

THE
SOUTHERN PREACHER:

A COLLECTION

OF

SERMONS,

FROM THE

MANUSCRIPTS OF SEVERAL EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL,

RESIDING IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.

CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS, WITH THE CONSENT AND
APPROBATION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE AUTHORS.

TOGETHER WITH

A FEW POSTHUMOUS SERMONS,

FROM THE

MANUSCRIPTS OF EMINENT DECEASED MINISTERS,

Who, when living, had resided in the Southern States.

CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS,

WITH THE CONSENT AND APPROBATION OF THOSE IN WHOSE POSSESSION THEY WERE
FOUND.

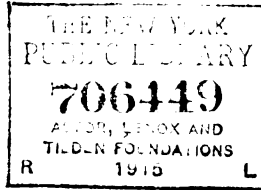
BY THE REV. COLIN M'IVER.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY THE EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

William Fry, Printer.

.....
1824..



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, } DISTRICT OF CAPE-FEAR,
NORTH CAROLINA DISTRICT. } *To wit :*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that, on the 7th day of March, in the forty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1823, the Rev. Colin M'Iver, of the said District, has deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, viz :—

"The Southern Preacher: a collection of Sermons, from the Manuscripts of several eminent Ministers of the Gospel, residing in the Southern States. Carefully selected from the Original Manuscripts, with the consent and approbation of their respective authors. Together with a few Posthumous Sermons from the Manuscripts of eminent deceased Ministers, who, when living, had resided in the Southern States. Carefully selected from the Original Manuscripts, with the consent and approbation of those in whose possession they were found. By the Reverend Colin M'Iver."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an act entitled "An act, supplementary to an act, entitled an act, for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching, Historical and other prints." Witness Carleton Walker, Clerk of the District of Cape-Fear.

CARLETON WALKER.

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ON THE BOUNDARIES WHICH LIMIT THE INQUIRIES OF REASON
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“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.”

IN the *preceding* discourse, we attempted to describe the proper province and office of *Reason* in the concerns of Religion. It is our *present* purpose to point out the boundaries, which limit the inquiries of Reason; beyond which, her guidance is utterly insufficient; and her noblest powers entirely fail.

If it be important to ascertain what Reason *can* do, it is no less so, to be apprized of what she *cannot* do. If it be criminal to exclude her from her proper agency, it is equally so to exalt her in the place of divine communication. If many errors result from a dereliction of her authority, the consequences of depending upon her guidance beyond the limits of her sphere, are still more fatal and pernicious. How many, by following her wandering light, into the wide and trackless regions of speculation, have been bewildered in an inextricable labyrinth of doubt and darkness!

It is worthy of our serious attention, therefore, to inquire what subjects lie beyond the reach of our rational powers, for the knowledge of which, we are wholly dependent upon Revelation.

First—The attributes and perfections of the Deity are wholly beyond the reach of rational investigation : all our knowledge of them is derived from Revelation. Reason is competent to discover the marks of design, in the works of creation ; and to elicit unanswerable arguments in proof of the existence of an intelligent First Cause ; But there are strong doubts, whether the idea of God would ever have occurred to man, had it not been originally revealed. We often hear of the natural perfections of Deity, which are evident from the works of his hand ; but even here, we are unconsciously guided by the light of Revelation.

We speak familiarly of the eternity of the divine existence ; of the essential omnipresence of Deity ; and his all-pervading knowledge ; and yet, what little progress does Reason's ken make towards comprehending existence, without a beginning : and how utterly unable are we to conceive of a Being, equally present in every part of the universe, and possessing perfect and infinite intelligence. All our faculties are lost and confounded, in the attempt to grasp the mighty idea of the Divinity. " It is high, we cannot attain unto it." All the knowledge we do possess, is solely derived from the sacred volume. And many of the attributes of Deity, even when clearly revealed, are entirely too vast for human comprehension. The most sublime and profound geniuses, both of ancient and modern times, have felt and confessed the total inadequacy of their powers ; and have bowed, in reverential awe, before the mysteries of the divine existence. And even the most holy men, the inspired Prophets and Apostles, whose whole lives have been spent in sacred studies, and in devout intercourse with the Deity, have had the most overwhelming views of the incomprehensible majesty of Jehovah, and the unfathomable depths of the divine perfections.

Secondly—Reason cannot pretend to scan the motives and designs of God's administration. For feeble, short-sighted man, to sit in judgment upon the plans of infinite wisdom, or to attempt to scan the principles and final issues of the divine government, betrays a degree of folly and presumption, only equalled by its appalling impiety. All our knowledge is confined within a narrow circle. It can penetrate a little way into the thick darkness of the past, assisted by the feeble lights of memory and human records; but the future is obscured by an impenetrable veil; and only partially removed by the hand of revelation. What arrogance, then, for man, to extend his inquiries into that boundless expanse of duration, before the creation of this world; or to pretend to trace the movements of the Almighty mind; or ascertain the designs for which this magnificent system was called into existence! What temerity, to bring the doings of infinite wisdom to the bar of human reason, and to subject the allotments of God's Providence to the inspection of our feeble rationality! What impious presumption, to question the rectitude of the legal sanctions and penalties, which God has established; to inquire into the origin of natural and moral evil; to attempt to shew how this might have been prevented; or how it might have been remedied, without an infinite sacrifice; or to judge of the results designed to be produced, by this dispensation, upon the universe generally! Secret things belong to God; those which are revealed, to man. As far as the light of inspiration discovers to us the origin of this world, and the designs and dealings of God towards the race of man, it is our duty and privilege, to push our inquiries. And all that is either safe or profitable for us to know, as to the ultimate purposes of God, or the destinies of a future world, is clearly made known to us in the Sacred Volume. But to spurn the boundaries which In-

finite Wisdom has fixed to man's inquiries—to enter the illimitable regions of unholy speculation—to attempt to survey the vast empire of Almighty Providence—to solve the mysteries, or fathom the designs of God's administration—evinces a hardihood, and self-confidence, on which the Angels look down with astonishment and pity. As well might the ephemeral insect be supposed to measure continents and empires, or comprehend the policy of government, or the intricacies of science.

Thirdly—Reason is wholly incompetent to judge what kind of Revelation it is consistent for God to make. We have heard much of the principles of natural Religion, independent of all revealed truth. But all that is excellent in these principles, is borrowed from the Bible. And every thing in the common systems of moral ethics, which deserves the name of religion, was originally obtained from the same source. To bring Revelation, therefore, to the test of natural Religion, is most absurd; for they both rest on the same foundation; and must stand or fall together. How can we pretend to examine whether the doctrines of the Bible are consistent with the character of God, when all the knowledge we possess relative to the Divine character, is derived from that very Bible? How can we judge, whether the laws and precepts of Revelation be in unison with the nature and perfections of Deity, when without the aid of Revelation, we are in utter darkness and ignorance, as to that nature and those perfections? We cannot decide, whether the Gospel be worthy of God, unless we possess some certain knowledge of the attributes of Deity, independent of the Bible. We cannot judge, whether the plan of Redemption be the best which could have been formed, unless we have a perfect knowledge of all beings and all worlds in the universe, with all their natures, interests, and destinies. Thus, it is evident, that we are utterly incompetent to

decide upon the fitness and consistency of any system of Revelation : we are destitute of all knowledge of God, but that obtained from Revelation ; and therefore, have no means of judging whether that Revelation is worthy of its author. We cannot, consequently, bring the principles of the Gospel to the test of other principles, previously known and of higher authority ; for no such principles exist. Reason, therefore, cannot judge, *a priori*, what kind of Revelation it is consistent for God to make. Its only office is, to ascertain, whether the claims of the Bible to Divine authority be supported by sufficient external testimony ; and if so, to receive, with implicit confidence, the system of doctrines, and the Divine instructions it contains.

Fourthly—Reason is incapable of a perfect comprehension of the nature and tendencies of moral evil. Many of the consequences of actual sin, are palpably obvious. The desolations it has spread through the world, the individual woe and ruin it has caused, and the host of calamities and pains which follow in its train, cannot fail to strike every reflecting mind, with a deep conviction, that sin produces misery. It is impossible to observe the effects of gross vice upon individuals under its dominion, or upon societies where it prevails, without strengthening this conviction. It requires no laboured arguments to prove, that the passions, inclinations, and tempers, which are essentially sinful, are productive of varied and extensive unhappiness. We need only survey the mournful mansions of pale disease, the loathsome receptacles of guilt and infamy ; we need only see the dungeons, and fetters, and scaffolds, of human justice ; follow the blood-stained path of war, through carnage, and rapine, and conflagration ; and reflect upon the actual state of mankind, whether civilized or savage ; to obtain the fullest evidence of the fatal effects of moral evil. It is the

clearest dictate of Reason, that if the Supreme Being be good and benevolent, man has lost his favour and incurred his wrath ; that, if the human race was created innocent and happy, some fatal evil has caused a sad reverse, both in their character and condition. Reason can even go so far as to perceive the impossibility of a sinful being's enjoying real happiness ; and that the consequences of sin in a future state must necessarily be unmingled misery.

Thus far, unassisted Reason can clearly discover the destructive nature and woful effects of sin. Such have been the views of the wise and virtuous, among the Heathen. But this falls infinitely short of a full comprehension of the nature and tendency of moral evil. This is only a discovery of some of the poisonous fruits ; the root is still to be disclosed. It is utterly beyond the powers of unassisted Reason to comprehend the whole extent of evil in the nature of sin, or the wide spreading ruin it tends to produce. Is it impossible for finite powers fully to understand the Divine character and perfections ? Equally incomprehensible is the true nature of that evil principle which rises in opposition to the Eternal. Are our faculties lost in reflecting upon the infinite extent of God's moral government ? How, then, can we fully estimate the magnitude of an evil, which aims at the overthrow of that government ?

Unless we can definitely know the situation and circumstances of all the millions of worlds, peopled with rational beings, in God's universal empire—unless we can clearly ascertain the true moral state of each of those numberless races of rationals—unless we can discover what kind of connexion and intercourse subsists between the different worlds in the universe—unless we can know the precise effects produced, or likely to be produced, upon the inhabitants of other worlds, by the rebellion of our guilty race—unless we can determine in what degree

the conduct of mankind, and the dealings of God towards them, are held up as a spectacle to the whole rational universe, to teach the most important lessons, and make the most lasting impressions ; in a word, unless we possess an extent of knowledge which is wholly unattainable by any created being, we cannot comprehend the nature and tendency of moral evil. As this is a subject utterly beyond our reach, involved in such darkness and mystery, it becomes us, humbly to receive the information God has been pleased to afford ; and devoutly to acquiesce in the decisions of infinite wisdom. We must allow the Almighty Jehovah the prerogative of managing the concerns of his own vast empire. He must be permitted to judge of the guilt of rebellion against him ; of the destructive consequences to be apprehended from sin ; of the measures necessary to be taken to render its pardon consistent with the general good ; and of the degree and duration of punishment, which must be inflicted, upon incorrigible sinners. Therefore, when God declares, that sin is an infinite evil, and that it cannot be pardoned without an infinite atonement ; when he informs us, that it is a moral poison, which pervades and pollutes the soul, rendering it utterly incapable of holiness or happiness, and deserving of infinite punishment ; it becomes us to receive, with reverence, the testimony of eternal truth, saying, " Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? " This argument puts to silence many of the arguments and objections of proud unbelief, against the doctrines of the Gospel.

Away with all theories and controversies about the origin of evil. God has not seen fit to reveal it : and let not man presume to decide on the deep things which belong to the secret councils of Deity. Away with the argument against the Divinity of the Saviour, and the necessity of an infinite sacrifice for human guilt, drawn from a low estimate

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of the evil of sin : it is founded in ignorance, reared by folly, and supported by proud impiety.

Let no man dare to arraign the justice of God, in condemning sinners to eternal misery. God alone is competent to decide on the rights of universal justice, the proper sanctions of the Divine law, or the necessary penalty of its violation.

Fifthly—Reason is incompetent to judge of the moral prerequisites for future happiness. Our ignorance of the real nature of sin, necessarily incapacitates us for perceiving the necessity of an entire moral transformation, to prepare depraved man for the joys of Heaven. While Reason cannot discover the nature of Heavenly enjoyments, nor the dispositions, tastes, and affections requisite to the partaking of them, it cannot judge of the needful preparations which sinful man must experience, or perish. Reason can well discover, that the heart of man is depraved in its tendencies and desires ; that he naturally fixes his supreme attachment upon temporal and unholy objects ; and seeks happiness in the gratifications of self and sense ; and that some renovation must take place, in order to enjoy a state of being purely intellectual and spiritual : but, what is the degree or nature of this renovation, or by what influence it is effected, it is utterly impossible for unassisted Reason to determine. It must, consequently, be the subject of pure Revelation ; and we must meekly receive the information which God is pleased to afford. When, therefore, we are informed, in the volume of revealed truth, that man is, by nature, totally depraved and corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins, utterly unable to restore himself, to atone for his sins, or to do any thing good or meritorious in the sight of God ; that all his own righteousness, his morality, his religious knowledge, professions, and observances, are entirely in vain ; that he must be quickened, renewed,

and regenerated, by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, in order to salvation; and that every one who is not thus made spiritually alive, thus changed in the affections of the heart, who is not thus translated out of darkness into light, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost, cannot be saved; but that the wrath of God abideth on him: I say, when these things are distinctly and repeatedly declared to us in the word of God, it becomes us to raise no objections against them; it becomes us not to sit in judgment upon their propriety, or rationality; but to submit to the declared decisions of the Omniscient Mind, and fully to embrace these doctrines, simply on the testimony of God.

Upon all these points, upon which we are incapable of judging for ourselves, our best authority is, "Thus saith the Lord."

Sixthly—Reason cannot change the inclinations, or fix the affections, on those objects which she approves as most worthy. The clearest convictions of *right*, are often united with the persevering practice of *wrong*. Why do many enlightened and well informed persons continue in licentious courses, though perfectly convinced of their criminality? Clearly, because the feeble powers of Reason are unable to withstand the impetuous force of inclination. And even where rational conviction does prevent open immoralities, restrain overt acts of sin, and produce external decency and propriety of conduct, the original tendency remains unimpaired; the current of evil inclinations is as strong as before. And this is the radical defect in rational Religion. It avails, to the production of a character, amiable, respectable, and pious, in outward appearance. But it leaves all the unholy propensities, and corruptions of depraved nature, unchanged and unsubdued. There remains an inward consciousness of a restraint, a force put upon inclination; and of acting

an assumed part, in opposition to the prevailing bent of the mind. A man may be fully persuaded of the excellency of virtue, of the powerful motives to a holy life, and of the baseness and hatefulness of vice ; and yet find himself utterly unable to check secret inclinations, for the indulgences and pursuits which he condemns. Such an one may well adopt the sentiment of the Heathen :

“ I know the right, and I approve it too :

“ I know the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”

Equally beyond the power of Reason is it, to fix the affections upon objects which it approves as most worthy. He has not yet taken the first step in self-knowledge, who is ignorant of his inability to command his affections. I am, for instance, perfectly convinced, that the Divine character is infinitely lovely ; that God is the only object of supreme regard ; and that I am bound, by every possible obligation, to love him, with an undivided heart : but it by no means follows, necessarily, that my affections obey my judgment. What multitudes feel the conviction of the duty, and yet remain in utter alienation from the God of Heaven !

One may admit the full persuasion that holiness is most lovely ; and yet be far from loving holiness. He may seriously believe, that Religion is the only really valuable acquisition in the world ; and yet, his heart may revolt at the duties and precepts of Religion. He may be convinced of the ruinous folly of a worldly life ; and yet, in such a life, he may find his only happiness. He may admit, that life is a fleeting vapour, honour an airy nothing, and wealth glittering dust ; and yet, his undivided affections remain fixed upon them. He may feel the weight of the motives which lead him to the strait and narrow path of piety ; and may earnestly wish to walk therein, and, at the same time, may be urged rapidly forward by

his passions, in the opposite direction. He may have an intense conviction, that his inclinations and affections must be entirely changed, must be fixed upon holy objects, or he never can be happy in Heaven; and yet continue to live and die the same.

How readily does Reason admit, that Religion is the great business of life, and the chief object of regard: but to bend all the energies of the mind to the influence of this truth, is beyond all human power. How rational is the proposition, that the favour of God is the chief good, and yet how difficult to excite ardent desires to obtain it. It is *one* thing to be convinced, that to be engaged in the Divine service, and to enjoy intimate communion with the Deity, is a state of unrivalled dignity and happiness: it is quite *another* thing, to be heartily devoted and inclined to such a condition. It is *one* thing, to be persuaded, what are the noblest objects of regard: it is *another*, to fix upon them the supreme affection.

From this total inefficiency of Reason, arises the necessity of Divine influence, to accomplish this great work of moral renovation in the heart of man: and the first step towards this work, is a complete conviction, that it is utterly beyond our powers, and can be effected by God alone. While we flatter ourselves that we possess a controlling power over our wills, inclinations, and affections, we shall never submit to the terms of the Gospel. It is to those who mourn the perversity of their wills, and the depravity and unholiness of their desires and affections, and who feel their utter inability to change the current of sinful feeling, and that, if ever they are sanctified and renewed, it must be entirely the work of God; and who, therefore, come to a throne of grace, as perishing sinners, saying, "Save, Lord, or we perish;"—it is to such that the promises of the Gospel are addressed, and the blessings of the atonement offered. Proud Reason must

lay down her vain pretensions, at the foot of the Cross ; nature must feel herself utterly helpless, and place her only hope in free, sovereign grace, before that moral renovation can take place, which constitutes the sinner an heir of glory. For “ the carnal mind is enmity against God ; ” “ Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Once more—Reason is not authorized to bring the doctrines of Revelation to her bar, nor to reject them on account of their incomprehensibility. We have already made some animadversions upon the arrogance of man’s presuming to judge, what truths it is proper for God to reveal, or what doctrines are consistent with the Divine character. We are now to apply those remarks more particularly to the alleged mysteries, or incredibility of the truths, of the Christian system.

Unassisted by Revelation, we are utterly ignorant of the nature of Deity, and of the manner of his existence : they are as completely beyond the sphere of our knowledge, as the planetary revolutions are beyond the ken of the dim-sighted mole.

In the sacred volume, is contained, all we know upon this high and mysterious subject. Revelation has disclosed to us as much of the Divine nature and attributes, as we are capable of knowing in our present state of existence, sufficient to make us wise unto salvation. But what we do know, compared to what we *do not* and *cannot* know, is as this world which we inhabit, to all the myriads of systems, throughout the illimitable regions of space. There is no created being, in the universe, though some may possess powers to us wholly inconceivable, who can comprehend the character and existence of God. And it was to be expected, that any communication which should be made upon this infinite subject, would contain mysteries unfathomable to our limited under-

standings. Therefore, it becomes us to bow before the majesty of revealed truth; and humbly receive the record which God is pleased to give us of himself. The Gospel reveals a Triune Godhead;—three distinct Persons in the Divinity, forming one infinite essence. This is a mystery, which, probably, angels desire to look into. All we know, or can know, about it, is, that thus it is written,—thus it has pleased the Eternal God to reveal himself to man. We have only to inquire, Is this truth taught in the authentic records of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? If so, we must believe and adore. But, to pretend, either to comprehend or to deny this doctrine—to make it the theme of argument and speculation—to employ abstract metaphysical reasoning in its elucidation—to form bold theories to bring it within the grasp of the human intellect—is going upon perilous and presumptuous ground. And if we go farther, and bring the doctrine to the bar of Reason, for trial, and reject and renounce it, because its mysteries cannot be solved—because its depths cannot be fathomed; we arrogate to ourselves the attributes of Divinity; we sit as judges over God himself. With equal propriety might we undertake to prescribe what truths it is proper for God to reveal: as well might we attempt to show, upon the principles of reason, and the nature of things, what kind of being God ought to be—as to reject the mode of existence in which the Deity is presented to us in his holy word. I do not allow myself to speculate upon this subject, even in private; much less to converse and dispute upon it. “It is high as Heaven, “what can we say? It is deep as Hell, what can we “think?” A simple reliance upon, and a cordial faith in the Divine testimony, relative to this doctrine, without being able to explain or defend it, will entitle the humble Christian to a seat in glory.

It is abundantly revealed to us in the Bible, that the

pardon of sin is impossible without an atonement ; that the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God, is the only sufficient atonement ; and that all, who leave this world without receiving the blessings procured by the mission of Christ, must be everlastingly miserable. Vain reasonings upon these doctrines, are exceedingly improper. We have no right to ask, whence came evil ? Whether sin could have existed, without the Divine appointment ? Whether God designed our race to be sinners before he created them ? Or, whether he might not have prevented the fall. These are presumptuous inquiries : these secret things belong to God :—probably we shall know them perfectly hereafter. Equally impious is it for us to inquire, whether there might not have been some other way of saving sinners, than the plan contained in the Gospel ? Whether God might not have pardoned sin, on easier terms than the sacrifice of the Cross ? Whether sin be, indeed, an infinite evil ? Whether the sins of a short life, can deserve interminable punishment ? And, whether it be consistent with Divine benevolence, to punish them with endless misery ? This, again, is an attempt to set ourselves above Jehovah ; to scrutinize the principles of his government ; to re-judge his decisions. “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest “against God ? Shall the thing formed say unto him that “formed it, why hast thou made me thus ?” “Shall not “the Judge of all the earth do right ?” We are incompetent to decide upon these high and awful matters. Have you a perfect and comprehensive view of all the designs and operations of God’s moral government, in all worlds and systems in the universe ? If not, you cannot judge of any particular act of his administration. Are you qualified to judge of all the possible plans, whereby sin might be expiated, which was most consistent with the Divine character, and most conducive to the good

of the universe? If not, you are not authorized to say, that the Gospel is not the only expedient, which could have been devised. Do you know the precise effect which was produced upon the moral inhabitants of other worlds, by the rebellion of man; the degree in which those other beings are acquainted with, and interested in, the transactions upon this guilty globe; or the consequences likely to result to the vast intelligent empire of Jehovah, from the manner in which this race of sinners is dealt with? If not, you know nothing of the absolute necessity of just such an atonement as the Gospel reveals; or of the wide-extended ruin which might have been caused by pardoning one sinner upon other terms.

Can you fully comprehend the rights of God's government? Can you exactly estimate the atrocity of rebelling against it, or the real nature and tendency of moral evil, or the stern necessity of a terrible example to preserve the loyalty of other worlds, or what are the natural results of unholy dispositions, or what extensive purposes of general good are to be answered by a perpetual exhibition of the direful consequences of sin? If not, how dare you question the justice, the righteousness, and the benevolence, of that irreversible determination which God has made; when he has distinctly announced to us, that he will punish all, who die impenitent and unsanctified, with everlasting destruction from his presence.

It is revealed to us, that all events were foreknown to the Deity from eternity; that he has an efficient agency in all events; that nothing can take place but in accordance with the original plan of his foreknowledge: and yet that man is a free agent, accountable for all his volitions, motives, and actions. This is confessedly above Reason; but not, therefore, contrary to it. If we attempt to avoid these difficulties, we fall into greater. Many have

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rejected these doctrines ; but none have been found able to substitute others, more consistent, in their place. To deny God's absolute foreknowledge, and plan of action, is to assail his Divine attributes, and to overthrow the whole fabric of Revelation. On the contrary, to deny that we act freely, and that we are voluntary agents, is to annihilate our moral powers ; it is to rebel against our continual consciousness ; to reject the evidence of our constant experience, of our inextinguishable feelings of self-approbation or remorse. He who denies man's free agency, represents God as a tyrant, and all the pains and sufferings of this life as resulting from flagrant injustice. He who denies his own free agency, renounces all claim to rationality, and places himself on a level with a machine of wheels and weights, or a passive engine. No, my hearers, God has made known to us, that his decrees and his agency are perfectly consistent with our freedom, and accountability ; and we must believe it.

It is made known to us, in the Gospel Revelation, that at death we shall commence a state of existence purely intellectual, separate from the body ; that at the end of the world, there shall be a resurrection of the body, and a re-union of the soul with it ; that all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive their eternal doom ; and that, after it is pronounced, "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." As these events are future, it is evident they are known only to God ; that he alone can disclose them ; and, therefore, it becomes not man, to indulge in vain speculations upon them. We have no materials for argument, no general principles to guide our inquiries, no facts to direct us, no data from which to draw our conclusions. All that we do, or possibly can know, as to the future destinies of men, is derived solely from the Bible : that alone affords a light which can penetrate the gloom ; and nothing can be

more absurd, than to employ the aid, and borrow the materials of Revelation, in forming a rational decision, as to the truth of that Revelation. Reason, therefore, has no authority to judge of the possibility or probability of these future events: it is a matter of pure Revelation; and he who unfolds those things which shall be hereafter, is able to accomplish all his purposes.

Yet vain Reason is prone to inquire, how spirit exists without members and organs? How perceptions or affections can fulfil their operations, without the senses; and demands, how can it be known, that the soul survives the body? Let Reason first explain, how the soul exists *in* the body; how mind acts upon matter; how volition produces action; how the soul can be conscious, while the body sleeps; how the mind can possibly feel energy, when the body is sinking into a mass of corruption?

Let her first explain these things, the truth of which every body knows; and then, she will be entitled to extend her inquiries.

But how, the sceptical votary of Reason triumphantly asks, how is the resurrection of the body to be effected? How shall the particles, which have been widely scattered, blown about by winds, wafted by waters, converted into vegetables, and these again decomposed, incorporated with other human bodies, and passing, in the course of ages, through numberless transformations, be collected and re-animated? But let me ask this proud reasoner, to explain how this world was formed, or by what process the first human body was raised out of the dust? Let him define what he understands by the principle of vitality in animated bodies: let him analyze the essential properties of matter: let him explain how a blade of corn springs from a corrupted seed: or how the human frame is fashioned in the womb: let him first account for those things, which are matters of experimental and

indestructible belief; and he will thence be marvelously assisted in his inquiries about the resurrection.

But human rashness pushes its inquiries still further. Men frequently ask, what kind of bodies we are to have after the resurrection? What form, what substance and qualities? Where is the final judgment to take place? How long will it continue? Where is Heaven situated, and what is the nature of its happiness? Where is the prison of despair, and what is the nature of its misery? The best answer I can give to such presumptuous inquirers, is briefly this: You will know in due season.

These are the secret things of the councils of the Most High. He reserves the knowledge of them to himself; and it is sinful temerity in man, to pretend to pry into them. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, "no, not the angels in Heaven, but the Father only." All that is important for us to know, is revealed. It would be in no way beneficial for us to know, how the dead are raised up, or in what sort of bodies they come. Reason cannot comprehend, what a spiritual body is. No good would result from our being informed, in what region of the universe the final judgment will take place, nor what degree of locality and materiality may be attached to future retribution. It is enough for us to know, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad; that the dead, small and great, must stand before God; that the books shall be opened; that the holy will be set on the right hand, and the unholy on the left; that the judge will say to those on the right hand, "Come, "ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you, from the foundation of the world;" and, to those on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his "angels;" and, that the righteous shall be received into his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures

for evermore; while the wicked shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. These are not themes, intended for vain reasoning. They are matters of faith; they are subjects of great, of everlasting import. In reference to them, our proper conduct is, humbly to bow before the revealed will of God, and prayerfully to examine ourselves, as to our preparation for those solemn scenes of futurity.

Thus have we imperfectly illustrated this interesting subject, and seen how limited is the sphere of mere Reason, in matters of Religion. We may hence learn the cause, why those who make Religion solely a matter of rational inquiry, and undertake to persuade themselves into piety, by the dictates of the understanding, generally fail of their object; and finally take refuge either in some wild scheme of latitudinarianism, or in the reveries of a sceptical philosophy.

We may also learn, why it is, that the most acute, penetrating, and comprehensive minds, are found to be even less susceptible of religious influence, than those of feeble intellectual powers. The child of ten years old, or the unlettered peasant, has sufficient reasoning powers to receive religious influence, and become wise unto salvation. And greater intellectual energy generally produces a state of feeling unfavourable to real piety. Though when men of great minds *do* experience the teaching and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, they become eminently holy, and incalculable blessings to the world.

Lastly, we learn the importance of distrusting ourselves, and going to the fountain of true instruction, and imploring, by constant and fervent prayer, the illuminations and instructions of that Heavenly Agent, without whose aid, we cannot become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.