

contain, had he had liberty to introduce them. 1. If I rightly understand him, he repeatedly suggests, that no man can believe the gospel to be true, while in an unregenerate state, because it is contrary to the "grain of his heart." But, as he at the same time allows, that *their opposition is silenced*, and that *a conviction is planted in their consciences* that the gospel *must* be true; and, further, observes, that "*this conviction is called believing*," though, as he thinks, in an improper sense, i. e. it will not prove *saving*; it is easy to see that his arguments will only serve to prove what no good man will deny, namely, that whatever persuasion any man may have of the truth of the gospel while he is in an unregenerate state, he is not thereby saved, or does not *believe to the saving of his soul*. It is utterly impossible, for him so to believe, prior to a new nature being given him; as soon might the effect precede its own proper cause. 2. However culpable a man may be, as a possessor and lover of the old man of sin, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; it must still be absolutely impossible for him to possess and love the *new man*, until God *creates* his own workmanship, and blesses him with *all things that pertain to life and godliness*, by his Spirit, *as before ordained*. And to say that, he could be regenerate, be holy, love Christ, and live by faith, *if he would*, is only saying, he could be and do those things, if he were made willing. Is not every act of the will, an *effect* of prior agency? Is it not a natural impossibility for the carnal mind to will its own change, or to will as though it were spiritual? Or can a man act spiritually without a will? Blessed be our God for ever, he has instructed his children, and taught them to know, that "*it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*. They that *believed on his name, were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, BUT OF GOD.*"

*Quot.* "The Jews declared themselves to be Moses' disciples, and had no doubt but they believed him; yet our Lord did not allow them to believe his writings, *Had ye believed Moses, says he, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me*. The same is, doubtless, true of all others who assent to his gospel merely from having been educated in it. Did they believe it, they would be consistent, and embrace those things which are connected with it.\*

*Ans.* This will not answer the purpose for which it is here

introduced, for it is manifest, from the scriptures, that many of the carnal Jews believed Moses and our Lord also.\*

1. Our Lord's reasoning was not designed to prove, that if those Jews, to whom he was then speaking, had believed the writings of Moses to be true, they would, therefore, believe in him to the salvation of their souls from the curse of the law, and from the pollution of their natures, as those do, who are born of the Spirit; but, only that they would believe him to be the prophet which Moses foretold, should be raised up unto them of their brethren. Christ had said, to the same persons,† "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Surely he did not mean to aver, that these Jews would receive him that should come in his own name, as many afterwards did, with the same kind of faith as the just live by. I, therefore, conclude, that he was not speaking to them of a new covenant faith in himself, but of the necessity and propriety of a natural common faith on him as the Messiah, sent of God according to prophecy. And the revelation he made of himself to them, by his words and works, was altogether suited to such a faith, and such a belief and open acknowledgment of his words and works would have done him honour, and been for their temporal good.

2. Although a natural historical faith in the doctrines of the gospel, will not save the soul that exercises it, yet it is useful in many respects in the cause of Immanuel. God will have his gospel acknowledged to be true by many who have no saving interest in it; that his own dear people, who are partakers of his salvation preached in the gospel, may fare the better in their dwelling among them; and that Christ Jesus may be more extensively honoured in his universal government of all, in the natural parts of religion, and his greatness be known far and wide. Thus I think the text in John, cited by Mr. F., is rather against him than for him, seeing Christ is speaking in that connection, of a natural homage and subjection to him, as a king whom God had anointed. Therefore, the words of Christ, *ye would have believed me*, are an additional proof that carnal men may believe his words.

*Quot.* "It is worthy of remark, that those professors of christianity, who *received not the love of the truth that they*

\* John vi. 14, 15, and vii. xxxi.

† John v. 43.

*might be saved, are represented as not believing the truth, and as having pleasure in unrighteousness.”\**

*Ans.* It is worthy of remark also, that the apostle is not speaking here of common professors, but of the followers of antichrist, who were not loved of God in Christ, did not receive his love in Christ, and were not written in the Lamb's book of life, or were not chosen to salvation from the beginning; as those were, who are preserved from worshipping the beast, and are called by the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. They preferred the doctrines of devils to the truths of the gospel, as preached by Christ and his apostles. In the third verse of the same chapter, the apostle speaks of a falling away, from which it appears, they had acknowledged the truth openly and afterwards swerved from it, and embraced the doctrines of the man of sin, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders. Their believing those lying wonders is called believing a lie:—and, when they received and acknowledged the image and mark of the beast, and rejected the doctrine of God's word, he gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and sent them strong delusion, that they should continue to believe a lie without repentance. But I shall, if spared, have occasion to notice this text hereafter; therefore, all I shall add for the present is, that the persons here spoken of, and alluded to by Mr. F., did not profess to believe the truth as laid down by Christ and his apostles; but, on the contrary, they were carried away by Satan in his devilish power to believe a lie: therefore his argument, from their profession and not believing the truth, is naught; for, though they preferred the lies of the devil to the truths of the Lord, all unregenerate men do not do so. We must not suppose that all the ungodly are alike ignorant of the doctrines of the gospel; because they are equally destitute of the salvation they contain.

*Quot.* “To admit the existence of a few facts, without possessing any sense of their humiliating implication, their holy nature, their vast importance, or the practical consequences that attach to them, is to admit the body without the spirit.”†

*Ans.* Suppose all this is allowed to be consistent: what will it prove? What have the non-elect to do with

\* Page 20.

† Ibid.

God's covenant in Christ Jesus? What have they to do with the blessed Spirit of all grace, which was given to the elect in Christ before the world began?\* How is it possible for them to possess the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus? God was determined not to bless them when he blessed the chosen remnant in the everlasting covenant of grace; has he altered his mind? Can they move him by their Old-Adam sincerity, manifested in reading, praying, weeping, and endeavouring to please God by varnishing up an outside, that shall be applauded by the generality of professors? It is not possible for the chosen seed to lose the grace which God hath given them in Christ; but they will all be made to enjoy a sense of the humiliating and holy nature of the gospel according to the mind of God. Christ has engaged to quicken, convert, direct, preserve, and glorify all those whom his Father gave unto him. The non-elect are sure to be lost.† Where then is the propriety of preaching and writing as if all men had the same opportunity of being saved, and as if men were probationers for eternal glory? Heaven is not offered, but given; and the election obtain it.

*Quot.* "Paul, notwithstanding his knowledge of the law, and great zeal on its behalf, while blind to its spirituality, reckoned himself to be *without the law.*"‡

*Ans.* True. But Paul was not without some knowledge of the law, and regard for it, although he did not internally and feelingly know its spirituality as he did afterwards. 1. I must think that the conduct of the Apostle, even before his conversion, when zealous of the law, was much less culpable in the eye of the law, than the conduct of such as fell down to worship idols, the works of their own hands. Nor can I view those persons who believe and acknowledge the great doctrines of the gospel, and lay themselves out to support the public worship of God where these doctrines are faithfully preached, although they be not internally sanctified by the truths they hear, and are nothing more than morally upright among men; I say, I cannot look upon such persons in the same light, as I do those who do all they can to hide the covenant of grace, and the sovereignty of God's love in election, redemption, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification of all the

\* Psalm l. 16.

† So says Mr. F. No. 24.

‡ Page 20.

covenant seed, and are ever disposed to point their ignorant philippics at all those preachers who "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." 2. To the words last quoted from Mr. F., he adds, "And such are those professing Christians, with respect to the gospel, *who receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved.*" This leads me again to observe that, the purport of Mr. F.'s reasoning is, to prove that those persons who are destitute of special saving faith, and who do not receive the gospel in the love of it, are without any spiritual and saving knowledge of it; whatever degree of persuasion they may have of its being true. But this will not prove that an unregenerate man cannot believe that what God says in his word is truth, and shall be performed accordingly. Mr. F.'s design was to prove, that an unregenerate man could not possibly believe the gospel; and, that whatever conviction he might have of its being true, yet he could not *believe* it properly speaking, because his faith in the truth of it was not of a saving kind; but he has not accomplished his design. To persist in saying, that notwithstanding the knowledge and faith an unregenerated man may have in the gospel, he does not properly or savingly believe it, proves not the point in hand.

*Quot.* "The scripture not only requires internal as well as external duties; but, if I may so say, exhibits internal as well as external truths. It not only affirms general truths, but describes their intrinsic nature and glory; and no person can properly be said to believe the gospel, unless he believe one as well as the other, because this only is believing it to be what it is."\*

*Ans.* Here our author distinguishes wonderfully, if I may so say. 1. We are here told what the scripture *requires* what it *exhibits*, what it *affirms*, and what it *describes*, with a small piece of logic into the bargain. Truth in the hearts of God's regenerate family answers to truth in the scriptures no doubt. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to take of the things of Christ and *shew* them to his people. That which is externally declared in the word of truth, becomes internally written on the heart by the operation of the Holy Comforter in his office-power from the Father and

\* 1st Edit. page 14.

the Son : when he comes of his own good will and pleasure, in the fulness and freeness of the Father's grace in election, and in the infinite merits and efficacy of the great Mediator, Jesus Christ our Lord. 2. When the things of Christ are only exhibited by the word in an external way of doctrinal demonstration, they may, and ought to be, believed by those who read or hear : for, according to the nature of the revelation the obligation binds, he that rejecteth the doctrines of the gospel, and preferreth the inventions of men and devils, gives God the lie. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God HATH given TO (US) ETERNAL LIFE : and this life is in his Son." 3. It is said, "The scripture not only *affirms* general truths, but *describes* their intrinsic nature and glory ; and no person can properly be said to believe the gospel, unless he believes one as well as the other." I have before observed, that it is not merely *what* a person believes that constitutes him a true christian ; but also how he believes it, in what light and in what power. For, if Christ Jesus be not the author, principle, object, and actuator of his faith, by the power of the Holy Comforter, it is but a natural belief in creature light and power according to creation-law, and not according to the covenant of grace revealed in the gospel, and the life of the *new creature*. But it seems according to Mr. F. that the scripture *describes* the intrinsic nature and glory of the truths it affirms. Yet he thinks no unregenerate person can believe the description. Why cannot such a person believe the description as well as another part of the word equally holy and true ? He allows that the following truths may be believed by the mere professor : viz. "that there was such a person as Jesus Christ—that he was born at Bethlehem—lived and wrought miracles in Judea—was crucified, buried, and raised again from the dead—that he ascended to glory, and will judge the world at the last day.—That he is God and man, and bears the titles of king, priest, and prophet of his church. That there is an eternal election, and particular redemption, an effectual vocation, a final perseverance, &c.—These (he adds), no doubt, are truths, and great truths, and what *it is allowed* may be believed where no saving faith is." Now, as these

sublime mysteries of the gospel may be believed, why not any other part of the word?

*Quot.* "Some men think they are great friends to the doctrine of election, yea, almost the only friends it has left in the world, who yet never from their heart believe it would be a fair thing in God to choose *others*, and to *cast them off*. Such cannot be said to believe the *equity* of the doctrine, and they might almost as well have believed nothing at all about it."\*

*Ans.* Surely this was committed to paper at a time when our author was very drowsy. He thinks no man can be said to believe the equity of the doctrine of election, without he, at the same time, believes it *would be* a fair thing in God to choose others, and to cast him of. Now, had he said they never from their hearts believed it *would have been* a fair thing in God to have chosen others, and passed by them, he would have been much more consistent with scripture, and experience. The scripture declares he will not cast off his people, and his faithfulness to his promise is what his people have to look to for support. On the other hand, all *the rest* are appointed to wrath, and seeing God changeth not his mind, how can any man, possessed of the spirit of Christ, ever believe it would be right in God, who cannot lie, to choose the rest, and cast off the election of grace? I am certain that those persons, who so believe the doctrine of election, cannot believe it equitably. I will, therefore, give Mr. F. his words back again in the following way: Some men think they are great friends to the doctrine of election, yea, almost the only friends it has left in the world, who yet never from their heart believed it to be a fair thing in God, to continue to love and hold fast, those whom he hath chosen, and to continue to hate and reject those whom he hath cast off. Such cannot believe the equity of the doctrine, and they might quite as well have believed nothing at all about it.

*Quot.* "Many seem great advocates for the doctrine of perseverance, who yet never cordially admitted the idea of persevering in grace and holiness. Perseverance with such, as one said, is 'the tacking together a beginning and an end, and leaving the devil to fill up the middle.' Such, instead of believing the truth, believe a lie, in supposing eternal bliss to be connected with such a kind of life."†

\* 1st Edit. page 14.

† Page 14.

*Ans.* The doctrine of certain perseverance in grace and holiness unto eternal glory is a Bible truth, and is readily admitted as such by many who are not interested in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who cordially admit *the idea* of persevering in grace and holiness, while their conduct is contrary to their judgments: nor do they believe eternal bliss to be connected with an immoral and unholy life. Perhaps there are not many, who seem great advocates for the doctrines of the gospel, that do, at the same time, believe that eternal bliss stands connected with a life of sin, unrepented of. I think I have observed that such kind of persons commonly believe the contrary, and appear to be supported by a false and delusive hope that they shall, some time or other, have repentance and forgiveness given them. Besides, cordially to *admit the idea* of persevering in grace and holiness, is very far short of *inwardly enjoying the power* of grace and holiness.

*Quot.* "A partial assent, it is allowed, there may be, without saving faith; but properly to believe a scripture doctrine, is to believe it, as the scripture represents it. It is not to admit this idea of this, and reject that, but to receive it *as it is*; and whoever thus receives the truth, receives the love of it, for that being must not be human that believes an object lovely, and yet does not love it."\*

*Ans.* Here we have the phrase *properly to believe*, again introduced; but it has been noticed already as not being to the point: therefore, I shall pass that by, and take some notice of what is here asserted; namely, that it is impossible for any human being to believe an object to be lovely, without at the same time loving it.

The word of truth declares, that Christ is *altogether lovely*. And I think it is possible for a rational man to believe, that what the Holy Ghost has said of Christ, is true; that he is what the scripture says he is, and at the same time feel no real gospel love to his person and work, so as to be thereby converted to God. It is true, the carnal man has never seen Jesus Christ in his own light, which accounts for his not loving him as the *upright*† are said to do. But he may have some knowledge of him in *nature-light*, and by the doctrines of the gospel, and may believe him to be lovely because the word of God affirms that he is

\* Page 11. † Song. i. 4. John i. 4, 9. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 22.

so, although he has never seen him in the light of saving grace, as the called ones of the Lord have. The gospel declares, that Christ Jesus is precious to them that believe. The new-born children of God have seen Jesus Christ *in the light* of the knowledge of the glory of God, and therefore, feel a real love to him, and are thereby drawn to him, and inwardly inclined to stay upon him. The mere professor has only heard of Jesus Christ, and received him in intellectual light, as he is externally manifested in the doctrines of the gospel. He will assent and consent to the truth of the gospel, and to this truth amongst others, that Jesus Christ, is *in himself*, and *to his people*, lovely and all-sufficient. The words last cited, were designed to prove that an unregenerate man could not possibly believe the gospel, but they do not answer that purpose.

*Quot.* "They (men in general) see no form nor comeliness in Christ, nor beauty, that they should desire him; therefore, they cannot believe him to be *altogether lovely*."\*

*Ans.* It is possible for a person to believe an object to be lovely in itself, and also to be lovely in the eyes of others, upon the faithful testimony of those who have seen and know it; when the persons supposed so to believe, may not have seen the object himself at all. All unregenerate men do not think and act alike: while some do not believe the scriptures concerning Christ, others do, and have no doubt but salvation is in, by, and through Christ. And in many respects they are useful in the professing world, and the real children of God are, at certain times, and in certain senses *helped* by them.† But, perhaps it will be said, they cannot inwardly and feelingly believe him to be *altogether lovely*, as the church meant by the words. It should be remembered also, that the matter in dispute for the present is, not whether they can believe savingly, but whether they can possibly believe at all, that what God has said in his word concerning Christ is true; not whether they can believe so as at the same time to possess the *witness* of their adoption in themselves; but, whether they can believe *the record that God gave of his Son*: which record is, that *God hath given to us eternal life; and that this life is in his Son*: that *he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not*

\* 1st Edit. page 16.

† Rev. xii. 16. 1 John v. 10, 12.

*life.* Is real or spiritual affection essential to a *rational* and firm belief of a proposition concerning Christ? Surely, not. I therefore conclude, that Mr. F.'s inference in the above citation is void.

*Quot.* "The necessary connexion there is betwixt faith and practice induces me to think it *impossible* for a wicked man, while such, to believe the afore-mentioned truths."\*

*Ans.* Upon this Mr. Button made the following remarks:—"I agree with Mr. F. when he says, 'there is a necessary connexion between faith and practice.'" I think wherever true faith is, the truth believed has taken such possession, such hold of that soul, that it cannot but show itself in the life, for faith without works is dead. Does the scripture declare nothing is so odious, nothing so dangerous as sin? he who has real faith, and is under its influence, so possesses that truth that he must necessarily hate and forsake evil. Does the Bible inform us, no Saviour is so suitable, none so precious, none so excellent in every view as the Lord Jesus Christ? he who has special faith, so possesses that truth in his soul, it makes such an impression on his heart, that he cannot but find an actual outgoing of his soul towards him in a way of love, trust, and obedience. But I cannot agree with him when he draws this conclusion: "The necessary connexion there is between faith and practice induces me to think it *impossible* for a wicked man while such to believe, &c. I have heard this pertinent question asked, Do not men in general believe they shall die, yea, really, cordially and heartily believe it? But do they act accordingly? or do not the judgment and practice of the generality of mankind contradict each other?" To this Mr. F. in his *Defence*, made this reply, "Death is more an object of *intuition* than faith. If people did not see the death of their fellow-creatures, and had no other evidence that they must die but the testimony of God, they would be as apt to disbelieve that as they are other things; and even as it is, if they realized death, *and what follows*, it would have an effect upon their spirit and life very different from what it has."† Here, if I am not very much mistaken, he is strangely incongruous even to a plain contradiction of himself. First he says, death is more an object of *intuition* than faith. Then to prove his assertion to be just, he appears to reason (as Mr. Martin has repre-

\* Page 16.

† Def. page 20

sented) thus: "I see the death of my fellow-creatures; from thence I *infer*, I must die sometime; and therefore, I do not so much *believe* the testimony of God as my own *inference* from repeated observation; and such inference is *intuition!* or *knowledge* not obtained by *the deduction of reason!* But it is objected, is it not to gratify the wicked to suppose they may believe many things, and yet act inconsistently? Not at all. They should be told plainly, that persuasion may be well *founded* when it is not *regarded*, or where seduction prevails against it."

*Quot.* "Persons may *profess* to believe many things which they do not, yea, may suppose themselves really to believe them; but if it indeed were as they say, it would shew itself by their actions. Men believe various things in the world to be odious, and others dangerous; that arsenic will poison them, or fire burn them; and they act accordingly, they make it their constant endeavour to shun them."\*

*Ans.* It is said, persons may suppose themselves to believe many things which they do not. Is this speaking congruously? Suppose by many things are designed many truths: As, *Christ is the head of the Church, and the Saviour of the body. He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He bowed his head and gave up the ghost. And the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Now can any *rational* person believe, or suppose himself to believe these assertions to be very true, and at the same time disbelieve them, or believe them to be very false? Or can he disbelieve the truth of the above assertions, and yet really believe, or think he believes them to be very true at the same time? I think not surely. But it will be said probably, that such a person as is above supposed, does not believe the qualities and properties of the truth, and that this only is believing it to be *what it is*. To which it has been replied, if a proposition be true, you believe it in its fullest extent, if you believe all that is predicated of its subject.—That as to the *qualities* and *properties* of these propositions considered as *truths*, they have only ONE, and that is their distinction from *falsehood*. It is further said, "Men believe various things in the world to be odious, and

\* Page 16.

others dangerous, &c.”—I answer, men believe that arsenic will poison them undoubtedly, when they take it for that very purpose; therefore, there can be no propriety in saying they act according to their belief, and make it their *constant* endeavour to shun it. For it is difficult to prove that *all* such persons are persuaded that arsenic *is adapted to make them happy*, by taking away their lives, or because it will poison them.

*Quot.* “Men believe that an enjoyment of the profits, pleasures, and honours of this life, would certainly make them happy. These are things they believe *with all their heart*, and they act accordingly, they pursue them with all their might.”\*

*Ans.* May it not be asked where these men live who always pursue these things with all their might? Mr. F. speaks of men in general as thus believing and acting, but I am inclined to think it would be difficult to find many of the above description. Perhaps Mr. F. would have been sufficiently wearied in finding one. Now if it cannot be proved that men in general do always pursue with *all their might*, the profits, pleasures, and honours of this life, from a persuasion that an enjoyment of them would certainly make them happy; then Mr. F.’s assertion is wanting of propriety. Besides, I can see no consistency in blending things natural and temporal, with things that are supernatural and eternal. Suppose the generality of men did believe that an enjoyment of the profits, pleasures, and honours of this life would certainly make them happy; and that they pursued them with great eagerness, and were successful in their pursuits; then, it would not follow that all who believe what God says to be true must, therefore, always act accordingly, and much less feelingly and heartily pursue the blessings of the covenant of grace. Yet they may be reformed in their conduct, through a natural faith in the word of God, and be in some respects more useful than before they heard the word. The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations, and the fruit thereof is for the spiritual healing and nourishment of the chosen seed, who are redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, tongue, and people.

*Quot.* “Were a company of intoxicated people to sit together in a house that was all in flames; and if, on the

\* Page 16.