

attributed to this cause, nor the inefficiency of modern preaching to the want of this gift.

3 *The efficacy of primitive preaching ought not to be ascribed to the power of miracles.*

A miracle, from its very nature, must be a striking and impressive event. Were we to see the helpless victim of disease arise from his couch, in perfect health ; or the dead man open his eyes and lift his head from the coffin ; or the tenant of the grave issue forth into the living world, and mingle in human society, as he had been accustomed to do in former days ; and were all these things to take place at the mere bidding of another, our minds would be forcibly arrested and deeply instantly recognize the finger of God in these events. Such miracles as these were wrought at the introduction of the gospel dispensation ; and, at the same time, the most decisive moral changes were effected ; that is, sinners were awakened and converted. The Jew renounced his bigotry, and the Gentile abjured his idols ; and those who were at enmity before, became one in Christ Jesus. As these two events—miracles and the rapid triumphs of the gospel—are associated in point of time, there is a tendency in many minds, to blend or confound them with respect to their moral influence. Tell such persons of the mighty and transforming movements of the gospel in the apostolic age—of the conversion of thousands under one sermon—and you are at once met with this declaration, *these were the days of miracles*. True, these *were* the days of miracles ; and the miracles which were wrought, were necessary to the success of the gospel. But this is not the point to be settled. Were the conversions which occurred in the days of the apostles, wrought by the power of miracles ? This question must be answered in the negative. Miracles seem to have been intended for a specific purpose. They constituted the seal of heaven to the commission under which the apostles and others acted, in introducing and establishing the new dispensation among the Jews and a new religion among the Gentiles. They furnish the necessary attestation, that these men were sent of God. They served to arrest the public mind ; to elicit inquiry ; and to rivet attention long enough to permit the truth, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, to find its way to the conscience and the heart. Miracles, I say arrested attention ; and conviction and conversation were wrought just as they are now, by the instrumentality of the truth and the agency of the Holy Spirit. The appeal made to the human mind, by miracles, was nearly intellectual, while the whole moral power was embodied in the truth. These interpositions of God are not essential to the most triumphant

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