateral efficacy of an extraneous circumstance. According to this theory, the most powerful and effectual appeals of God to our lost world are drawn from the kingdom of nature, and not from the kingdom of grace. But this is not the end of the difficulty. On the supposition that apostolic success is to be attributed to miracles, then miracles must be restored to the church, or the predicted triumph of the gospel will never take place. The true decision of the question now at issue appears to be this—miracles were necessary only in the introduction of the gospel ; and with the record of these special acts of God, in our hands, and without their actual occurrence before our eyes, the ministers of the present day, are, to say the least, in a situation as eligible for making a saving impression upon the world, as were the apostles with a peculiar providence of God in their favour.

4. *We ought not to ascribe the difference under consideration to the mere sovereign God.*

That God is a sovereign, and that as such he governs the world of nature and the world of grace, there can be no doubt. And in this fact, too, every heart ought to rejoice. But the sovereignty of God, as well as any other doctrine of the Bible, may be misunderstood or abused. It would, no doubt, be incorrect to refer the existence and the loss of the soul to a mere naked, sovereign act of God. The same may be said of the poverty of the sluggard—the ruin of the prodigal—the abasement of the intemperate—and the remorse and shameful death of the murderer ! All these things take place under the government of a sovereign God ; but they take place according to established connections between cause and effect—between means and ends, and in such a manner, too, that man is always free, and never permitted to go and hang his sin on the sovereignty of God's throne. On the same principles, it would be an abuse of divine sovereignty, to ascribe to this cause the coldness and death which pervade some sections of the church, and the want of power and efficiency which generally charac-