

WIT.

Sidney Smith is known to the million mainly as a great wit, and he is worthy of his renown. But those who have read his works know that with him as with all good men whom God has endowed with that most fascinating gift, wit was not the end, but the means to the end. Like other forms of eloquence, it is to be prized or censured, as it is used or abused. Like every power of human thought or human language, it is hallowed by its consecration to great ends, or desecrated by perversion to unworthy ones. How exquisite are the humor and wit of Addison, directed as they are, to the correction of social evils, and to the interests of morality and religion. How mighty an engine against the Jesuits were the Provincial Letters of Pascal. There was no weapon of the Reformation which its enemies more dreaded than the wit of Luther. Luther, indeed, had, beyond any other German, a large measure of the sort of wit which strikes the English mind. He is irresistibly comic at times. Serious as are the pursuits of clergymen, we believe there is no class of men in which there is so much real wit and humor. God meant it to be so. The power of seeing things in the aspect which makes us smile is a shield from much that painful in our lot, and is often the best weapon we can use in staying what is ridiculously wrong. We could do infidelity and evil no greater good than to surrender to them a weapon whose affectiveness they understand so well. Men will laugh, and how much better it is that they should laugh with the truth than at it. Conjoin wit with principle, direct it to good ends, temper it with benevolence, guard it from excess and from working out of its true sphere, and you have in it a new safeguard for truth and goodness

CHAMPAIGN CITY P. O.

BRO. FRANK:—P. Nicaise say what you think of the 17th and 18th verses of the last chapter of Mark, in their connection with the two preceding verses.

STUDENT.

The reading of the passage in question is as follows: "These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." This is a difficult passage, and men, of course, have had different opinions respecting it. Some have supposed that the words, "These signs shall follow them that believe," etc., relate to all who believe on Christ. This we do not believe. We do not believe it related even to all who believed on Christ in the time of the apostles, for the following reasons:

1. The promise contained in these words was, we claim, most faithfully fulfilled. Let him deny this who can.

2. All who believed, even in the time of the apostles, did not work miracles, or these signs did not follow them.

3. All who have believed since the time of the apostles, have not worked miracles, or these signs have not followed them.

4. It is simply a matter of fact, that since the death of the apostles, and all on whom they laid hands, there have been no miracles. All claims

to miracles since that time are the most idle pretenses and base impostures. Why did they cease, if the Lord intended their continuation? Why did they not accompany all believers, if the Lord intended they should? Why did the inspired apostle, in the same connection in which he declared that prophecies and tongues should cease, declare that faith should abide?

We are of opinion that the commission, as Mark inserts it, is parenthetical, and that reading the passage without the parenthesis will show who the signs should follow. Let us now copy the whole passage, placing the commission in parenthesis, that the reader may see what we mean, at the same time adopting the Bible Union version:

"Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they reclined at table, and upbraided their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen. (And he said to them: Go into all the world, and preach the good news to every creature. He that believes and is immersed shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be condemned.) And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

"The Lord, therefore, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; and he sat down on the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed."

1. The eleven, whom he upbraided for their hardness of heart and unbelief, because they believed not them who had seen him after he was risen, were unquestionably the apostles.

2. Where is the antecedent to the word "them," in the phrase, "These signs shall follow them that believe?" It is not the word "he," in the phrase, "he that believes," etc., because "them" is plural, and "he" is singular. It is certainly back of the commission, what we have included in parenthesis, it is certainly the eleven, whom he upbraided for their hardness of heart and unbelief.

3. The position just taken is evidently correct, from what followed. Mark says, "The Lord, therefore, after he had spoken to them (the apostles), was taken up into heaven; and he sat down on the right hand of God. And they (the apostles) went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them (the apostles), and confirming the word by the signs that followed."

The following, we doubt not, is the true state of the case:

1. The Lord upbraided the apostles for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not those who had seen the Lord after his resurrection.

2. The Lord promised that the signs described should follow the apostles.

3. Mark informs us that the promised signs did follow the apostles.

4. The object of the signs was to confirm the word. The apostles went forth, everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word, which the apostles preached, by the signs that followed.

The Lord never promised that all believers, at any period, should work miracles, nor that any believers, in all ages, should work miracles. The