

they had never apostatized;* therefore, it cannot require that evangelical love, by which faith works, and sinners are saved. If I am bound to be, and act, as an innocent man, I cannot, by the same law, be required to be and act as a regenerated sinner, saved by grace, and redeemed by blood. The character required by the law, according to Mr. F.'s own reasoning, would not be that of a christian, were it in possession; therefore, faith in Christ must be out of the question; for where Christ is excluded as the object, faith cannot be requisite as an eye.

10. If the law of God requires no natural impossibilities, then it cannot require fallen man to *re-produce* the principle lost by the fall; but Mr. F. says, the law requires no natural impossibilities; therefore, it cannot require fallen man to re-produce the principle lost by the fall. Man became punishable for his disobedience, but to re-instate himself in the divine favour, was neither possible nor commandable. Having sinned, he must abide the consequences, his innocence once lost is for ever gone; and except sovereign mercy had interposed, the whole race of Adam must have endured, the equitable, but awful, sentence of indignant justice. If even it were admitted that, man by the first offence lost a power of believing, it would not follow that, he is to be exhorted to restore it. When Uzziah presumed to burn incense contrary to the law of God, and became a leper in consequence of his rash intrusion, it was not his duty to restore himself to soundness. "But it was his sin that brought on the leprosy." True, and the leprosy was his punishment. Man must endure the effects of his evil deeds, if grace prevent not, but he is not required to re-place what by sin he lost. "Then by transgression he is released from obligation." No such thing, he must suffer the awful results of his temerity and defection. The wages of sin is death: when his ability is lost for perfectly *doing* the will of God, his existence remains for finally *suffering* it.

11. It is granted that God has not lost his authority, because man has lost his ability to keep the law under which he is born. The *commandment* shews man once had power to keep it perfectly; but *exhortation* supposes a *present* ability, which it is very evident no man has. We

* Nos. 11, 17.

may urge the truth and justice of the commandment, and of the penalty annexed; we may explain the ground of its authority; and we may thereby shew the direful consequences of disobedience; we may also maintain the righteousness of God in his governing character; but we cannot, without evincing our folly, *exhort* any man, but upon the supposition of his being radically able to obey: or that he is possessed of the very principle out of which the acts required must *necessarily* arise.

12. If the law of nature knows nothing of Christ, or of spiritual things, then it cannot command those who are under it to seek a possession and an enjoyment of those things; but the law of nature knows nothing of Christ, or of spiritual things; therefore it cannot command those who are under it to seek a possession and enjoyment of those things. If this be granted, as I expect it must, then the unregenerate are not bound to have and exercise spiritual faith; for all duty, as to them, must belong to the law under which they are placed.

13. If the law enjoins man to be perfect in himself, then it cannot command him to seek perfection in a Mediator, by faith; but the law enjoins man to be perfect in himself; therefore it cannot command him to seek perfection in a Mediator, by faith. The law has no reference to a Saviour in its commands, but requires its subject to be and do that, which would suppose him not to act by faith in a Mediator, nor to need one, to fulfil its demands for him.

14. The law requires nothing as a means of salvation; but special faith is a means of salvation; therefore, the law does not require special faith.

15. Whatsoever disposition of mind the law requires of any one man, it requires the same of all men who are under its authority, without distinction; but Mr. F. acknowledges that, spiritual faith is required of none but those "who have opportunity of hearing the gospel," nor of them, "before they have opportunity of examining the evidence attending it;" therefore, spiritual faith cannot be required by the law, which requires the same of all men who are under its authority, without distinction. Yet if faith be not required by the law, it is not required at all of the carnal.

16. If regeneration be God's work, and man be passive under the formation of the principle within him, then

regeneration cannot be man's duty; but regeneration is God's work, and man is passive under the formation of the principle within him; therefore regeneration cannot be man's duty. All the regenerate are born, not of the will of man, but of God: except a man be born of the Spirit he *cannot* believe in Christ, when he is born of the Spirit, he is *sure* to believe; and to be so born is a favour which none but God can bestow. He that does not believe, is destitute of that principle without which no man ever did, nor any man ever will believe, because without it no man ever can believe. And were men as sinless as Adam in Eden, they could not believe as the regenerate do, without a principle suited to the nature of the act. The point to be considered more directly is, not what hinders faith, but what produces it. God never causes any one to believe without first forming the principle of faith, and therefore, it cannot be man's duty to believe without such principle. For surely, the Lord God does not command a man to believe, or to produce the act *without* the principle; when he himself never produces the act but *by* the principle. The conclusion is, that Mr. F.'s propositions are not founded in truth. "There cannot be an obligation to believe, where the pre-requisites of faith are denied."*

17. If all the unregenerate, who have opportunity of hearing the gospel, were commanded to exercise spiritual faith, and other gracious acts, and were encouraged to perform them by the promise of spiritual blessings to them; then, the promise must be general and conditional; but the promise of spiritual blessings is not general and conditional; therefore, all the unregenerate who have opportunity of hearing the gospel, are not commanded to exercise spiritual faith, &c.

18. If the law requires spiritual faith in Christ of the unregenerate, it must require it in the highest degree; but the highest degree of faith will include a full assurance of interest in Christ, therefore, the law does not require spiritual faith in Christ of the unregenerate. It is certain that faith can add nothing to the Mediator's work; therefore, if he be not the unregenerate man's Saviour, before he believes in him, he can never be his Saviour by his believing in him. Christ's interest in any unregenerate sinner,

* P. Withers, D. D.

cannot depend upon the conduct of that unregenerate sinner. Interest, and the evidence of it to the interested, ought not to be confounded.

19. Many of those who have opportunity of hearing the gospel, are not written in the Lamb's book of life; God himself cannot cause them to believe in Christ, without changing his purpose concerning them; but God cannot change his purpose; therefore, he cannot cause them to believe in Christ. It is impossible in the nature of things, for the non-elect to be saved* as the elect are; and Mr. F. has said, "they never will believe," and it may be subjoined, that, if the cause be absolutely necessary to the production of its effect, it must be equally impossible for them to believe, as it is for them to obtain salvation.†

20. If no man ever did possess spiritual faith, but as a sovereign gift through the merit of Christ, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit; then no man can prove it possible in the nature of things, that any one should now possess faith in any other way; but no man ever did possess spiritual faith, but as a sovereign gift through the merit of Christ, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit; therefore, no man can prove it possible, in the nature of things, that any one should now possess faith in any other way. If the principle must, in the nature of things, precede the act, then obligation to the act cannot precede the gift of the principle. If it be subjoined that man lost the principle by the Eden lapse, and that therefore the obligation remains, though the principle be destroyed; it is replied, that this is founding the whole system of the duty of the dead in sin, on highly disputed premises. Yet upon this one principle Mr. F. has rested all his arguments. This, however, will be hereafter fully answered. Suffice it at present to say that, if even the premises begged were granted, the desired conclusion would not follow. See the 10th argument of this Section.

If the preceding arguments cannot be invalidated, in vain has Mr. F. cited particular texts of scripture to prove that, unregenerate men are commanded and exhorted, to have and exercise spiritual faith in Christ. We know that truth is consistent with itself, and must therefore conclude

* No. 24.

† No. 14.

that, such scriptures have a different signification from that which he has put upon them. The sentiment of sovereign and distinguishing grace in the salvation of God's elect, maintained in this section, is exemplified in the conversion and sanctification of a peculiar people on earth, and will be finally exemplified in the separating day of our Lord's personal coming and judgment.

SECTION IV.

STRICTURES ON CERTAIN EXTRACTS CONTAINED IN THE SECOND SECTION.

It may be needful here to apprise the reader, that having numbered the quotations, they will be referred to by the numbers prefixed, and not again written down, except as far as the nature of the observations and reasonings upon them may require, to avoid obscurity: *it will therefore be necessary to turn back to them as he reads.*

No. 2. Mr. F. also says, "*Regeneration* is introduced as a *cause* of faith: it includes the first impartation of spiritual life: and is that operation in which the soul is passive; *we are born again.*"* But this forms a *contradiction* to the words referred to, for if regeneration denote what is effected by divine operation, in which the soul is passive, and if, under such operation, souls *are born again*, as he says, then, though regeneration be not used to express any thing *we do*, yet, it expresses what *we are*. Compare also No. 15.

Doctor Hammond says, "Regeneration signifies a new or second state." Is not this second state what Mr. F. must be understood to mean, by "a godly *state* of mind," which he tells us he concludes is *necessary* to the sinner's believing in Christ? He also asserts that, "what a person is when he is regenerated, he *ought* to have been prior to that period." But when he is regenerated, he has a godly state of mind, he has a godly principle, and this principle, Mr. F. says, amounts to the same thing as *the disposition* of the mind.† Now a godly disposition of mind must be a *right spirit*; and Mr. F. says, sinners *ought to be* of a right spirit, the conclusion is, that regeneration, according

* p. 210.

† p. 101.

to his own words, *is used to express our being of a right spirit*, which contradicts his words in No. 2. And hence what he has pleaded for, amounts to saying, it is every man's duty to be regenerate! Yet, in fact, regeneration is that part of salvation by the Holy Spirit, in which the soul is *passive*, but duty belongs to those things in which it is *active*.

New birth expresses what *we are*; but regeneration is new birth; therefore regeneration expresses what *we are*. But this Mr. F. denied, and so erred from the truth evidently.

No. 3. Under this number we find our author has opposed both truth and himself. I understand him to affirm that, "Nothing but the Almighty influence of the Holy Spirit, according to the riches of sovereign grace, can regenerate a sinner, or cause him to be a regenerate character." To this sentiment I can have no objection. But he also adds, "We do not say it is the duty of men to give themselves special grace." Very well. What then are they to do? He does not admit it to be their duty to regenerate themselves. Now as they are unregenerate, and as it is not possible, in the nature of things, that they should act spiritually while they remain unregenerate; the question again demands attention. *What are they to do?* In the production of a holy principle, or state of mind, God is the agent, and the sinner is a *passive* subject: duty, therefore, here cannot apply. Man is exposed to suffering through the loss of his original state, but he is not punishable for not re-producing his forfeited rectitude: having lost it, and become a sinner, he is under the incurred sentence of the law, as the offspring of Adam; but this does not imply that he is to be exhorted to be what the regenerate are, and to do what they do. No man, it is presumed, will be damned, for not having that faith, which man in his original rectitude had not; nor yet, for not re-producing that natural holiness which Adam lost for ever.

In reply to the second sentence under No. 3. I observe that, Mr. F. has again flatly contradicted himself. He declares that, "Whatever regenerate men do, carnal men ought to do the same." Yet he also says, "Carnal men are not bound to love God for his special and distinguishing love to them, seeing there is no evidence of his having

any such love towards them: but godly men are.”* The argument then will stand thus: whatever regenerate men do, in respect to spiritual dispositions, unregenerate and carnal men ought to do the same; but regenerate men love God for his special love to them, therefore, unregenerate and carnal men ought to love God for his special love to them! This was Mr. F.’s manner of reasoning, and I never learned that he revoked it, though it is evidently contrarious.

No. 4. This extract is wholly approved, but then it overthrows the whole system of Mr. F., concerning the duty of the dead in sin. For, if the cause necessarily precedes the effect, then God must have willed it should; but the cause does necessarily precede the effect; therefore, God must have willed it should. If God has willed a godly state of mind to precede believing, then it must be impossible to reverse that order; but God has willed a godly state of mind to precede believing; therefore, it must be impossible to reverse that order. Now, if that order *cannot* be reversed, God cannot require faith of the unregenerate; but Mr. F. has affirmed that God does require faith of the unregenerate; therefore, what Mr. F. has affirmed, supposes that order *can* be reversed. But as this supposition is false, Mr. F.’s system must be untrue. If it be said that faith is the duty of the unregenerate, but that they are not required to believe *while they remain in unregeneracy*, then the point is given up to us; for this is allowing that only the regenerate are required to believe, in an immediate sense. And as regeneration must first take place, and as it neither is, nor ought to be, of man, but is necessarily of God;† faith cannot precede it, nor be required prior to it. No. 5, and 25.

No. 5, and 25. Observe, Mr. F. affirms, 1. “That *almighty power cannot* cause the heart while carnal to love him, and be subject to his law. 2. That what is impossible *in its own nature*, God is never introduced as accomplishing any more than man. 3. That the impossibility of a carnal man’s loving God and being subject to his law *while carnal*; and the impossibility of the natural man’s receiving the things of the Spirit of God,

* 1st Ed. p. 98.

† John i. 13.

while they appear foolishness to him are of *the same nature*. 4. That God requires no natural impossibilities. 5. That things that are possible with God, are *not such as are impossible in their own nature*." These things Mr. F. here asserts, and their assertion amply proves in what confusion his thoughts were involved in regard to the duty-system, which he so tenaciously retained. From this statement I reason as follows:—

1. What God cannot do is a natural impossibility; but God cannot cause the heart while carnal to love him and be subject to his law; therefore, for the heart, while carnal, to love God and be subject to his law, is a natural impossibility. And be it observed that, Mr. F. says, in the preceding statement, that the impossibility of the natural man's receiving spiritual things is of the same nature: is natural. He at the same time adds, as if to refute himself, "God requires no natural impossibilities." Then how can he require the effect while he withholds the essential cause?

2. If *omnipotence* itself cannot cause the unregenerate to love God, then *wisdom* and *equity* cannot *exhort* them to love God; but omnipotence itself cannot cause the unregenerate to love God; therefore wisdom and equity cannot *exhort* them to love God. This, however, will not deny but their *obligation* ought to be explained, and their exposure, and accountableness pointed out; that their miserable estate, and their need of a Mediator may be demonstrated ministerially: and if the Holy Spirit will, efficiently. A sense of guilt, and condemnation, want and helplessness, must precede any real reception and enjoyment of the work and fulness of Christ. *Preaching* the gospel through the law, and the law through the gospel, are suited to effect those essential things; for perception must precede persuasion. The will can only be gained through the understanding.

3. Perfect obedience to the law, as at first required in innocence, is a debt which fallen man owes to his Maker; but that which is owing may be justly demanded; therefore, perfect obedience to the law as at first required, may be justly demanded.* He that through his own fault, as a son of Adam, is disabled for paying, is, in equity, liable to suffer; but every man is, through his own fault, as a son

* With a view to the infliction of the penalty, or to shew the need of a saviour; by an exegetical, but, not by an exhortative, use of the law.

of Adam, disabled for paying; therefore, every man is in equity liable to suffer. Nor can any man escape it, by any effort of his own; for without Jesus' blood there is no remission for any one. None, however, shall perish for whom that precious blood was shed.

No. 8. "It is the duty of a bad man to be a good man." What is here intended by—*duty to be*? Is not *being* prior—*necessarily* prior to any obligation that can warrant a serious exhortation to action? What was Adam's duty before his Maker breathed into his nostrils the breath of life? Was it his duty to be the upright creature which he afterwards became? Or, was he not first made radically holy, and then required to be actively so at all times? By sin man lost his original principle of rectitude, and his incapacity, thus acquired, became his punishment in part. His accountableness remained when his ability was destroyed; and he remained capable of suffering, when due obedience had become impossible. Hence the awful representations which are made of his future state in holy writ. As many as are left under the law, will be judged by the law: but whosoever believeth in Jesus is evidently saved from the wrath to come,* being redeemed by Christ, and justified from all things in him.

"We make nothing the duty of men," says our author, "but that in which they are voluntary." Pray is a godly state of mind, which he asserts is necessary to believing, a thing in which men are primarily voluntary? Surely not. He further says, "Whatever may be said of particular volitions being caused by ideas received into the mind, original biases are not so caused."† Then how can those original biases come under the notion of duties? Whoever has them is a good man; therefore, the *duty to be*, does not apply to him in the sense of our author. And if a physical change of state *necessarily precedes* all holy acts, and duty be restricted to such acts, as Mr. F. says it is; it must be absurd, to exhort to the latter, while we suppose the absence of the former. No. 7. When men are required *to be* holy, merciful, and the like, it must be understood that they are required to *act* holily: and the persons exhorted so to act, by the apostles, were supposed to be in a gracious state.

* 1 Thess. i. 10.

† p. 207.

No. 9. It is readily admitted that where there is no law, there can be no transgression. But pray, what is the extent or definite import of this—"so far?" Sin is the transgression of the law. Is it needful to say *how far* it is so? Or, must we suppose that, to a certain extent, it is not a transgression of the law? Mr. F. is gone, I know not whether his admirers can make out his meaning for us, which certainly is often not very evident. The direct contrary of active unbelief, is not spiritual faith in Christ; but a natural and reasonable belief of the gospel record concerning him. All duty, binding on the unregenerate, belongs to the law as it was at first written on the nature of man; but spiritual faith belongs to another relation and covenant, of which Adam originally knew nothing, though he was sinless. Infidelity may be allowed to be a sin, without thereby supposing that spiritual faith is the duty of infidels.

No. 10. How can those men be reckoned either the friends or enemies of Christ, who have never heard of his name? Those who have had no revelation of Christ cannot be bound to be his friends; but thousands have had no revelation of Christ; therefore, those thousands cannot be bound to be his friends. But I shall be told, perhaps, that Mr. F. intended every man who had opportunity of hearing the gospel. This is still perplexing, for is every man so circumstanced the enemy of Christ? If so, where are his followers? Or, is every man under the gospel the friend of Christ? Then, where are his enemies? If all *are* enemies, what is meant by saying they ought either to be his friends, or his enemies? So confusedly did he write on this darling theme, that we must change his proposition yet, again, to express what seems to have been his intention. "Every unregenerate man, having opportunity of hearing the gospel, ought to be Christ's friend." But is Christ the friend of all such? If he be, then all such persons are redeemed by him, are prayed for by him, and they must all be brought to the fold; yea, they cannot perish, but shall have everlasting life. If he be not their friend, how can they be bound to be his friends? Can they be bound to love and praise him as though he had loved them, and given himself for them? Surely this is not likely to be maintained. Yet it follows not, that they ought to be his enemies; for he injures them not at all, in procuring

salvation for, and revealing it to, his chosen people; nor is there any unrighteousness in him. They that are whole have no just ground for persecuting the physician, who is going about to heal the sick. But on the contrary, men are accountable for whatever opposition they raise against Christ or his servants; and for the want of whatever approbation, Adam, while in a state of innocence, would have shewn towards him, under the displays of his redeeming mercy towards guilty creatures, supposing such to have existed. This accountableness, I have before said, requires to be *exegetically* insisted upon, for instruction and conviction, while *exhortation* in such a case would be absurd. Adam was punishable for the loss of his rectitude, but it would have been irrational to exhort him to restore it, and unjust to excuse him from blame.

No. 11. This is answered in the 8th and 9th arguments of the foregoing Section: and by himself on his 158th page.

No. 12. This is partly answered in the 1st and 2nd arguments. It is also refuted in itself, by the contrariety of its principles. For if the gospel be "simply good news, and relates not to precepts, or injunctions," as it certainly does not, then obligation to believe does not arise from it; but if not, then he flatly contradicts himself, by saying, "our obligation to believe arises from the gospel." In his third proposition, he tells us that, "though the gospel be not strictly a law, yet it virtually requires obedience, which includes faith;" and he in No. 12. says, "the gospel *obliges* men to believe." Now, if this be true, it must be a law, and he who is under it and believes not, must incur its penalty; and this penalty must abide, unless it can be proved that, Christ has redeemed such unbelievers from under the penal authority of the gospel!! Thus we have a gospel that relates not to precepts, he says, yet *obligation* arises from it. The law is founded in the relation subsisting between God as an almighty, holy, and good Creator, and man as his creature; in what relation is this obliging gospel founded? Is it in the one just mentioned, or in some other? If the gospel obliges to obedience, it must punish for disobedience.* Where then is the essential difference between law and gospel? Goodness, it is owned, is

* On this subject see my piece entitled *Doctrinal Antinomianism Refuted*. Section VI.

deserving of gratitude, but equity demands that gratitude as a duty. The gospel is worthy of belief, but the law makes that belief a duty, according to the relation in which its subject is supposed to exist. So our author says,* “It is enough for us that the revealed will of God to sinners, says, *believe*; while the gospel graciously adds the promise of salvation.”

As to duty, he pretends it is required *virtually* by the gospel, and *formally* by the law. But the sentence just cited from his own book, makes nothing of this distinction. Some distinctions are admirably useful, and others are only suited to generate perplexity; among which, this about virtual and formal obligation may be reckoned.

No. 13. Is noticed elsewhere, and, besides, it destroys itself by its contrariety. “*Spiritual* love (it is asserted) is required of sinners who have no other means of knowing God than what are afforded by the works of nature.” He also says, “There is not a grace of the Holy Spirit but what possesses a portion of every other grace.” So that every grace of the Spirit of Christ is required to be exercised by the very heathen, who never heard of the gospel of spiritual things! How daringly contrary is this to Paul’s reasoning in the tenth chapter to the Romans? The matter will be exposed by three connected arguments. According to Mr. F. we are to reason thus:—

1. There is not a grace of the Holy Spirit but what possesses a portion of every other grace; but spiritual love is a grace of the Holy Spirit; therefore, spiritual love possesses a portion of every other grace.

2. If love possesses a portion of every other spiritual grace, it must possess a portion of spiritual faith; but love does possess a portion of every other spiritual grace; therefore, it possesses a portion of spiritual faith.

3. There can be no doubt whether a portion of spiritual faith be obligatory on sinners, who have never seen a Bible; but spiritual faith is the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus; therefore, there can be no doubt whether the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, be obligatory on sinners who have never seen a Bible: that is, they are bound to believe in him of whom they have not heard; and shall be for ever punished in hell, for not believing a record which they

* p. 114.