

—that therefore his law is too strict, and, if it must extend to the heart, too broad, requiring more than ought to be required, especially of fallen creatures?—that, consequently, a breach of it is *not* so very criminal as to deserve damnation?—that if God were to damn us, it would be a very hard and cruel thing?—that we are *not* so depraved and lost, but that if God were but to deal fairly with us, we should do very well without a Saviour, or at least without such a Saviour, and such a salvation as is altogether of grace?—that there is *no* such excellence in the Saviour that we should choose it—so choose it, however, as to be willing to have our pride mortified, and our lusts sacrificed to it?—in fine: that there is no need for such an ado about the concerns of our souls—no need to become new creatures, to be at war with all sin, to make religion our daily business? This I take to be nearly what the Scriptures mean by *unbelief*. The belief of the gospel has attached to it the promise of salvation, and the disbelief of it the threatening of damnation.

You have observed, I dare say, that it is very common to represent truth, and the belief of it, as of small account, and morality as all in all; nay more, that the preaching of the former is the way to subvert the latter. And yet, how easy were it to prove that this is no other than destroying the means in order to effect the end! Whatever may be pretended, I believe it will be found that all sin springs from error, or the belief of some falsehood; and all holy actions from the belief of the truth. The former appears in that the will of man is so constituted as never to choose any thing but an apparent good. It is impossible we should choose what appears to us at the same time and in the same respects unlovely. Therefore, whenever we choose evil, we must believe evil to be lovely: that is, we must believe

a falsehood. This the scripture represents as calling “evil good, and good evil.” And thus, all vice springs from error, or false views of things.

On the other hand, whatever there may be of what is called morality, there is no real obedience to God, or true holiness in the world, but what arises from a conviction of the truth. Does holiness, for instance, consist in love to God? what love can there be to God, but in proportion as we discern the infinite excellency of his nature? Does it consist in abhorring sin? How can we do this any further than we understand and believe its odious nature? Does it consist in repentance for sin? certainly there can be nothing of this, but as we understand the obligations we are under, and the unreasonableness and vileness of acting contrary to them. Or does it consist in prizing salvation? this will be in proportion as we believe our lost estate. From whence spring those heavenly virtues of fear, contentment, diligence in divine ordinances, acquiescence in the will of God, humility, &c., but from a conviction of the truth? God proclaims before the universe, “I AM THE LORD!” This truth realized, or heartily believed, begets a holy fear towards this fearful name. God, in his word, declares the vanity of all things under the sun, and the weight of future bliss. A belief of these truths damps inordinate anxiety, and raises our desires after a glorious immortality. God declares that a day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. A belief of this will make us earnest and constant in our attendance—will make us leave our farms and merchandize, and all, to come and worship in his house. God has promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee:”—that “they who trust in the Lord and do good, shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed.” A belief of this calms and composes the mind under the