

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.

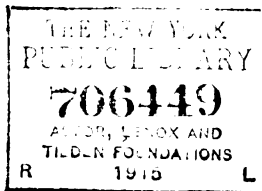
TOGETHER WITH
A FEW POSTHUMOUS SERMONS,
FROM THE
MANUSCRIPTS OF EMINENT DECEASED MINISTERS,
Who, when living, had resided in the Southern States.

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.

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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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JOB XXXII. 8.

But there is a Spirit in Man ; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

MANY of the divisions and corruptions which have afflicted and humbled the Christian Church, have originated in erroneous views of the proper office and agency of *Reason*, in matters of *Religion*. As this is a subject which lies at the threshold of all Religious inquiry, it presents itself in its full magnitude, to every traveller in search of truth ; and from the views he takes of it, he derives a powerful direction as to his subsequent course ; and a decided influence upon his religious opinions.

Opposite impressions, have led conflicting parties, into wide extremes, and most dangerous conclusions. Thus, multitudes exclude Reason from any participation in their spiritual concerns ; considering her guidance altogether unsafe, and her light wholly delusive.

On the contrary, other multitudes bow, with entire devotion, before her shrine ; bring every thing to the test of her approbation ; reduce all systems to the level of her comprehension ; and subject all doctrines to her supremacy.

These opposite extremes of error, are as common as they are pernicious. Among the contemners of *Reason*, you shall find those, whose Theology consists chiefly in incomprehensible mysteries, and perplexing speculation.

N n

With them, mystery is but another name for truth. Their maxim is, the more contrary to Reason a doctrine may be, the more entirely is it worthy of implicit confidence. They blindly follow the dogmas of their leaders, deeming it the highest impiety, in matters of faith, to listen to the dictates of the understanding.

Another numerous class of those who reject the authority of Reason, in matters of religion, consists of enthusiasts, and visionaries of every description. They implicitly yield themselves to the guidance of feeling; their hopes and joys, rise and fall, with the fluctuations of the passions. Their Religion is made up of violent impulses, and fervours of affection; they boast of a light within; and by that they must walk, though Reason and Revelation, alike forbid. With them, the most conclusive arguments, go for nothing. They are exalted far above the regions of rationality. To submit to the cool dictates of the judgment, in the services of piety, to bring their peculiar tenets to the scrutiny of calm and patient examination, and to carry the torch of Reason into the dark recesses of mysticism, would be, in their estimation, little less than sacrilege. Thus, the gloomy votaries of ecclesiastical infallibility, and the devotees of fanaticism, unite in rejecting the aids of Reason; and excluding her from any agency in the vast concerns of Religion. On the other hand, very many fall into the opposite extreme. In their eagerness to avoid the torrid heats of enthusiasm, they withdraw among the ices of cold speculation. Disgusted with the follies and extravagancies of fanatics, they shun ever the appearance of pious feeling; and carefully cultivate, rather the knowledge of the head, than the affections of the heart. Elated by a fancied intellectual superiority, they deem their unassisted reason competent to the solution of all doubts, and the explanation of all truth; they therefore proudly reject all mysteries

which are incomprehensible ; and all doctrines which are beyond the limits of the human understanding. They enthrone *Reason* as the supreme arbiter of truth, and error ; and to her decisions, make their sole appeal. The doctrines of Revelation must be lowered to the level and reduced to the dimensions of their comprehension. The reality of Divine influence, must be rejected, because they cannot discern the mode of its operation. The fires of devotion must be extinguished, because they are not kindled at the altar of Reason. The emotions of Religious joy, must be repressed, because they are not excited by the force of argument, Thus, Religion is deprived of all life and energy, despoiled of those sublime mysteries which mark its divine origin, and frittered down to a mere system of moral ethics, that it may gratify that pride of man, which it was designed to abase ; and be in union with those principles of human merit and efficiency, to which it was designed to be in irreconcilable opposition. The opposite extremes of error, therefore, upon this subject, lead to results equally calamitous. Those who rashly reject the guidance of Reason, and those who place implicit confidence in her dictates, are equally at war with the essential principles of the Gospel. The former are urged forward by the impulse of feeling, the sport of winds and waves, without direction or object ; the latter cling to the shores of their own knowledge, venture not beyond the line of their own understanding, and thus, make no progress towards a Heavenly destination. The former yield themselves to the entire dominion of every influence, which claims to be from God ; and blindly obey every behest which calls itself Divine, without the smallest scrutiny ; the latter retire, and intrench themselves within the resources of their own minds ; assume a lofty tone of independence ; and set at defiance, all sanctions, but those of science ; all conviction but that of argument ; and all authority but that of reason.

Those represent human reason, as an artful deceiver, ever to be shunned and opposed. These ascribe to her, prerogatives almost divine; and make every thing bow in low subordination to her paramount authority.

Amid these conflicting views, these opposite extremes of error, it becomes us to search for the line of truth. Our time will be well employed, in reflecting upon this intricate subject. Let us endeavour to ascertain and define the true province of Reason, in matters of Religion; and inquire into the proper application of her powers, and the real extent of her authority. Let us also fix the limits beyond which we cannot trust her guidance; where we must have a brighter light, than her feeble torch can afford; a more clear and comprehensive perception than she can claim, to make good our course, among the perils and difficulties which surround us.

With this design, we shall attempt, in the sequel of this discourse, to show, affirmatively, what is the proper office and agency of Reason, in the concerns of Religion. It will be the object of a subsequent discourse, to assign proper limits to this agency; and, show negatively, what Reason cannot accomplish. In pursuance of our present design, we observe, that Reason alone renders us moral and accountable beings; subjects of the Divine government; capable of receiving a Revelation from God; and receiving any benefit from Revelation. That beings must be able to distinguish between good and evil, must have a self-determining power, must be capable of moral agency, before they can become the proper subjects of praise or blame, of reward or punishment, must be universally admitted. That there should be imposed the restraints of law, where there is no freedom of volition, is the greatest of all absurdities.

The Revelation which God has been pleased to make, is addressed to us, as rational beings: it constantly ap-

peals to our Reason. Why does the Almighty condescend, in the holy volume, to unveil himself to our view, in all the attractions of goodness, and mercy, and in all the beauties of purity and truth? Why does he spread out before us, the lovely portrait of genuine virtue, and point us to its glorious destiny?

Why does he unfold to us, the treasures of his wisdom, and bestow upon us, a complete system of moral instruction? Why does he use the words of invitation and persuasion, and urge upon us, the most powerful motives and arguments? Why does he address us in the language of promise, and present before us, all the terrors of his wrath? Certainly, because we possess rational faculties: because he has given us reason for our guide; and through that medium, all moral influence is communicated.

If our Reason has become so utterly depraved and perverted, as to be excluded from all the operations of Religion, why does Divine wisdom make such efforts to instruct, to convince, and to persuade us? It would be infinitely easy for God, to produce any change he pleased, upon the heart and the affections, by his own immediate agency, without any external means; and yet, why has he not done so? Evidently, because we are not passive machines, but rational, intelligent agents. Besides, if Reason has no agency in the concerns of Religion, then it would be as proper to address the motives and arguments of the Bible, to infants, or ideots, as the most enlightened man. If it be not, therefore, the greatest possible folly, to address to men, the truths and sanctions of the Bible, it must be, because Reason enables them, to feel the influence of Divine truth.

If rationality be the ground of moral obligation, we must infer the ability to comply with the Divine requirements. If man be, in the Divine estimation, susceptible of conviction, and persuasion, from arguments and ex-

postulations, and a proper subject of penal sanctions, then, we must infer, that the free exercise of our rational faculties, in matters of Religion, is indispensable. If our moral obligations be in proportion to the strength of our rational powers ; if where much is given, much will be required—if more will be required of him who has had ten talents, than of him who has had one—more of those who live to mature years, than of those who die in childhood—more of those who possess highly cultivated minds, than of the unlearned—then it follows, that Reason is the foundation of all Religious influence, upon the human mind.

It is also undeniable, that Reason is able, clearly to perceive the desirableness and necessity of a Divine Revelation. Man is capable of reflection, of foresight, and of drawing correct conclusions. He finds himself in this state of being, surrounded by woes and dangers, the victim of continual evils—the child of sorrow, disease, and death.

He can perceive the moral disorders, which surround and affect him—he can form some conception, of the moral ruin which has befallen his race ; he sees the desolating effects of the unruly passions, and evil propensities of his fellow beings ; he feels within himself, the painful war of conflicting principles ; and his own incapability of pure and holy felicity. The dictate of Reason is, if the Ruler of the universe, be good and holy, this wretched race has rebelled against him, and lost his favour. He inquires how shall this ruin be repaired ? this floodgate of misery closed ?

How shall we, wretched wanderers, return to allegiance and happiness ? Can the guilt of man be expiated ? Will the God of Heaven remit the penalty of his violated law ? Can he, consistently with his perfections, pardon

transgression ? Can human nature be restored to its original purity, and excellence ?

Reason clearly sees, that none can answer these questions, but God himself; she therefore considers a Revelation from God infinitely desirable. She sees herself surrounded by darkness, which nothing can dispel, but light from Heaven; by doubts and mysteries, which none can explain, but the Father of wisdom; she sees obstacles interposing between man and happiness, which nothing, but infinite power, can remove; and clouds of wrath, blackening to a tempest, over the heads of the guilty race of man, which nothing can disperse, but the rays of Heavenly mercy—She therefore, anxiously expects a messenger from God, a Revelation from Heaven. From that Revelation, she expects to know, the character and designs of Jehovah—the origin of moral evil—the disposition of the Deity towards this hapless world, and the future destinies of sinful men. Such would be the views and expectations of enlightened Reason, even where Revelation never dawned. Such were its views and hopes, before the commencement of the Christian æra. Some of the wisest of the Heathens, cherished the confident belief, that God, in compassion to his blind and erring creatures, would, at some time, give them a revelation of his will. If, then, Reason is capable of perceiving the necessity of Divine Revelation, we infer, that she has an important agency in the concerns of Religion.

As a system of revealed Religion, is now made known, claiming to be communicated by a Divine messenger, to contain the will of God, the terms of man's restoration to the Divine favour, and all that it is necessary for us to know, as to our present state, and future destinies: it is the important office of Reason, closely to examine the evidences on which these claims rest; to collect all the testimony which can be brought to bear upon the subject.

and then to draw the momentous conclusion, whether or not, this Religion be a revelation from God.

And this great duty should always be performed by Reason, in every enlightened mind. To believe the Gospel, because it was the Religion of our ancestors—because it is the Religion of our country, or because we were taught, from our infancy, to believe it, without examining for ourselves, and carefully considering the objections and proofs, is utterly unworthy of an enlightened and liberal mind. It is as disgraceful to our Religion, as it is degrading to ourselves.

Christianity comes, surrounded with evidence, carrying in its front, a weight of testimony; it challenges investigation; and boldly relies, on the irrefragable proofs which support its claims. To take its truth, as a matter of course, and to refuse examination, is to place it on a level with those Religions, which are utterly unsupported by evidence, and have no foundation in truth. A Mahomedan, or a Hindoo, has just as good reasons for embracing his Religion, as the man who adopts Christianity, without examination. He will tell you, his Religion was that of his Parents and Ancestors; that it was the established faith of his country; and that he was taught to believe it, from his infancy. To scrutinize evidence does not imply a doubt; but rather a determination to prevent the possibility of doubting. Thus, it is a duty to let Reason be employed, in this, her legitimate office, of investigating the proofs, removing the difficulties, and confirming the doctrines of the Christian Revelation. There are ample materials provided for such examination. Why are all the minute facts, connected with the early Gospel history, preserved upon record? Why is the verification of the prophetic writings continually presented to view, in the New-Testament? Why are the words and actions of the blessed Saviour, so minutely recorded?

Why are his miracles, which were performed in the midst of thousands, so fully and circumstantially related? Why are the proofs of his resurrection and ascension placed in so striking a light? Why is it, that every important occurrence, on which the credibility of the Gospel would essentially depend, took place before many witnesses?—And why is it, that the Apostles continually refer to these sources of evidence; hazard little by assertion; but constantly employ the most cogent and conclusive arguments?

Do not all these things show, that it was designed, that Reason should scan these proofs, carefully examine these facts, and establish a foundation for our faith, firm and immovable? Here, then, is an important field for rational inquiry. A volume is before me, which claims to contain a revelation from God. Was any revelation necessary? Is the purport of this revelation, such as the wants and woes of man require? Are the objects proposed to be accomplished by this system, such as could not be accomplished by other means? Are the great and leading facts which it relates, supported by sufficient testimony, to remove all rational doubt? Those facts being admitted, are the great principles of the system necessarily established? Is there sufficient evidence, that the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New? Is there clear and unanswerable proof, that miraculous interventions of divine agency did frequently attest the truth of the Gospel? And during the eighteen hundred years which have passed away since the commencement of the Christian dispensation, have the evidences of its divinity accumulated strength? Do the events which have attended the diffusion of Christianity, the comparative state of Christian and Anti-christian nations, the influence which the Gospel has exerted, and the moral effects which it has produced, afford corroboration to the original testimony?

If such inquiries as these, are honestly and faithfully made, by Reason, and the conclusions which result from them carefully pursued; and if the issue be, that the affirmative is true, then, the duty of Reason is performed; she may rest, with confidence, on these great truths, that the Gospel is a revelation from God; and that a Divine Messenger has descended among men to effect their deliverance from guilt and depravity; and to instruct them in the way to Heaven. Having established these fundamental truths, it becomes Reason to sit down, as an humble disciple, at the feet of this divine teacher; and meekly receive the instructions of Eternal Truth. Such is the sphere of action, and such the proper agency of Reason, in the vast concerns of Religion. Far from excluding her from our system, we assign her an important station; and give full scope to her exalted powers. It is her influence which constitutes us moral and accountable beings; renders us proper subjects of law and government; and makes us capable of the knowledge and enjoyment of God. To her are addressed all the motives, arguments, doctrines, promises, and threatenings, of revelation. She discovers the obstacles which interpose between fallen man and true happiness; the disorder and depravation of which sin has been the cause; the darkness and perils in which it has involved us; and can clearly discern the necessity of a light from Heaven, to guide us out of this labyrinth of woes;—of an exertion of divine efficiency, to restore the desolations which sin has spread, and of both instruction and influence from the Father of Spirits, to redeem and sanctify depraved man, and prepare him for the mansions of blessedness. She has also a most important agency in reference to revelation. It is her duty to investigate its pretensions; to collect and examine all the facts which go to the establishment of those pretensions; to scrutinize all the proofs which arise from

the fulfilment of prophecy, and the intervention of miraculous powers; to search into the records of past ages; weigh the various testimonies of profane historians; and consider the known phenomena of nature, to ascertain the credibility of the sacred records. Thus, it is evident, that we assign a wide and important province to the powers of reason;—impose upon her solemn and responsible duties; and pay her all the honours due to her high attributes, and Heavenly origin.

Not a step do we take, in defiance of her authority; not a truth embrace, in violation of her dictates. Every precept and doctrine we adopt, is in perfect unison with the decisions of that understanding, which is given us by the inspiration of the Almighty.

From the preceding views of the subject, we proceed, now, to make some practical observations.

First.—We perceive the falsity of the charge generally preferred against evangelical preachers, that they reject the authority, and exclude the agency of Reason. Because we do not spend our whole time, in strengthening the outworks, and polishing the armaments of Christianity, but, being satisfied with our security in that respect, are chiefly solicitous to watch against the machinations of internal foes, to preserve discipline, and cherish a spirit of active obedience;—therefore, we are accused of total indifference to the strength of her bulwarks, or the beauty of her towers. But do we not show the greatest confidence in the walls of our Zion, when we consider them so impregnable, as to keep every assailant in awe, so indestructible as to inspire universal confidence, and render all active defence unnecessary?

If we employ most of our efforts, rather to impress the truths of religion upon the heart than to confirm them in the head,—rather to excite the affections, by unfolding the sanctions and destinies of Religion, than

to convince the understanding by reciting its evidences,—rather to resist the chilling influence of cold speculation, than the open attacks of infidelity ; it is because we do not suspect our hearers of scepticism ; but esteem them full believers in the Christian revelation.

Were our impressions of an opposite character, did we esteem it necessary to declare and defend the foundations of our faith, to enter the lists with any of the various forms of infidelity,—we should not shrink from the conflict. We would meet the foe on the fair ground of rational inquiry and argument ; and marshalling the mighty host of evidence in favour of revelation, under the banners of Reason, bid defiance to every uncircumcised Philistine, who should dare assail the armies of the living God. But why spend time in proving what not a hearer denies ? Why conjure up an imaginary enemy, merely for the sake of putting him to flight ? Why take up the time of the afflicted and disconsolate, who need the consolations of religion,—of the trembling Christian, who wants support and encouragement,—of the growing believer, who longs for the rich provisions of grace,—of the broken-hearted penitent, who pants for the balm of Gospel mercy,—of the slumbering sinner, who must be roused to a sense of the dangers which surround him,—or of the careless, thoughtless mortal, who must *feel* the truths which he now admits, and forgets, in the same moment ? Why consume the precious time of all these, in arguments and illustrations, in which they feel no interest ; and from which, they can derive no benefit ? It is true, themes of this sort afford a fine field for the displays of genius ; and the gratification of vanity ;—they are exceedingly pleasing to certain classes of hearers ; because they neither disturb their security, nor alarm their fears :—they lead to illustrations, and discussions, by which the taste is regaled, and the fancy entertained ;

but they produce no good ; they are utterly inefficacious to the salvation of the soul.

There are Ministers richly endowed by nature, and refined by mental cultivation, who have a reach of imagination, and a vivid glow of fancy, inferior to none—who have the treasures of learning, the refinements of taste, and the beauties of diction at their command ; whose resources of entertainment are rich as the stores of philosophy ; who could, not only collect and arrange, but elevate and adorn ;—who, by choosing popular subjects, and embellishing them by ingenious speculations, could gather the fresh and fragrant honours of public applause ; and obtain the highest distinctions to which genius aspires ;—who yet turn away from all these delusive prospects ; sacrifice all the hopes of ambition upon the altar of truth ; encounter the frown of the world, by dwelling upon the doctrines of the Cross ;—excite the indignation of some of their hearers by declaring their guilt and danger : and steadily pursue the path of unyielding fidelity, amid the arrows of slander, the sneers of contempt, and the incessant storm of merciless persecution.

We observe, *Secondly*, that zeal and fervour in Religion, so far from being irrational, are in perfect unison with the dictates of enlightened Reason. We are accustomed to hear, that the influence of Reason tends to check all the ardour of devotion ; to repress all the emotions of religious feeling ; and to produce a degree of moderation, nearly allied to utter insensibility. It is readily admitted, that it is the office of Reason to prevent the extravagancies of the passions ; to regulate the imagination ; to prevent the mind from being carried about by every wind of doctrine ; or being captivated by fanciful delusions. But it is utterly denied, that her influence is opposed to the deepest impressions of religious truth, or

the entire predominance of pious affections. The distressful emotions of the awakened sinner are increased rather than repressed, by the dictates of Reason. What ! Does Reason forbid anxious concern, when the destinies of immortality are at stake ? Does she cry peace, when the voice of God exclaims there is no peace ? Does she bid the man to be cool and unmoved, who stands upon the brink of eternity's ocean ; and whom the next swollen surge may overwhelm in everlasting ruin ? Does Reason condemn the alarms of him, who stands burdened with guilt, exposed to the thunders of Heaven's wrath, unsheltered and unforgiven ? Does she disapprove his rapid flight to the city of refuge, when the avenger of blood is close behind ? No, my hearers : men never act more rationally, than when they tremble at the displeasure of a Holy God ; than when their hearts are stricken through with terror, at the thought of standing before the bar of Jehovah, unprepared ; men never act more in obedience to Reason, than when the interests of the soul and the destinies of a future world wholly absorb the mind ; than when this world sinks to nothing in their estimation ; when nothing can cheer them, but the light of Gospel hope ; nothing relieve them, but the experience of pardoning mercy. The prodigal never acted so rationally, as when he resolved to return, as a penitent, to his offended father. The publican obeyed Reason, as well as conscience, when he smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner !" And Paul never acted so worthily of his rational powers, as when he spent three days without meat or drink, in darkness and unutterable anguish, supplicating the mercy of that Redeemer, whom he had persecuted. The charge of irrationality, and of derangement, is rather applicable to the careless, than the awakened sinner ; to the man who smiles while Angels weep, than to him who weeps while Angels

smile; to the man who ventures perdition upon the chance of life, rather than to him who overlooks time, in his solicitude for eternity; to him who wastes the seed-time of his existence in trifles, and exposes himself to everlasting famine; rather than to him whose eye is constantly fixed, upon the harvest, which shall be gathered in, in a future world.

Reason condemns the conduct of him, who is anxiously accumulating earthly treasures, while he utterly neglects the Heavenly inheritance. Reason condemns the exultation of him whose joys may be blasted in a moment by death; and loudly reprobates the folly which purchases ungodly pleasures, thoughtless mirth, and *criminal indulgencies*, at the tremendous expense of never-ending woe. Thus, he who is most seriously and devoutly engaged in Religion, acts most agreeably to the dictates of Reason. Thus, he who fears God, and fears none else; who hates sin, and hates nothing else; who makes Religion his one great object, and accounts all else as vanity; who dreads no evil but God's displeasure; and makes this life the vestibule of Heaven; acts most worthily of Reason, God's noblest gift to man. Hence, we perceive the absurdity of calling great ardour in religion, and strong emotions upon spiritual subjects, irrational. The principle which opposes them is philosophy, falsely so called—that wisdom of man, which is foolishness with God.

We may observe, *Thirdly*, An entire devotedness to the cause of Christ; a style of preaching calculated to arouse, convince, and alarm; and continual efforts and fervent prayer for the conversion of sinners, so far from savouring of enthusiasm or fanaticism, are sanctioned by the authority and approbation of the coolest Reason.

It is common to hear it said, of men who are much more engaged in courting popular favour, and acquiring

a reputation for distinguished talents, than in bringing sinners to the Saviour—whose sermons are much more calculated to afford entertainment, and excite admiration, than to send the auditors to the closet of devotion and self-examination—who labour more for polished style and brilliancy of thought, than for impressive truths and solemn exhortation, and who are as well satisfied if critics admire as if Christians are edified,—if the multitude be pleased as if sinners repent—that they are liberal and enlightened ; and under the influence of Reason as well as Religion. And it is as common to hear it said, of men who are serious in a serious cause, who feel the appalling responsibility of their station ; who realize that their own souls and the souls of their hearers are at stake ; who believe that their people must be brought to repentance, must be savingly converted, or perish forever ; and who, therefore, devote all their exertions to the accomplishment of this one great object, who wish to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, and are willing to make any sacrifice to the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom—that they are bigotted enthusiasts, visionary fanatics, and strangers to rational views and solid judgment. But if we take the Bible for our guide, Jesus Christ for our model, and the destinies of an endless duration for our criterion, we shall be led, in both cases, to far different conclusions. Is it not the dictate of reason, to pay a higher regard to the decisions of God, than to those of frail, fallible men ? Yet God says, “ He that winneth “ souls, is wise ; ” “ They that turn many to righteous- “ ness, shall shine, as the brightness of the firmament, “ and as the stars for ever and ever.” “ Blessed are ye, “ when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall “ say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. “ Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your re- “ ward in Heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets

“which were before you.” Of one who utterly disregarded the opinions of others, and humbly sat at the feet of Jesus, he said, **“Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her.”**

Is it not rational, that a Christian Minister should copy the example of Jesus and his disciples, take up the Cross, and follow his Lord, through evil report, as well as good report? Let us suppose, then, a Minister, who should conduct his ministerial labours after the model of Jesus and the Apostles. He would make it his only object to call men to repentance; and this object, he would pursue, constantly, perseveringly, and earnestly. He would utterly disregard the opinions, the powers, and the reproaches of men. He would go from house to house, warning men of their danger, and urging them to fly from the wrath to come. He would not confine his ministry to the Sabbath; but every day, and on all occasions, he would call the attention of men to the concerns of their souls, and the realities of a future world. He would hold frequent prayer meetings, with his fellow-Christians; yea, he might continue all night, with his brethren, in devotion; for so did Jesus with his disciples. Now, should a man thus imitate the Saviour and his Disciples, in what light would he be viewed in our days? He would be called a fanatical madman, as his master was. Be it so. But does that prove that he acts irrationally? Does that prove, that it is contrary to Reason for the servant to be as his Lord? No: it only proves, that the wisdom of man is folly in the sight of God; and that, what is highly esteemed and approved by God, is often foolishness in the estimation of men.

When one course of conduct will insure to a man applause and prosperity in this world, but will surround his dying bed with terrors, cover him with confusion when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, and

expose him to endless condemnation: and another course of conduct will prove a thorny path of self-denial, will expose him to contempt and opposition, involve him in difficulties, and despoil him of all temporal comforts; but which will cause him to triumph in the hour of dissolution; and in consequence of which, he will receive, before the assembled universe, that glorious plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Which of these courses of conduct does Reason urge us to pursue? Indeed, if the doctrines of the Gospel, if Heaven and Hell, be solemn realities, nothing can be more irrational than to treat them in a cold, formal, and indifferent manner. If unconverted men be on the brink of perdition, is it not reasonable to address them, with all imaginable earnestness and feeling? If this, our only state of probation, be rapidly passing away, is it not reasonable to use all possible persuasions and arguments, with those who are wasting it? What would be said of a man, pleading for his own life, or the life of his friend, who should show no feeling, no earnestness, no apprehension; but should evidently try to make an elegant speech, to excite admiration, by beautiful imagery, and flights of eloquence, and who should mingle a variety of other topics with the object of his plea? would he not be pronounced void of Reason? Just so void of Reason is he who does not preach as if he never should preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.