

# CHRISTIANITY DEFENDED,

AGAINST THE

CAVILS OF INFIDELS,

AND THE

WEAKNESS OF ENTHUSIASTS.

## A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT UTICA,

MAY 15, 1808.

---

---

*BY JAMES CARNAHAN;*

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES AT  
UTICA AND WHITESBOROUGH.

---

---

---

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens; his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Acts, xvii. 16.

Because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach, and to seduce my servants. Rev. ii. 20.

---

---

*UTICA:*

PRINTED BY SEWARD AND WILLIAMS,  
FOR GEORGE RICHARDS, Jun.

---

1808.

## ADVERTISEMENT.



*The circumstances, that gave rise to this discourse are as follows : a pamphlet entitled, " A Narrative of the remarkable restoration of Miss MARTHA HOWEL, of Minden, in the state of New-York, By ELIAS LEE, Pastor of the Baptist Church at Ballston Springs" was circulated in the neighborhood, with great industry. The young woman herself, who is the subject of the narrative, had also been in this town three or four weeks. There were persons who introduced her into religious conferences, and even into the pulpit on the Lord's day, to repeat her narrative, to add explanatory circumstances, and occasionally to exhort.— Believing that a very improper use was made of this thing, the author of the following sermon, considered it his duty, to bear public testimony against it. As what he said on the occasion has been misrepresented, the discourse is now sent to the press, with a view to let those who have any concern in this affair know what was, and what was not said. It is certainly no disgrace to the members of the Presbyterian Church and congregations in this vicinity, that very few, if any of them, have been led astray by these delusions.*

Whitesborough, May 30, 1808.

## CHRISTIANITY DEFENDED, &c.



JOHN, X. 37.

*If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.*

WHEN God condescends to speak to man, guilty and fallen as he is, he addresses him as an intelligent and rational being. He says to him, *come let us reason together.* He reproveth him for his sins, he warns him of his danger, he endeavors, by motives addressed both to his hopes and his fears, to persuade him to flee from the wrath to come. When God speaks to man, he also does it in such a manner as not to leave the least reasonable ground to doubt but that the voice comes from heaven. If God reveal his will to man, surely it must be done in such a way as to give those who candidly examine the subject, satisfactory evidence, that it is indeed a message from *the Father of lights.* If this were not the case, there would be no possibility of detecting impostors. One man might say, that he was a teacher sent from God to make known to men their duty. A hundred different persons might make the same assertion. Suppose their revelations contradicted each other, how should an honest inquiring mind know which of these to believe and obey, unless there were some external evidence to prove a commis-

sion from heaven? To prevent this confusion and uncertainty, it is necessary in the nature of things, that when God does make a revelation to man, he should give to the messengers of his will a commission impressed with some seal, which no impostor can counterfeit.

It is consoling to the Christian to find, that the Author of his religion, and those, who acting under him completed the canon of the sacred scriptures, had a commission stamped with the seal of heaven: I mean the power of working miracles. Our Lord himself did not demand to be heard and to be believed as a divine teacher, until he had produced the evidences of his authority. Hence he has said, *I have a greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.* John v. 36, 37. And again, *If I had not done among them the works, which none other man did, they had not had sin: But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.* John xv. 24. That is, if I had not done among them such miracles as no other person can perform, they would not have been criminal in rejecting me as the Messiah: but since they have seen these miracles, their guilt is awful.

In our text also, our Lord rests his claim to be received as the Messiah, solely on the miracles which he performed. *If I do not the works of my Father believe me not.* That is, if I do not such miracles as can be performed by the power of God only, *believe me not*; consider me as a liar, an impostor: but if I do work these miracles, you reject me at the peril of your souls.

We have other reasons for believing Christianity to be true: but all other evidences being set aside, we are willing to rest the truth of our religion on the same grounds on which our Lord has placed it: that is, on the miracles performed by those who first published it to the world. I shall then place my argument in favor of the truth of our holy religion in the following order:

First. I shall prove, that real miracles are an evidence of a commission from God, and consequently of the truth of the doctrines taught by the person who performs them. Secondly. I shall show that we have good and sufficient reason to believe that real miracles were performed by our Lord and his Apostles. Lastly, I shall answer the objections which infidels derive from the miracles said to have been wrought to establish other religions, and especially from those said to be performed among some sects of Christians, for the confirmation of their peculiar tenets. Give, my brethren, your candid and fixed attention to the illustration of these positions. For on your belief of this religion, your salvation depends. *He that believeth not shall be damned.*

I. We say, that miracles are an infallible evidence of a commission from God, and consequently of the truth of the doctrines taught by the person who performs them in the name of God.

But little need be said in favor of this truth; because it is admitted by unbelievers in the present day, that miracles, if real, do prove a commission from heaven. They deny, however, the possibility of miracles being wrought, and that any evidence or testimony can make them credible.

I only observe, then, on this point, that a miracle is a suspension or alteration of some establish-

ed and uniform law of nature; so that some effect is produced without the use of those means, which have a tendency to produce it. Thus, if a stone, without the application of any visible means, should rise from the earth, say to the distance of three feet, and remain there suspended, it would be acknowledged by every person who saw and examined it, to be a miracle; because it is contrary to the established laws of nature. Thus, also, should a person who had been born blind, be instantly, by a word, restored to his sight, without the use of any means calculated to produce this effect, it would be a miracle. And were it well attested, no rational man ought to disbelieve it. Now it is God, who has established the laws of nature, which for wise purposes are uniform. God still governs the universe; and no created being can possibly suspend or alter any of the laws of nature, without his permission or express authority. Were this possible, all things could not be under the control of the Almighty. Should any person, claiming to be a messenger sent from God, perform a miracle in attestation of his divine mission, infidels themselves would say, that he ought to be believed, and his doctrines received as the will of God. The only question then, which remains, is, can any evidence or testimony, make a miracle credible.

We say, it is as capable of being substantiated, by proof, as any other event whatever. Should a whole nation agree in saying, that on such a day, at such time of the day, the sun was darkened, and the earth covered with blackness for the space of three hours, and this, at a time when it could not be eclipsed by the moon, this surely would be a miracle; and it would be as capable of being

proved by testimony, as that the French conquered the Russians in the battle of Austerlitz.

II. I pass to the illustration of my second position, which is, that we have good and sufficient reason to believe, that real miracles were wrought by our Lord, and his Apostles.

1. Many of the miracles, recorded in the New Testament, are of such a nature as not to admit of any collusion or deception whatever. To give sight to those who had been born blind, to make known cripples to walk, to cleanse instantly those whose bodies were covered with a loathsome leprosy, to raise the dead, were certainly works which the finger of God only could effect. The witnesses of these works attest, that they were performed in the most public manner, in the presence of enemies as well as of friends. At the time, and for several ages afterward, no enemy ever denied the facts asserted, no friend ever confessed, that he had told a falsehood, even when threatened with dangers the most dreadful. With regard to a great part of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, there was no opportunity for collusion between the person who performed the miracles and those on whom they were performed. Neither could the witnesses who attest these works be deceived respecting the things which they declare to have both seen and heard. They had the evidence of their senses, in circumstances the most favorable for detecting a fallacy.

2. It is only by impeaching the credibility of the witnesses, that the enemies of the gospel can make any thing like a defence of their principles. It may be said that the Apostles and Evangelists from interested views, published to the world known falsehoods. But this is a mere assertion, with-

out a shadow of evidence to support it, and in direct contradiction to all moral probability.— What motive could have induced these men to forsake *all* and follow Christ, but the full conviction of the reality of his miracles? Neither wealth nor pleasure, nor reputation nor preferment, nor any other worldly motive, was presented to their view. They had nothing but crosses and persecutions and death to expect.— These are strong proofs of the truth of those miracles on which their faith was founded. Will it be said that they expected a future recompence? This is true. But their hopes must have been founded on the works which they saw; and especially, on the resurrection of their Master, of which they were eye witnesses. Now, on the supposition that they knew the miracles of Christ were fables, and his resurrection a lie, what expectation of a recompence, could they have entertained from that God, whom they always acknowledged, as the avenger of falsehood, and the rewarder of truth? *If Christ be not risen, says St. Paul, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up.* Thus upon the single fact of the resurrection of Christ, every thing depended. If they did not know that this was so, they could have had no hopes, either in this world, or in that which is to come. Be it remembered, too, that the Apostles did not suffer and die, testifying their belief of any doctrine or opinion, as the votaries of some false religions have done; but testifying their perfect knowledge of facts, their certainty of the miracles and resurrection of Christ. Surely the testimony of such wit-

nesses would be received without the smallest suspicion in any court of justice.

3. The miracles mentioned in the New Testament, viewed in connection with the success and rapid spread of the gospel, are credible. The rapid progress of Christianity, considering the circumstances in which it was at first propagated, cannot be rationally accounted for in any way, but on the supposition that its first heralds were possessed of the power of working miracles. It is a singular fact attested by the history of the world, that no religion except the Christian, has ever prospered, that made pretensions to the power of working miracles. This is truly a remarkable circumstance. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Jansenists pretended to work miracles, to support the claims of their sect against the Jesuits.\* But these very attempts ruined their cause. The Anabaptists† also, that wild and furious sect, which arose in Europe in the days of Luther, pretended to work miracles, to have prophetic visions and to dream dreams. But these pretences blasted their cause, brought many of them to a wretched end, and covered their memories with eternal infamy. Thus it is, that God, in his holy providence, frowns on those who presume impiously to snatch the seals, with which he marks the commissions of the special Messengers of his will. No mortal shall attempt to invade the prerogative of the Almighty, to seize and to wield his thunders, who shall not suffer severely for such temerity. These facts lead us to believe that God will still exercise the same care over his church, so that if any sects or parties shall, at any time, presume

\* Mosheim, vol. V. p. 200, 201, and note (n) under the same.

† So called from their re-baptizing all that they proselyted from other Christian denominations. See Mosheim's account of this sect, vol. IV. p. 424. It is full of useful instruction.

to alledge miracles in support of their cause, they will be blasted in the attempt.

4. Lastly—The miracles recorded both in the Old and New Testament, are *credible* from the importance of the *end* for which they were designed. It is not reasonable to believe that the Almighty, for small and unimportant reasons, would interpose and alter or suspend those laws, which in wisdom he has established. If, according to the appointment of God, the same causes did not produce the same effects, a scene of incalculable confusion would ensue. If, for example, the merchant or mechanic, who, having locked up his shop, when he went to his breakfast, did not on his return find it in the place where he left it, but removed by the power of God some ten or twenty miles distant:—This might, indeed, be a just chastisement for his unfair dealing, and other crimes; yet the confusion occasioned by such an occurrence, would be so great, as far to overbalance the useful ends it might answer. Hence, we never see examples of this kind.

If the sick and the maimed were usually healed by miracles, there would be no occasion to avoid danger, or to employ a physician. It is not even credible that God, from compassion to his dearest children, will miraculously remove the afflictions under which they labor, without having in view some higher and more important end. We every day see the most pious and holy persons living, suffer the same afflictions to which other men are subject; and all their prayers, and aims, and good deeds, do not induce the Almighty to work a miracle in their favor. He delivers them in the ordinary course of his providence only, by the use of appointed means. But the miracles recorded in

the holy scriptures, had in their performance a higher and nobler end, than merely the restoration of those that were sick and lame and blind and dead. They were intended to confirm the divine authority of those, who as instruments in the hand of God revealed his will to men; who were appointed to instruct and reclaim an ignorant and a vicious world; who were authorized to publish those doctrines and precepts, on the belief and practice of which, the salvation of mankind depends. A single soul is worth more than a thousand worlds. The redemption of the world, then, is the noblest work which infinite grace and power can effect. If this work were worthy to be undertaken by the only begotten Son of God, who is equal with the Father; is it not credible that, to establish his divine mission, he should use the power of changing or suspending the fixed laws of nature? If any object can demand the interposition of the Supreme Being, surely this is such an object.

III. I attempt now, in the last division of my subject, to answer the objections which infidels derive from the miracles, said to have been wrought for the establishment of other religions; and especially, from those said to be performed among some sects of Christians, for the confirmation of their peculiar tenets.

Infidels state their objection, derived from these sources, somewhat in this form: "You Christians, says the unbeliever, require me to embrace your religion on pain of eternal perdition; because you say it is proved to be divine, by the miracles wrought by its Author and his Apostles. Now, if yours were the only religion which pretended to have the seal of miracles, I would embrace it;

but I find that other religions make the same claims. And if I should be induced to embrace Christianity itself, I should not know with what sect to connect myself; for they all pretend to be, exclusively, the people of the Lord." This is, in substance, an objection, which all modern infidels bring forward against Christianity. It was started by Voltaire, and Hume, and it has been reiterated a thousand times by Paine and other infidels of the lower class. To this objection permit me to answer in the words of Paley. "To hear some men talk one would suppose, the setting up of a religion by miracles to be a thing of every day's experience, whereas the whole current of history is against it. Hath any founder of a new sect among Christians pretended to miraculous powers, and succeeded by his pretensions?"—"Were these powers claimed or exercised by the sects of the Waldenses or the Albigenses? Did Wickliff in England pretend to it? Did Huss or Jerome in Bohemia? Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any of the Reformers, advance this plea?"\* "The French prophets in the beginning of the last century ventured to alledge miraculous evidence, and immediately ruined their cause by their temerity." "Concerning the religion of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, of China, a single miracle cannot be named; that was ever offered as a test of any of those religions *before* their establishment."† It is true there have been pretensions to miracles among some Christian sects *after their establishment* for the confirmation of their peculiar tenets, and the story of these miracles has sometimes been propa-

\* Campbell on miracles.

† Adams on do.

gated by those who knew it to be a falsehood.\*—  
 These are what have been usually called *pious frauds*. But to answer the whole objection at once, we affirm that the history of the world does not contain a single example of a well attested miracle, except those wrought in confirmation of the religion of the bible. And we challenge the whole tribe of infidels to produce one. David Hume, who from his knowledge of history was a person the most likely to succeed, has made the attempt. He has selected three examples which he thought would bear the best comparison with the miracles recorded in the gospels. They are the following; viz.

1. The cure of a blind, and of a lame man, at Alexandria, by the Emperor Vespasian, as related by Tacitus.

2. The restoration of a limb of an attendant in a Spanish church, as told by Cardinal de Retz—and

3. The cures said to be performed at the tomb of the Abbe' de Paris.

Now, my brethren, Campbell, and Paley have examined these examples selected by Hume, and they have shown that there is not the smallest evidence, or the least ground of probability that these miracles were ever wrought. I refer you to what these excellent writers have said on the subject. If then Hume, with all his natural acuteness of understanding, and extensive knowledge of history, was not able to find a single example of a well attested miracle, except those recorded in the bible, who will again undertake the fruitless task? This objection therefore which infidels so often repeat is wholly without foundation. But in the face of all this evidence, that no real miracles have ever been

\* See Paley's Evidences of Christianity, p. 196.

wrought, except in confirmation of the religion of Christ, will it be said, that in the case of MARTHA HOWEL, a lame girl, whose memoirs are written by Elder Lee, of Ballston springs, we have a recent example of a real miracle?

Mine is the humble task to examine, and to expose this piece of weakness and nonsense. This is a miracle which no infidel is weak enough to believe, although many of them are extremely credulous respecting every thing that opposes the bible. As I am then to contend with professed Christians, I am at liberty to change my ground, and to derive arguments from the sacred scriptures. Before we advance to the examination of the subject, suffer me to state a few proofs derived from the holy scriptures, which will lead us to believe that there was no miracle in the case, and indeed, that we have no reason, at the present day, to expect miracles, in any case whatever.

1. It is evident from the text, and from other passages,\* some of which were quoted in the introduction, that our Lord considered the power of working miracles, as a sufficient evidence of a commission from heaven. This also is the doctrine of St. Paul: To the Romans he writes, *I will not dare to speak of any of those things, which Christ has not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed; through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the spirit of God.* Rom. xv. 18, 19. To the Corinthians—*Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.* 2 Cor. xii. 12. Thus, according to the sacred scriptures, the power of working miracles is an evidence of a

\* See also the answer of our Lord to John, when he sent his disciples to enquire whether he was the Messiah. Mat. xi.

commission from heaven, to reveal the will of God to mankind. That God will grant this power to no impostor, is also proved by the words of our Lord. *For there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.* Mark, ix. 39. Here we are directed by our Lord to receive every person, who shall work a miracle in his name, as one of his inspired servants. We cannot without rebelling against him reject any one who has these *signs of an Apostle*. If then, it be true that this girl had visions and dreams explaining the nature of the gospel ordinance of baptism, if she foretold her miraculous cure, and if this cure took place according to her words, we dare not reject the explanation which she has given: For God has undeniably marked her out as one of his favored servants: and she is authorized to travel from place to place, as she does, teaching publicly, confirming the churches, and correcting the abuses, which some denominations of Christians make of the ordinance of baptism. In the execution of this office, however, it unfortunately happens, that she contradicts the Apostle Paul, who says: *I suffer not a woman to teach; but to be in silence.\** 1 Tim. ii. 12. We have then our choice, to believe either the Apostle or this girl:

\* To the same purpose, also, is 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. *Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak: but they are commanded to be in obedience, as also saith the law; and if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.* Some say that the Apostle, in these passages, does not forbid women to exercise their gift of exhortation, or of explaining publicly the sacred scriptures; but that he meant to prohibit their taking a part in the government and discipline of the church. This, however, is a subterfuge of which the people, with whom I contend, cannot avail themselves, because they occupy this ground already. No person is admitted to, or excluded from their communion, without the consent of their church members, male and female.

2. This is not all: If she has the commission before mentioned, then her revelations are of equal authority with any part of the word of God. Her narrative ought not to be considered merely as apochryphal, as containing useful instruction but not of divine authority. We say it ought, then, to be bound up with the sacred volume, as a necessary supplement. Did I believe there was any thing miraculous in the case, I would not rest a single day, until I had this narrative placed in my bible. This, perhaps, would be going farther, than any of the advocates of this delusion are yet prepared to go. It is not however going farther, than both reason and scripture direct us to go.

3. But here again we should be involved in a dilemma, from which it would not be easy to extricate ourselves. It is admitted by all denominations of Protestants, that the bible, as handed down to us from the days of the Apostles, is the only perfect and infallible rule of faith and of practice. To it they all appeal, as the only umpire in cases of controversy. They expect no new revelations; and in support of this opinion, they advance these words of St. Paul: *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* Gal. i. 8. To these they add that solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus, when, by the Apostle John, he closed the canon of sacred scripture. *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy; God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

Rev. xxii. 18, 19. Will it be said, that the revelations of Martha neither add to, nor diminish from, the things contained in the bible? that they are only explanatory of what was before revealed? Be it so. This explanation does not give the smallest relief; because it implies that the scriptures are imperfect—are not sufficiently clear and explicit, with regard to the subjects and the mode of baptism; so that God was under the necessity of giving a supernatural explanation of these questions. When our Lord said, *If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*; and when he moreover added those curses, contained in the last chapter of the Revelation of John, it would seem, that he thought the revelation already given amply sufficient, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, to direct men to heaven.\* But with regard to this, it seems experience had proved, that the infinitely wise and ever blessed God was mistaken. Error had taken such deep root in the Christian world, that it was necessary God should mend the perfect rule of life, which he had given; that it became necessary to inspire and miraculously cure this woman, so that, having thus *the signs of an Apostle*, she might be duly authorized to add an explanatory supplement to this holy book. This subject, I know, is too solemn to admit of irony; but this is the true language which this transaction speaks. Here we think we might safely rest our

\* See also 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* Mark well these last words—*that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* The word of God needs no supplements, nor dreams, nor visions, to make it a perfect rule of faith and practice.

cause. On these grounds we would be justified in saying, without farther examination, that all the remarkable things contained in this narrative are mere fables. But setting aside, for a moment, this positive evidence from reason and scripture; if you will have patience with me, I shall examine some of the particulars related in this narrative. The whole account, from the beginning to the end, aims constantly at the marvellous. I shall select only two or three things, which appear to be the most wonderful. The first *surprising* circumstance is, that “she can read tolerably well in religious books, but not in those which treat on worldly subjects.”\* This must be considered as a perpetual miracle. She can know and pronounce words in a religious book; but let her turn her head to a worldly book, and instantly her eyes are darkened, so that she cannot know and pronounce the very same words, which she knew and pronounced the moment before.—Martha, Martha, to believe this, requires a strong faith!

The next miraculous thing we notice is her dream respecting her death and burial, which, according to her interpretation, represented her baptism. As Martha had the singular prudence and good sense, not to tell this dream, for nearly a year and a half after her baptism took place, we have no proof, except her own assertion, that she ever did

\* Narrative, p. 8. That this girl can read better in the bible and in religious books, than she can in those of a different kind, no person will dispute. But this falls far short of what the narrative affirms, and of what the girl herself says; for according to her story, she cannot read a word in worldly books. Yet the person who asserts this is considered as an Oracle. *I am come in my Father's name and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive.* How true! Men will believe any thing, rather than the word of God.

dream such a dream.\* We place this, then, on the same shelf with the legend respecting her *reading*.

We now come to the great and stupendous miracle, of her instantly recovering the use of her limbs, after having been a poor cripple for fifteen years. Concerning this part of the narrative, I make the same remark that Paley does in a similar case. "It has long," says he, "been observed, that popish miracles happen (only) in popish countries." This miracle happened in the presence of Baptists only—but I say nothing about this; because I am persuaded I can give a satisfactory solution of the phenomenon, admitting every word, that Elder Lee says respecting it, to be true, and without impeaching the veracity of a single witness. It is said that this girl predicted her cure. In this I see nothing supernatural, if we believe the account of her biographer; his words are these—"Neither did she feel liberty, at any time, to speak of her healing, except in that general way before mentioned, viz. that in some future time, she should obtain her health at the springs; and even this she kept from Elder Langworthy and myself, and all her friends here, until it actually transpired."† What is there extraordinary in this affair? Nothing is more common than to hear infirm and splenetic persons say, that they would recover by a change of place; and especially if they could be removed to one so celebrated for restoring health, as the Ballston springs. Martha's prediction was precisely of this nature. Let us now attend to her walking instantaneously, after having

\* Narrative p. 20, compared with p. 18.

† Narrative p. 20.

been helpless for a long time. It is known to medical men, and also to others, that human nature is subject to a malady, which consists chiefly in the imagination. Men as well as women have imagined that they could not walk, and frequently that they were at the point of death. After this unhappy state of body and mind has continued for months or years, something has suddenly surprised or irritated them ; and, exerting their strength, they have walked to the astonishment of themselves and others. Let us examine the facts stated and proved in this narrative, and see if they be not consistent with this solution. It is a fact sufficiently proved, that, after a log rolled over this girl at the age of nine years, she was helpless and unable to walk, during the eleven years next succeeding. After this she recovered so far, according to the testimony of her mother, that “ she could walk from the bed to the fire, and sit up long enough to have her bed made, and eat her victuals ; in which state she remained for more than three years.”\* She was then seized with a fever, which brought her so low, that she was not able to dress herself for three months. From this time she never walked until her restoration, which happened ten months afterwards, at Mr. Garret’s in Ballston. In a meeting of the brethren and sisters of the Baptist church, in that place, called for the sole purpose of seeing or hearing this girl say or do some wonderful thing ; she, on a sudden, leaped from the bed on the floor and walked. Recollect that this girl, immediately before she was taken with a fever

\* Narrative p. 25. These are the words of the girl’s mother, without any change, except substituting the third person of the pronoun in place of the second.

the summer preceding, had been able to walk *for more than three years*. She had now been free from her fever ten months ; and this was time sufficient to recover the same strength which she had before her fever, without the use of any extraordinary means. Moreover, before her restoration, she had been ten weeks in the neighborhood of the Ballston springs, at that season of the year when these waters are most efficacious. Elder Lee no where asserts, nor does he produce a single witness to prove, that she did not use these waters during this period. We are therefore at liberty to conclude that she did use them ; and this is an additional reason, why we should believe that, in a natural way, she had recovered strength sufficient to walk. We suppose, however, that she was unconscious of possessing this power, owing to the peculiar state of her mind. As she had imbibed a notion that she would be cured by the immediate power of God, seeing herself surrounded by her Christian brethren and sisters, and having heard their fervent prayers, she imagined that the time had come ; and, exerting the strength which she possessed, she leaped on the floor. Here then, is a satisfactory solution of this marvellous business. That it is correct, and nothing more than what frequently happens, I appeal to the experience and knowledge of all well bred physicians. And I am happy to observe that there are five or six such present.\*

\* We think the proofs, advanced in the preceding part of this discourse, sufficient to justify our belief that there was nothing miraculous in this cure. And if we have failed in accounting for it, so as to save the honesty of those concerned, we are not to blame ; because we have made for them the most charitable apology we were able.

It would certainly be advisable for these people, to have some dis-

It is, surely, far more surprising than any thing contained in this narrative, that there should be any man, whose professional line of business gives him an opportunity of knowing something of the pranks of a distempered imagination; who should be enraptured with this affair; who should speak of this girl as the mighty power of God; as having a great and glorious work to perform in this part of the country; as not suffering the inhabitants of Utica hereafter to sin so cheap; and as spreading such light on the road to heaven, that henceforth it will be difficult to get to hell.—Oh! what will the world turn to! My heart sickens at the thought of its folly.

I cannot, my hearers, consider this affair in any other point of light than as a very weak, and at the same time a very wicked transaction. If this narrative had been written with a manifest view to entertain children, or even to amuse those of riper years, who are fond of the marvellous, I never would have said a word about it. But to hear these childish dreams, these hypocondrical whims told with a grave and solemn air, by a minister of the gospel; to see this silly girl carried about to be stared at by the multitude; to see her placed in Christian pulpits to tell her experience, and to explain the mode and the subjects of a gospel institution—this is what neither my reason nor my conscience will bear.

1. This appears to be a very wicked and detestable transaction when we consider that it is nothing less than invading the prerogative of the

interested witnesses present, the next time they attempt to work miracles; because it is very difficult to persuade some persons, that there was not something more than mere honest simplicity in this transaction.

Almighty, impiously snatching the sacred and known seals with which he has confirmed to the world the truth of his word, and making them the means of propagating the notions of a party.— This is what I dare not do for my life. It was awfully wicked in the Pharisees of old to ascribe the undeniable miracles of Jesus Christ to the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. It is not less impious to ascribe the dreams and hypocondrical vagaries of a poor weak and enthusiastic girl, to the miraculous power of the Almighty, and to carry her about preaching baptism by immersion only, under the solemn sanction of heaven.

2. This work appears wicked also, when we consider its effects. It is destroying the only rational and scriptural foundation on which Christianity can rest. Infidels have said, and the ablest and most successful advocates of truth have been compelled to acknowledge, that if the history of the world furnished a single example of a miracle, as well attested as those related in the bible, then Christianity could not be the only true religion. The friends of revealed religion have taken their stand; and hitherto they have been able satisfactorily to prove, that no real miracles have ever been wrought, except those related in the bible. We complain, therefore, of the injury which those persons, who patronize this delusion, are doing to the cause of Christianity, which all sects ought to be equally solicitous to maintain. Should they succeed in establishing that a real miracle was wrought on this girl, and that she had supernatural revelations, then will they accomplish that which Voltaire and Rosseau and Hume and Paine wished to do, but were not able. Should they succeed, they will

destroy at a single stroke, all that Paley and Campbell and Porteus and Watson and Scott have done, in favor of divine revelation. And should they succeed in demolishing the bulwarks, which these venerable men have erected against infidelity; are they themselves prepared, are they able, to step forward and defend their religion on a different ground? Perhaps they may say they trust in that precious promise of our Lord, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church*. But do they expect that God will support his cause by a perpetual miracle, whilst they are doing all in their power against it? Do they wish to take a part in opposing God, in order to show the world that he can support his kingdom against the combined efforts of friends and foes? We believe God can do so; but for our part, we wish to have no hand in this work. Should they succeed in these attempts, in which they seem to employ all their zeal, then will the mouth of every profane wit be open; then will the sneer of every ignorant fool be excited, against the gospel.—This, we fear, is *the great work*, which this woman came into this part of the country to effect.

Far be it from me, to say that all the leaders of this party, knowingly and designedly, do this thing. No: I have such confidence in the honest, though ill-informed zeal of some of them, that I am persuaded they would rather go to the stake this moment, than to destroy the religion of Christ. Certainly, *they know not what they do*. Still, I cannot say, that their ignorance in this case is excusable:—they ought to know better. A taylor, who should ruin my garment in cutting it, I could compel to pay for the cloth. A lawyer who, ig-

ignorant of his profession, should involve me in expensive suits, would injure my property the same as if he had taken it from me on the highway.— A physician, who through want of skill should cause my death, would produce the same effect, as if he had administered poison. On the same principle, the minister of the gospel, who, through ignorance, leads his hearers into *damnable* errors, is chargeable with their perdition.\* The truth is, that every man ought to be, in some measure, qualified for the business in which he engages.— I know that no learning, connected with the most sincere piety, can make any man fully competent to fulfil the duties of this important office. After the best preparation for the sacred ministry, the most pious man on earth has reason to exclaim, *who is sufficient for these things?* Notwithstanding I am persuaded that a little knowledge of human nature, of the history of the church, of the objections of infidels, of the evidences of Christianity, would have prevented these errors and delusions, against which I remonstrate.

You know, my hearers, that I have preached to you more than three years and a half; and you are my witnesses, that, until the present time, I have never in the pulpit, uttered a single sentence against any denomination of Christians.† But now, when I see errors so dangerous, propagated among you; when I see Christianity itself, virtually attacked; to be silent would be highly criminal. Now, *whether you will hear, or whether you*

\* See Matt. xv. 14.

† I am candidly of the opinion that these people ought to thank me for the unpleasant task which I performed: for I have endeavored to prevent them from destroying the foundation of their faith and hopes.

*will forbear*, I must warn you to beware of those who spread these delusions. Now I must tell you that we see (in a church which boasts of being the purest, and in fact the only true church of Christ on earth) impositions, which would have disgraced Popery, in the darkest ages. Yes, we see in this church, which presses you into her bosom as the only place where there is any probability of salvation, those *lying wonders*, those *profane and old wives' fables*, against which the Apostle has expressly warned us. The leaders of this party, are those who go bawling through your streets—*baptism! baptism! in our way, or no salvation!*—who invite, and almost force you, to their evening caucuses, for the express purpose of showing you, that you are poor, superstitious creatures for dedicating your children to God in baptism, according to his own institution. Surely with the assistance of teachers so profoundly learned, so far removed from any thing like a blind superstition, you must, in a very short time, become astonishingly wise and superlatively pious. Does it not seem, my brethren, as if the Ruler of the universe, having long witnessed with disapprobation the proselyting spirit of these people, had at length, in his holy judgments, given them over to this delusion, in order to show to the world their true character? For my own part, I renounce all Christian fellowship with them, as long as they conduct in this disorderly way. With perfect freedom, I could sit at the table of the Lord, with an Episcopalian on the one hand and a Methodist on the other—I could commune even with a regular Baptist. But with these people I shall hold no Christian fellowship; and the reason of this conduct I as-

sign in the language of holy scripture—BECAUSE THEY SUFFER THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL, WHICH CALLETH HERSELF A PROPHETESS, TO TEACH AND TO SEDUCE THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD.

To any of these men, I trust I feel no personal animosity. They have not personally injured me, and I intend not to injure them. These censures are not directed against this denomination, without exception. If there be any of them in this vicinity, who detest these impositions, I have not offended them. Much less are these remarks intended for this denomination, throughout the world. Belonging to this church, there have been, and still are men, whose names I venerate. There was Pierce whose soul was too heavenly to remain long on earth; there was Stillman, over whose venerable ashes the pious of every Christian name yet weep. There is Clay, who has lately consecrated to the service of the sanctuary reputation and talents and wealth. There is Fuller, who has defended the gospel of his Master against the sophistry of Socinians, and the attacks of Infidels. There is Carey, who had piety to conceive, and talents to execute, the laudable enterprize of translating the sacred scriptures into the various languages of India; and there are many more who are an honor, not only to the denomination to which they belong, but also to Christianity itself. But did these truly great and good men know the mean and contemptible arts, by which some of their brethren\*

\* I say *some of their brethren in this quarter*; because it was certainly not my intention, to involve all the Baptists in this neighborhood, in the disgrace justly attached to those, who favor the story of this girl. And I am happy to learn, that there are some of this denomination, who have as little faith in the Narrative of MARTHA HOWEL, as I have myself.

in this quarter are endeavoring to support the cause of their party, they would shed tears of blood.

Could my feeble voice reach those unhappy deluded men who are the patrons of this imposition, I would expostulate with them for a moment. I would say to them, pause I beseech you, and reflect on what you are doing. Are you prepared to answer for all the consequences of this affair?—Will you be responsible for all the blasphemies which some future Voltaire or Paine shall utter against your Savior and his religion, on account of this transaction? Will you answer for the souls of your neighbors which shall be lost in consequence of this *stumbling block*, which you have now placed before them? In a few days your body shall be placed with theirs in yonder graveyard, there to rest until the morning of the resurrection. Methinks I see the heavens open—Lo! the Judge descends—the trumpet sounds—the dead start from their tombs. As you advance with the throng towards the judgment bar, your infidel neighbor fixing on you his distracted eyes, exclaims, “It is true, it is true, Jesus is my judge, and I shall be damned, I shall be damned! Ah, inhuman neighbor! but for you I had now ascended with the righteous to the realms of glory.—There was a time when we lived together in that village, that I was thoughtful on the subject of religion—I was almost persuaded to be a Christian. At that moment\* a woman was introduced to my notice—I heard you, who professed to be a follower of Jesus, extol her as an angel sent from God—I read her narrative, and I saw at once that it was

\* At this time, there was an unusual attention to divine things in the village of Utica.

all a fable. Glad to be relieved from the remorse of conscience, I concluded, without farther examination, that the religion of Jesus was a fable also. From that instant I cast away my bible—deserted the house of God; and now I shall suffer justly for my folly: but I will eternally curse *you*, as the occasion of my misery.” Merciful God, from such a moment of horror save every human soul! This solemn day, my brethren, is before you all. Let no one, for any cause, discard the religion of Jesus, without a full and candid examination. “And let those, who profess this religion, beware lest they give occasion to the ungodly to be offended.