

THOUGHTS  
ON THE  
DUTY OF MAN  
RELATIVE TO  
FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST,  
IN WHICH

MR. ANDREW FULLER'S LEADING  
PROPOSITIONS  
ON THAT SUBJECT ARE CONSIDERED.

BY JOHN MARTIN.

WE KNOW THAT THE LAW IS GOOD, IF A MAN  
USE IT LAWFULLY. 2ND TIMOTHY 1: 8

PART 1.

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1788.

**Abbreviations:**

Treat – Mr. Fuller's Treatise.

Def. – Mr. Fuller's Defense of his Treatise.

Rem. – Mr. Button's Remarks on Mr. Fuller's Treatise.

Observe. – Mr. Taylor's Observations on Mr. Fuller's Treatise.

\*Observe. – Mr. Taylor's Observations on Mr. Fuller's Reply.

Letter. – Letter from Philip Withers, D.D. to the Rev. Andrew Fuller.

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## Introduction.

Our first temptation was to be raised above the condition of humanity: and from that period to the present, what is the duty of man, has been, in every age, disputed.

At the close of the last century, a book was published, and received by many with great applause, called *The whole duty of man*; which is yet thought by some, to be a kind of standard book on religious obligation. Of more recent date another book was published, the title of which is, *The new whole duty of man*; and still more recently, a third has appeared, which the author has called, *The complete duty of man*.

These treatises contain but a small part of the well intended labors of CHURCHMEN to fix the bounds of our duty, and to inform us what is the nature, and should be the practice of Christian piety. – *Dissenters* have not been unemployed on these subjects, nor have they been employed in vain.

More than fifty years ago, what then obtained the name of *the modern question*, became a popular debate. The question was, “Is saving faith in Christ a duty required by the moral law, of all those who live under the gospel revelation?” On this question, and on what was connected with it, our duty, in reference to revelation, was perhaps, as ably argued as might have been expected. However, that dispute has long since died away; and was in a great measure forgotten, when a pious author [*Mr. Andrew Fuller, of Kettering, in Northamptonshire*] thought proper to renew the controversy, by a TREATISE which has this title, *The Gospel of Christ worthy of all Acceptation*; and, to keep it up, by his DEFENCE of that TREATISE, which contains a reply to REMARKS and OBSERVATIONS which have been made upon it.

In the preface before his TREATISE, there is an invitation (*p.12.*) which does him honor; but there is also, in the same preface, an alarming sentence (*p.7.*) which is not to his credit. If dispassionate and just reflection were always the same, who that reads Mr. Fuller's alarming decision, (which in fact, amounts to this, that to oppose his leading sentiments would be to quarrel with the Almighty, who that reads this) would venture to accept of his subsequent invitation? – Yet some have had such courage. What respect they have obtained from our author for so doing, is probably unenvied; and what thanks this additional attention to his own request may possibly procure, is yet unknown.

Whoever wishes any controversy to terminate in favor of truth, cannot be reluctant to be informed of a turning point: but it is displeasing when the report of such a favor ends in disappointment. – What it was that could lead Mr. Fuller to imagine, that an attention to the awful controversy that has in all ages subsisted between God and a wicked world, would be of such consequence in the present debate, he is best able to determine. – Conjecture is not certainty. But, it is well known, in order to *defeat*, some have endeavored to *deter*.

Whether any thing Mr. Fuller has attempted to establish, will be much affected by this reply, they who are inclined to read it have a right to decide for themselves. But should any be of opinion, that the *wiser* part would be not to read it, he may rest satisfied, that the wisdom of his resolution is not very likely to be disputed.

If Mr. Fuller be not treated with due respect in the following pages, it is for want of judgment; nor should the reader be surprised if, in a few instances, wisdom should seem to be wanting; for, what is *always* due to Mr. Fuller as a disputant, it must be confessed, is not *very* easy to be decided. Should our author be hurt that so much of his TREATISE and DEFENSE appears to be overlooked, when he recollects in what manner he himself thought it most prudent to answer one of his friends (*Mr. Dan Taylor*) it is presumed, he will not imagine that the present *mode* of reply was preferred for want of due respect. It may yield him some satisfaction

to remember, that what is omitted cannot be misrepresented: and, if by declining a labor that would increase the fatigue of the reader, were it pursued, a writer can as well accomplish his intention, it only remains to be considered what that is, and whether it be worth the reader's notice. What is here intended, (should this treatise ever be completed), the title page and table of contents have told: but how far that plan is happily conceived, or successfully executed, is now in part, submitted to men of understanding.

It will be some consolation (nor is much more expected), if what is here produced, should repress the offensive levity and confidence of some, in propagating those opinions which are here opposed. Should they still retain their resolution to defend them, yet, if they are brought to perceive that a *little* more may be said against their favorite notions than they have been wont, or indeed, willing to apprehend, they will probably hold with greater caution, and with better temper, their leading peculiarities. – Could so much be gained, peace and truth would, in some measure, be promoted by this attempt; the hope of which, has surmounted every displeasing apprehension.

**THOUGHTS**  
**ON THE**  
**DUTY OF MAN, &C.**

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**PART I.**

**Disapprobation of Mr. Fuller's leading**  
**Propositions on the Duty of Man.**

**SECT. 1.**

*His leading propositions considered as* OBSCURE.

In Mr. Fuller's treatise there are the following propositions:

Prop I. "Faith in Christ is commanded in the Scriptures to unconverted sinners."

Prop 2. "Every man is bound cordially to receive, and heartily to approve, whatever God reveals."

Prop 3. "The gospel, though it be no law, but a message of pure grace, yet virtually requires such an obedience to it which includes saving faith."

Prop 4. "The want of faith in Christ is ascribed in the Scriptures to men's depravity, and is itself there represented as a heinous sin."

Prop 5. "God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on men for their not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Prop. 6. "Seeing other graces, or spiritual dispositions, with which salvation is connected, are represented as the duties of men in general, there is no reason why faith should not be the same."

It is thought that want of method, that introducing nearly the same ideas under different words, and that an embarrassed style, have diffused obscurity over the sense of these propositions in their first appearance: but, in their explanation and defense, the shades of obscurity seem to be much augmented. What has contributed to produce such perplexity in our author's composition, are supposed to be, in a great measure, the following improprieties:

**I. *The ambiguity in the TITLE of his TREATISE which is frequently repeated.***

In the *title* of Mr. Fuller's TREATISE, we read of *the obligations of men fully to credit, and cordially to approve, whatever God makes known*. But, how are we to determine with tolerable precision, when any person, in Mr. Fuller's opinion, arrives to *manhood*? Is this point to be settled by the number of his years, the extent of his capacity, by his moral endowments, or by any other method? – This question will not be thought frivolous, when it is considered how much our author (as a controversial writer) requires *every* man to perform while *unregenerate*; on what penalty for non-performance, on the other hand, and, on the other, how little he has said of the extent of their duty, or of their obligation to perform it, who are not yet advanced beyond the state of *childhood* and of *youth*. – It is confessed, that the terms *man, men, every man* and *all men*, in common use, do not need any explanation; but when an uncommon weight is laid on such words, the sense in which they are so used, should be as determinate as possible.

**II. *The TIME in which our SUPPOSED duty is to be performed.***

Where obligations are numerous, of wide extend, and of great importance, the *time* which is allowed to fulfill such obligations, is an article of great moment. But, is this article so managed by our author as

to prevent *obscurity*? Is there that due attention to the various conditions, circumstances and capacities of men that might have been expected? Nay, does he not frequently insist, that what is *spiritual* and *supernatural*, is the duty of *all* men; and assert, that what it is there duty to *be*, to *have*, and *do*, is the *effect* of that influence which is as *sovereign* in its grant, as in its nature it is *divine*?

In the most cautious page (*p. 164*), on the article of *time* to perform our supposed duty, we have but slender and dubious information. “*Perhaps*,” says our author, “some regard ought to be paid to the *order* of things. It would be very strange for any one of us thus to address another, *Be perfectly holy, now, this moment.*” – It would be very strange, indeed, if *some* were to use such language; but, if either Mr. Fuller, or his friends, should adopt it, who could wonder? For, on his sentiments, what is any unregenerate man to wait for? Divine assistance? How can that be? Since he supposes the whole compass of their duty *ought* to be done without it; and, that it *would be* done, were they as *willing* as they are *ABLE*. Yes, (*p. 131*) “whatever a person *is*, or *does*, in respect to *spiritual* dispositions and exercises, when he is *regenerated*, we think,” (says our author and his abettors) “it is *no more* than what he ought to have *been* and *done*, *PRIOR* to that period, as well as at that time.” – This makes his former caution of being holy, *now, this moment*, very obscure: but, when it is recollected that our author says, that the gospel (*p. 58*). *Requires*, that they who are in a state of rebellion to God, without any exception, (while in that unregenerate and rebellious state) should give it a cordial reception, that they should *immediately* lay down all arms of hostility, entirely submit to mercy, cordially acquiesce in all its designs, and intreat to be of the number of those that shall be reclaimed by it, *obscurity* is then ripened into contradiction; and both, as far as they can be understood, seem to contain something so *anti-evangelical*, that it is as remote from *glad tidings* as it is distant from fact. – It is true, our author is sometimes disposed to admit, that (*p. 4, 13, 14*) “all sorts of acts and exercises, do *necessarily* arise from their *principles*; that there are some things, such as loving God and holiness, which cannot be *done* without the party being truly gracious; and some

things which cannot be *believed* in reality, without constituting the party a true believer.” – But does this make the matter less *obscure*? For, it is the duty of *every* man to be *truly gracious*, and, to CONSTITUTE HIMSELF *a true believer*? – If this be the *duty* of the unregenerate to *perform*, (and, in every thing which is, in any state, our *duty*, it is something to be *done* by us), it must be their *duty* to *desire*, and *endeavor* to perform it; but, can he who is of this opinion, much admire that grace which bringeth salvation?

### ***3. Not saying by what means our SUPPOSED duties may be accomplished.***

This is the more remarkable, since when Mr. Fuller gives his opinion how the conscience of a *sinner* should be addressed with propriety, he says (*p. 164*), "The *order* of things rather requires, that we should endeavor to convict him of his unholiness and of his evil nature, before we exhort him to the contrary; and then, when we do exhort him to perfect holiness, it should be by directing him to those *means* which tend towards perfection." Nay, our author has said (*p. 168*), "If instead of using exhortations to sinners, *merely that we may* use THE MEANS which God has appointed, we give them to suppose, that any work that is truly good, is, in whole or in part, to be effected by, or ascribed to, themselves, *then do we dishonor the Spirit of God!*" – Here, it is evident, MINISTERS are *merely* to use appointed means, with *prudence* and *caution*: For, they are never to give their HEARERS the least reason to suppose, that any work which is truly good, can be, in any part of it, *effected* by them; this, says our author, would be *to dishonor the Spirit of God!* But, what *means* has Mr. Fuller recommended, or even discovered, by which the unregenerate, (if they do but make a proper use of them, to the full extent of their natural ability) may possess spiritual dispositions, and perform spiritual acts, and spiritual worship? Yet, he continually contends, that whatever a person *has, is, or does*, when regenerated, it is *no more* than what he ought to *have, be, and do, prior* to that period, as well as at the time! Either such words must be destitute of meaning, or what our author has said on the *use of the means*, and of our not being

*efficient* causes in any thing which is truly good, must sink into such unmeaning syllables as cannot possibly yield us instruction or the shadow of satisfaction.

**4. DETERRING *his reader from making a proper use of those means in which God has appointed believers to have communion with himself.***

Of our author's imaginary obligations, it may be truly said, there is not any *mean* by which they can be performed. The simplest reader, therefore, will always perplex him, if he should seriously ask, *How* am I to *be* and *do* what you say I *ought* to be, and *should* accomplish, *prior* to regeneration? But where obligation is real, there is *some mean* to perform it, whether we are *sinners*, or whether we are *saints*. It must be the duty of each, for instance, to occupy that reason, or grace, which the Lord has bestowed; but to suppose it is the duty of either to *create*, or to think they *ought* to be *efficient* causes of any thing which is truly good, approaches by much too near that error which the apostle James has not only guarded us against, but plainly contradicted. His words are, "Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

*Searching the Scriptures*, and *prayer*, according to the ability, and degree of persuasion, which God has imparted, seem to be those important and indispensable duties, which lead to every thing that is excellent in religion. Now, whatever be the *cause* of our inability and unbelief, and whatever may be the train of tremendous *consequences* attending each, yet, can it be the duty of any *creature* to *do* that which Omnipotence alone can effect? Or even to *pray* for that, which he does not believe it is consistent with the goodness and glory of God to bestow? – That he who *prays*, or *speaks*, should do each according to his faith, (intreating the Lord to increase it;) that he who acts religiously, should act with *humility*, and, in every action, consider *in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being*, may be safely admitted. But, were this properly

acknowledged, and the genuine consequences of such a confession embraced, many contentions would for ever cease.

*Searching the scriptures* is not only recommended by the inspired writers (**1st Timothy 3:16, 17**), but, by our Lord himself (**John 5:39**). – If *the Gospel be worthy of all Acceptation*, he must not only know it, but he best of all knows what may be inferred from that fact. – If what you preach be GOSPEL, then, says a sensible man, *it is good tidings*; and, if it be WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, then he infers, it will invite and bear the closest inspection. – So our Lord thought when he said, “*Search the scriptures; in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.*” So the apostle thought when he wrote thus to Timothy (**2nd Timothy 2:7**), “*Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things!*” Nor could he think otherwise when he commended those Bereans who (**Acts 17:11, 12**) *received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, TO KNOW whether these things were so: therefore many of them believed.* – Such wisdom and goodness, such patience and prudence, are worthy our constant imitation. But has our author indulged this amiable disposition? He does not, indeed, prohibit searching the scriptures; far from it, he attempts to explain them, and wishes all men to read and regard the word of God; yet, at the same time, he most unhappily, in some measure, defeats his own design; for he terrifies the timid, and offends the more discerning, by insisting on such obligations as are impossible to be performed, with such penalty for the nonperformance, as is very unfriendly to a deliberate and composed attention to the inspired writings, and, unlikely to promote that kind of conviction which issues in sound conversion. – The scriptures make a large book; and contain some things hard to be understood; if therefore, an unregenerate reader be not endued with power from on high; if some time be not allowed him, and consternation be removed, or kept at a distance, what will he understand of the word of truth and grace? A constrained assent may be extorted from him, but that belief which becometh the gospel, and that conduct which best adorns the doctrines of God our Saviour, are not so likely to be produced. – Coercion and perturbation ill agree with glad

tidings. They who neglect them, indeed, cannot escape what is due to the criminal cause of their neglect; but inquisitive minds, whatever may be their present weakness, or may have been their former folly, a minister of Christ should address, as the angel saluted those women who watched the sepulcher of our Lord; when he said, *Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified!*

*Searching the scriptures*, however, will never be a substitute for *supplication*. It is the junction of these duties that adds excellence to each. The primitive Christians continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. – Our author is undoubtedly addicted to prayer, and recommends it to his hearers, as much by his own example, as by his exhortations. It is, however, regretted, that his exhortations on this subject are unhappily *obscured*. He says (*p. 47*), “It is every man's duty to think of himself as he really is, and as God has said he is.” But suppose *every* man cannot see himself to be what he really is; or that *any* man should not only be ignorant of his real character, but at present, unable to admit that the Bible is the word of God: however, such a character may be made up of criminal tempers, and those tempers may stand connected with awful consequences, yet supposing the fact, which is but too common, is it the duty of such a man in his devotions, (should some panic produce a prayer,) to imitate the Syrians in that manner which our author has directed (*p. 47*)? He thinks it is: but if it be, it is either the duty of this man to convert himself, or while unconverted, to be as sincere, and spiritual, in his devotion as if he were converted; -- and if so, why not his duty to be as spiritual as the most established Christian in Great Britain? – Our author's sentiments compel him, if he chooses to retain them, to confess this consequence is not pushed too far.

But, on this subject, let us hear his own argument. – “It is to no purpose to say here, *This is the effect of regeneration*. It is granted, and what then? Such is the error of men's minds, and enmity of their hearts, that they must undergo an entire renovation of soul before they can be set right. They must be born again, and as it were, new made. But this does

not disprove, but imply, their obligation to be right, *previous* to such renovation.” – *Obligation to be right, previous to such renovation*, must signify, that we are obliged to *be right* by some *power of our own*; and if so, it must be by a power which is able to surmount the *error* of our minds, and the *enmity* of our hearts: but, to *undergo* an entire renovation of soul, to be *born again*, to be *new made*, (unless the interjected *as it were*, alters the very nature of these acts) these words evidently refer to a *power* which is *not our own*; to operations, which would not be *virtuous*, but *vicious* – which would not argue *humility* but *pride*, to wish that we might perform them: because they are operations which, both in *power* and *glory*, are peculiar to the HOLY GHOST. All this is sufficiently perplexing; yet what Mr. Fuller may mean by our obligation to *be right, previous* to regeneration, adds to the obscurity of this perplexing page.

### ***5. Attempting to distinguish between spiritual BLESSINGS and spiritual DISPOSITIONS.***

Of this attempt, it may be truly said, either our author should have let it alone, or have pursued it further. As he has left it, who is not embarrassed by his assertions? – They *only* who take them for granted. – He supposes, that his *last* proposition, which makes it the duty of men in general, to have spiritual dispositions (*p. 97*), “lies at the bottom of the controversy;” and adds, “it is hoped that what has been said will make it manifest, that *spiritual* dispositions are the duty of *all mankind*.” What can Mr. Fuller mean less than this, that it is the duty of every unregenerate man to be spiritual without revelation, and prior to regeneration? *Without revelation*; for, have *all mankind* the Bible? *Without regeneration*; for duty is something to be done *by us*, and not that which is done by another. – When this difficulty, or some other, is presented, our author attempts to distinguish between *blessing* and *disposition*. Thus we have it (*p. 130*), “Faith, and every other spiritual blessing, considered *as blessings*, do not come under the notion of *duties*; but faith, and every other spiritual disposition, considered *as dispositions* do; and it is men’s sin they have them not. – In the former sense, *duty* has *no* concern, unless it be to *desire* and *intreat* a share in

them; in the latter it has.” Yet, it is but in the following page, that our author assures us (*p. 131*), “Whatever a person *is* or *does*, in respect to spiritual dispositions and exercises, when he is regenerated, we think it is *no more* than what he ought to have *been* and *done*, PRIOR to that period, as well as at that time.” – A little lower down, having done his utmost *to make this small matter still more plain and evident*, he says, (*p. 131*), “All we affirm is, that it is their duty,” – (the duty of unregenerate men) – “*to be* THAT which nothing but special grace can make them; and he that will deny this, must deny that a bad man ought to be a good one.”

One might almost be confident that whoever *denied this*, our author would not. Yet certainly, he *half* denies it at least; and perhaps, he will be compelled to give up the other half *also*. He says “faith, and every other spiritual blessing, considered *as blessings*, do not come under the notion of *duties*.” Now, if *blessing* be as essential to make a *bad* man a *good* one, as *duty*, that we see, is given up; for a *bad* man, according to Mr. Fuller, is not bound to *be* a good one, only with respect to his *disposition*; which he says ought to be spiritual, and that it is his sin it is not so. But it maybe asked, since both blessing and duty are supposed to be essential to make a *bad* man a *good* one – which of the two is to take the *lead*, the *blessing* or the *disposition*? Is the first to produce the second, or is the second to procure the first? If our author admits blessing to precede duty, and Christ to be first in his own kingdom, he will be the very man whom he censures; nor need he tremble at the thought. If he denies it, and will affirm that the duty which ought to be performed by the unregenerate, should both precede and obtain spiritual blessings, this would be to assert what even *Arminians* would disapprove. For, they do not suppose that any good disposition of ours will either procure, or precede, what they are pleased to call preventing grace (*Observation. 53, 54, 55*). Till it be settled, therefore, which is to take the *lead*, the blessing or the duty, in what *order*, and to what *end*, the attempt of our author to distinguish between spiritual blessings and spiritual dispositions, must be classed with one of those unfinished

essays which immaturely come to light without beauty to attract, or strength to command minute attention.

Our Lord spake a parable to this end, that *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*. But, does not he who prays with propriety, seek to possess something which he believes to be good; good for him, being what he is; which he is willing to receive as a real favor; which he cannot otherwise expect; which if granted, he hopes to be grateful, and which if denied him, he cannot pretend to complain of the denial as an act of injustice? Prayer, then, is becoming, or unbecoming, as these things are perceived, believed, and regarded; or, as they are not perceived, and as he who prays either disbelieves, or disregards this connection. Human perceptions, and every thing which is built upon them, are liable to fluctuation: but in all our prayers, unless we verge to hypocrisy, we must rigidly regard reality. In short, when we pray, we must pray as in truth we can, let our frame, or state, or the consequence of so doing, be what it may. – These petitions of David are excellent; *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me: for I wait on Thee!*

Suppose the son of a deist, brought up in contempt of revealed religion, to be convinced that the gospel is worthy of all acceptance, but staggers at those very promises which he wishes, above all things, now to enjoy; may he not, in such a situation, pray for instruction and assistance? But can he command, can he deserve these blessings? If they are withheld, is he obliged to be as happy and holy without them, as if those blessings were instantly granted and fully enjoyed? So our author seems to suppose. But is this *gospel*? Do we perceive in this *the reign of grace*? – Should it be said, that such prayers are always *immediately* successful: are we bound to believe that unsupported saying? – It cannot be denied, that *waiting on God*, (however that phrase may be abused by some, and burlesqued by others) is frequently and strongly recommended in his word. In the most painful and perplexing situations, men have waited, and sometimes waited long, for his salvation. On this subject, a well known promise is, *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*: but while so employed, (the *soul waiting for the Lord* more

than *they that watch for the morning*), is it the duty of him who thus waits, previous to the desired, but delayed renewal, to mount up with wings, like eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint?

What is more sovereign, free and gracious, than the operations of the Holy Ghost? Does he not quicken, separate, illuminate, console and sanctify, strengthen and settle whom he will? Can any man foretell *when* he will operate, on *whom*, in what *manner* (**Romans 8:15**), or in what *degree*? Who hath known his mind, that he may instruct him? Have there not been diversities of gifts, administrations, and operations, by the same Spirit (**1st Corinthians 12**)? Would it not have been rash to have said, when they were most diversified, that it was the duty of any man to have possessed any gift, or operation of the Holy Ghost, previous to the grant of such favor? Simon Magus admired some of those operations. *He saw and believed, and was baptized. He continued with Phillip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and the signs that were done.* He wished to do the same. But, with all his errors, he saw the Holy Ghost was GIVEN; and, though he offered money, saying *Give me also this power*; evil as this tempter was, it shows, that a man *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity*, may believe there is a *power* which he has not; and may greatly *desire* to possess it, without believing that the possession of such power was previously his *duty*. If a man of his complexion could be anxious to obtain his desire without the idea of duty, may not others? Nay, are not all men anxious to possess what they *covet to enjoy*? This fact, refutes most of the alarming inferences of our author. For our *desires*, in proportion to their strength, whether they are good, or evil, will make us earnest to *have, to be, and do*, whatsoever is pleasing to us. So that, if any many *desire* to follow CHRIST, though he may be persuaded that every Christian is what he is, by the *grace* of God, and firmly believe, it is not his duty to make himself a Christian, yet while he *wishes to worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*, he will use such *endeavors* as correspond with the real *nature* and genuine *state* of his own desires; and this, in due time, will make it manifest, whether it be undefiled Christianity, or, some corrupt view of it only which has engaged his

attention. – If the desires of men be vicious, let us endeavor to convince them of it, and attempt to raise the reverse; but let us always remember, man will never act *without desire*, nor *beyond it*. If the object of his desire be the discharge of *duty*, it may be *strong*; but if it be the enjoyment of what is thought a real *blessing*, it will in common, be *stronger still*; and, which is best of all, as this blessing comes, like health, it will make the whole compass of his *duty* the more *delightful*.

Can any imagine, when Sampson lost his strength and eye sight, his liberty and former dignity, (bound with fetter of brass, and grinding in the prison,) that it was then his duty to have renewed his might, and to have surmounted such affliction? Or, that when he was brought out of his inglorious confinement to be the jest and insult of the inhabitants of Gaza, it was then his duty to pull down the huge house in which he was exposed on the worshippers of Dagon? Or, that when he felt the pillars on which it rested, it was then his duty to make them bend and break, previous to his fervent prayer to the Lord God for adequate ability? Or, that when he had so prayed, and bowed himself with all his might, in order to know whether the ALMIGHTY had answered his petition, if he had not felt in that act, divine energy, would it still have been his duty to have done what he did; and to have *slain*, unassisted, *more at his death than he slew in his life*?

It may be objected, that the strength which Sampson had, and lost, and afterwards regained, was *natural* ability. But was he not *a Nazarite to God, from the womb to the day of his death*? Was he not miraculously strong, and endued with power from on high, to be a judge in Israel? Did he not lose his great strength by his great folly; and against his inclination? Was it not renewed by prayer, in order to avenge the public insult of his public character; and the horrid boast of infidels, and of idolatrous and immoral pagans, against the God of Sampson? – *Out of WEAKNESS he was MADE strong*. The strength of his mind returned first: as it advanced, he confessed his weakness and folly, and prayed to *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; and, in so doing, did he not act a *wiser*, and a *better* part, than when he said, *I will go out*

*as at other times before and shake myself? This must be admitted; for then, he wist not that the Lord was departed from him!*

Should it be said that such remarks might have been spared; this will only show what is plain enough already, that they who are of our author's sentiments, and they who are not, cannot be of the same opinion.

### **6. What is said of EQUAL obligation.**

A body consisting of many members, the form, the situation, and office of which are very different, may stand in need of clothing; but can it be necessary so to veil the whole as almost to make it doubtful whether it consists of *one* member only, or of *many*? The mystical body, or church of Jesus Christ, is as diversified in its members, in form, situation, and office, as the human body. This diversity with unity, is its beauty: but this beauty is sometimes so *obscured* by our author, that one would imagine he has it at heart to promote a bill of *uniformity*, and to compel all men to *believe* and *act alike*. – He says (*p. 14*), “Every man is bound cordially to receive, and heartily to approve, *whatever* God reveals.” Not only to *believe* (*p. 13*), “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 into 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, a particular redemption, an effectual vocation, a final perseverance,” &c. &c. but *so* to believe, as to *include* in their belief of “the aforementioned doctrines, their *qualities*, or *properties*,” which are said to make “a great, and even an essential part of their truth.” – Thus the duty of *believing* seems to be pretty equally extended by our author; nor are his *practical* obligations sometimes, at a greater distance from equality. For he says (*p. 152*), “Men ought to be *holy*; ought to *love* God with all their hearts; that [*P. 14*] *spiritual* actions are incumbent on all men; that they ought to have a *principle* or [*p. 152*] *disposition* so to

act;” in short, that the [p. 108] “*most pure and perfect love* is incumbent on *all mankind*.”

Such is our author's equalizing plan; which he binds on men who, in his own opinion, (or what is *sometimes* his opinion,) are *totally* unable to regard it; but he subjects them to the [Prop. 5] most awful punishments for non-performance, because he contends, they might do all that he requires if they would [Def. p. 46]. – Whether what is now produced and referred to, be compared with the apparent contradictions which will be exhibited in the following section, or whether it be considered as it now stands before us, it is sufficiently *obscure*.

What can our author mean by his *second* proposition, or by much the same assertions in the *title* of his TREATISE? Is this the meaning; that every man is obliged fully to credit and cordially to approve, *whatever* it pleases God, at any time, to convince him is both true and good? This would be like saying, it is our duty to *know* what we *understand*, to *credit* what we *believe*, and to *approve* what we *esteem*. These are identical propositions, which communicate no instruction. One might as well say, *That if a thing be, it is*. Such propositions, as an archbishop [Archbishop Tillotson] has expressed it, are *surfeited with truth*; but Mr. Fuller's fondness for such propositions, has been already censured [Letter. P. 82]. – Fond as our author may be of such modes of speech, it cannot be supposed he would indulge in the *title* of his TREATISE, and in one of his *leading* propositions. He must, therefore, be understood to mean, that *every man is bound cordially to receive, and heartily to approve whatever God reveals*, in the literal sense of that assertion. But if we so understand him, we shall not only do that which he *forbids* us [Def. p. 23, 24], but be in possession of an idea which to St. Paul himself, was probably unknown. – To the church at Philippi, thus he wrote: Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. – Yet when this great man came the nearest to that mark which, when converted, he continually kept in

view, did he either believe, or had he done, more than our author says that every man ought to believe and do, PREVIOUS to his conversion?

Will Mr. Fuller seriously contend, that every man ought, not only to exercise his own talents, whatever they may be, with prayer for wisdom and for a blessing, but that every man *ought to perceive* as much as St. Paul perceived, or to be as holy as he was, not having his spiritual perception? Was it even the duty of Paul to be as near the mark as his *first* setting out, as when he had *finished* his course? It might as well be said, it was his duty to have set out before he did: and, it is more than probable that our author is of that opinion. But he who takes this liberty, may as well assert, it was the duty of Saul to have *apprehended that, for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus*, BEFORE he was apprehended of him. Or, as well affirm, that it was the duty of Saul, when arrested, in his way to Damascus, -- instead of saying, *Who art Thou, Lord?* To have *beheld the glory of Jesus Christ, as the glory of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth*; -- instead of his saying, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* To have found it out; -- instead of his going into the city to be told what he must do for the Lord, after he was filled with the Holy Ghost, to have illuminated himself, or to have been baptized, (as afterwards became a very common practice), without the least pretense to illumination! – Should our author reply, “He that will deny this, must deny that a bad man ought to be a good one.” we must only wish him to recollect what answer has been given to the inference *already*, but we add, he who asserts it, may also assert, (and perhaps Mr. Fuller has no objection), that it was the duty of Saul to have been a gracious man, BEFORE it pleased God, who separated him from his mother’s womb, *to call him by his grace*. – To be *good* without *grace*, is the favorite opinion of the *world*; that the *unregenerate ought* to be so, and that they *could*, if they *would*, is, at present, the favorite opinion of our author, and of his select friends.

When Saul was converted the grace of our Lord *was exceeding abundant, with faith and love*. The effect of this favor was his unremitting ardor to *press forward towards the mark for the prize*. But,

thus animated, and thus acting, what temper towards others did such *abundant grace* produce? The best. Let *us therefore*, (said he to the Philippians) *as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereunto we have already ATTAINED, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* – Here are light, wisdom, gentleness, goodness, with a proper concern for a conversation becoming the gospel, or, for behavior that might *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. May we unweariedly follow this great teacher, and copy, as we can, his admirable example! – In his epistle to *other churches (Galatians 6:1)*, we perceive the same judgment, and the same disposition. His compassion of the feeble minded never fails. But were we to suppose that it is the *duty* of the weakest Christian to be as strong as the strongest, or that he who has but *two* degrees of perception and power, ought to have *ten*, or having but *two* of each, it is nevertheless his *duty* to perceive and perform as much as if he actually had *ten*, would this strange opinion either manifest our *humility* or enlarge our *benevolence* to the feeble minded?

Some people have imbibed from the earliest dawn of reason, such an aversion to every equalizing plan in the church or state, *strictly* understood, that the shadow of such a disposition is apt to awaken their settled disapprobation. Dislike to that all-confounding system, has frequently been confirmed by the fine and full resemblance which the apostle has shown between the natural body of man, and that sacred and numerous society of believers which is united by mutual sympathy and consent, and who, in their *corporate* capacity, are called *the church of Christ*. There is also, in certain respects, the same analogy between the *natural* body of man, and the *civil* corporations of mankind. Who can read the twelfth chapter of the first of Corinthians and not be of this opinion? But, if this analogy be just, what a *veil* has our author thrown over the mystical body of Jesus Christ! How are the different members of that body and their distinct duties *obscured!* What pressing and urging, on legal principles, does our author indulge, to show that unregenerate sinners ought to be members of this spiritual society,

*previous* to the renovating influence of that spirit which forms and animates the whole! What eagerness, in *common*, does he discover to promote the *equal* belief and *practice* of every Christian; (as well as to show it is the duty of every man to be a Christian) as if all members of the church of Christ had the *same* office; or, as if where *more* was given, nothing *more* was required!

Two things may be objected to these remarks. *First*, that the sovereign distribution of miraculous gifts should be distinguished from that grace which bringeth salvation. – That they ought to be distinguished is admitted: but that the grace which is essential to salvation, is both as *supernatural* and as *sovereign* as any gift that ever God bestowed on man, and that what is commonly called spiritual gifts, were always of real advantage to the possessor, unless when *abused*, cannot fairly be denied. *Secondly*, it may be said, that the life of innocence might be continued; and what is *now* required of a *sinful* creature, that CHRIST, *who is our life*, may be enjoyed, should not be confounded. This also is admitted: but such an objection would ill become our author, because he has not been careful to keep up any such distinction. Nay, he denies it; for he says, it appears to him, that the scripture knows but of one kind of *real* holiness, and that is a conformity to the holy law of God; so that the law of *innocence*, and the will of God to *us*, are supposed to be the same (*p. 81*).

The reader is now in possession of what are thought to be the principle sources of *obscurity* in Mr. Fuller's TREATISE. Obscurity, which does not arise from mere *brevity* nor from *prolixity*, nor from bad *arrangement* of expression, but from something which is not so easy to be defended. But, some no doubt have read it, who have overlooked the present subjects of complaint. Of such perhaps, it may likewise be said, they have read his TREATISE without perceiving any *errata*, or finding the want of that which our author has been so good as to give (*p. 16*). Want of perception, in some cases, may be our advantage; but it cannot be admitted, that what is not *perceived* does not *exist*. – It is acknowledged, that our author sometimes, speaks with greater caution than has hitherto been represented: but it does not appear he ever designs

in any page to revoke his leading sentiments. Whatever, therefore, may *seem* to oppose them, must be considered as so many contradictions to his main intention. Such contradictions increase the perplexity of the *careful* reader; but, they are so *numerous* and so *singular*, that it has been thought proper to reserve them for the following *section*.

## SECTION. II.

### **Mr. Fuller's *leading propositions considered as INCONSISTENT.***

To a friend (Mr. Dan Taylor) who has, it seems, invited our author to stricter ties of friendship, Mr. Fuller replies, "Could I see evidence on his side, I hope, I should embrace his *invitation*. But it is a presumptive argument with me, that his views of things must be, some how or other, *very* distant from the truth, or they could not abound with such manifest *inconsistencies*." (Def. p. 106). – Whether our author will admire, or even admit this argument, as it is here retorted, or will be of opinion that this section exhibits *manifest inconsistencies* of his own production, it might be thought presumptuous to foretell. – Let it, however, be remembered, that the present charge of Mr. Fuller's being inconsistent, is entirely confined to those apparent contradictions and mistakes which are *here* produced. It would be very unfair to search for any of a *prior* date. The *last* pamphlet is always supposed to contain the *present* judgment of him who wrote it. In this respect, it is like a man's *last will*, which should ever be so interpreted as if he had never made any other. – The apparent contradictions of our author, are here reduced to *seven* leading articles.

#### **1. On the GROUND of *religious obligation*.**

According to our author's favorite view, this is *mere* injunction. He says, that "an obligation and encouragement to believe, are two *very* different things." (Def. p. 56). He adds, "the one, I suppose arises from the moral law, the other from the gospel." Yet this discovery seems to have been forgotten, when he said, "that there is a sense in which our obligation to

comply with the gospel does arise from the gospel *itself*, is allowed.” (*Def. p. 53*). Nor is this the only time when our author was of that opinion. For, on this subject, he truly says, he has given us his thoughts in his *TREATISE*. If that page be consulted, to which we are referred, we shall there (*p. 57*) find his *third* proposition, with a comment upon it; the result of which is, that though the *gospel* be not a *law in form*, it is so in *fact*; and, indeed, a *law* of the greatest *extent* and *rigor*. But, should any complain of this contradiction, our author may plead, he has plainly told us, that “the gospel, strictly speaking, contains no injunctions at all [*Def. p. 62*], but *merely* the good tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ; that what *constitutes* the gospel is GOOD NEWS [*p. 5.*]; that the gospel is *simply* GOOD NEWS [*Def. p. 57*]; and that *news*, whether *good* or *bad*, relates not to *precepts*, or *injunctions*, but to *tidings proclaimed*.” – If these things are perfectly consistent, what can constitute contradiction?

## **2. On the EXTENT of religious obligation.**

This is sometimes so stated by our author, as has been already observed (*see the preceding section*), that in reading that statement, one would imagine it was his full intention to prove that all men are bound to believe and act *alike*. Nay, he hopes he has made it manifest, “*that spiritual dispositions*, to the subjects of which God hath promised salvation, (though none but saints are or ever will be possessed of them) *are nevertheless, the duty of all mankind*.” – But, if it be the duty of every *bad* man to be a *good* one, of every sinner to be a saint, is not our author who affirms it, obliged to instruct them how they may perform their duty? – Many things may be desirable which no man can effect, and dreadful which no creature, by his own power, can avoid; but that any thing can be the duty of any man to perform which ought only to be done by the ALMIGHTY, seems to be an extravagant supposition. Has any creature an arm like God? Should any man therefore, think it his duty to do that, which the arm of the Lord alone can effect; nay, which that arm alone ought to produce? By no means; for, the power and glory of those acts which are peculiar to JEHOVAH, cannot be divided. – He

that wishes weakness to accomplish what OMNIPOTENCE only can perform, or to be OMNIPOTENT, may as wisely wish to measure the waters in the hollow of his hand, to mete out heaven with his span, to comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure, to weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; and may as modestly wish, he could ascend and fill the throne of God!

It is displeasing to perceive that our author speaks as loosely of the *scriptures* as on the power of God. – [P. 108], “*Scripture* did I say? Surely it never ought to have been questioned, even though God had *never* told us, whether loveliness ought to be loved, beauty admired, purity imitated, just authority feared and obeyed, sin lamented, truth embraced, and a vile sinner lie humble before God!”

*“O ye cold hearted frozen formalists!  
On such a theme ‘tis impious to be calm;  
Passion is reason, transport temper here!”*

Thus our author warmed himself, till (by Dr. Young’s assistance), he kindled into a flame. But let us be sober. Was it ever intended that Adam, after his apostasy, or that any of his natural descendants, should be able to perceive, and judge, and act, as our author has supposed they might, without revelation? Why, then, was Adam so soon after his fall, compelled to hear the voice of God? Why, as revelation was enlarged, was redemption, both by price and power, more and more unfolded? Why did David so much exult in this distinguishing blessing [Ps. 146, 19, 20], and why do we so repeatedly thank God that he who is our peace, hath broken down the middle wall of partition, if after all, even now the canon of scripture is *completed*, it should be thought not *essential* to produce the *purest* love of God? – How different were the views and decision of *our* apostle! (**Ephesians 2**) He informs us, that *Gentiles* were *far off*, and remained so, till they were *made nigh by the blood of Christ*; that while they were *without Christ*, they were *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, and strangers from the covenant of promise; having no hope, and being without God in the world. – What a

contrast between the writer of this Epistle to the Ephesians, and what has been quoted from that TREATISE which many are said to admire!

*O ye warm hearted unthinking zealots!  
On such a theme, 'tis disloyal to be still;  
Rebuke is reason, anger temper here!*

From what has been produced it seems as if our author thought our obligations to believe, and to behave, were the *same*: yet who that reads his following remarks, can suppose that Mr. Fuller is of that opinion? He says, “Our love to God consists either in *gratitude* for the bestowment of his favors, or *complacency* in him, for his own native excellency.” He adds (*p. 88*), “the *first* of these is the duty of every one who is a sharer of those favors, and that, according to the nature and degree of what he shares. The *last*, which is perhaps, the purest, noblest kind of love that can be exercised, is incumbent on every one who has the *natural* use of his faculties, and the *means* of knowing those excellencies; which every intelligent creature has, in a greater, or lesser degree. Those who have access to the holy scriptures” [which supposes that some of the *purest* and *noblest* lovers of God have not!] “have the means of plentifully knowing what God is, and nothing but a shameful disinclination and wicked aversion hides his glory from their minds. As to those who have *never* heard of the scriptures, they have the works of creation and providence, by which they *might* learn, if they were *rightly disposed*, so much of the divine character, as to know him to be a most amiable, lovely being.”

Here, our religious obligations seem to be as *different* as in some preceding quotations they appeared to be *alike*. Now, in one view, they are said to be according to the favors we have received; and, in another, to be according to our *perception* of the divine character, and the *medium* by which that perception is obtained. If our author had not depreciating views of *gratitude*, would he not admit, that the purest, noblest kind of love, was always according to the *nature* and *degree* of that favor which we receive? For, the medium by which we perceive divine excellence, and the power we have to enjoy it, must be favors

which such criminals as we are have no right to expect. But our author conceiving that the works of *creation* and *providence* are a sufficient medium, and that our *natural* faculties, *rightly disposed*, are a sufficient power to produce the purest, *noblest* love to God, superior favors, such as redemption and renovation (though mentioned in stronger terms, and as laying us under much greater obligations), instead of producing superior affection to God, are supposed not to produce any such esteem of his excellence as equals the more disinterested love which Mr. Fuller has extravagantly extolled.

To some people these things are displeasing. – But peradventure it was an oversight. No; for our author recollects and repeats the substance of this page (*p. 88*) with apparent satisfaction. He says (*p. 97-98*), “Our obligations to God, as has been hinted before, appear to rise from *two* grand springs; the one, what God *DOETH* for us; or the numerous bounties of his hand; the other is, what God *IS* in himself, or the infinite excellence of his nature. The *first* is binding on all those, and *only* those, on whom his gifts are bestowed; and that in *proportion* to the value and circumstances of those gifts. *Carnal* men are under obligations to love God for his innumerable bounties to them, as the God of nature and providence; and the circumstance of these bounties, being given them amidst their rebellion against him, ought to heighten their love. *Good* men are under exceeding higher obligations for his peculiar gifts to them, as the God of all grace. *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.”

How different and various, according to this view of things, are our religious obligations! Who would imagine, when he compares this with some preceding quotations, it was the production of the same author in the same *TREATISE*! But, if all obligation (*Def. p. 57*) “must arise from some *law*” from the (*Def. p. 56, 57*) *injunction* of some law, not from *inducement*; and if that law be, as our author says it is, the *moral law*, it may be asked, are the injunctions of the moral law not only *exceedingly various*, but in this vast variety, are those injunctions to be obeyed

without any *inducement*? – *Further*; if *good* men are under *exceeding* higher obligations to love God for his *peculiar gifts* unto them, as the God of all grace, than *carnal* men are, seeing carnal men have no *evidence* of such *favor*, which, indeed, is a fact; what becomes of our author’s fancy, so frequently introduced, namely, that the purest, noblest kind of love which can be exercised, is not that delight which is closely connected with *gratitude*, but that which consists in rapturous admiration of the native *excellence* of God, and which does not need so much as the *report* of his distinguishing favor to give it existence? – *Lastly*; if *carnal* men are not bound to love God without *evidence*, can they be bound to *produce* it? But how often does our author insist, with sufficient severity, that it is incumbent on every man, *previous* to his renovation, to be THAT, which the moment any man is, he would either immediately have an *evidence* of God’s distinguishing favor towards him, or, he would be both holy and happy without it?

Our author may object, that he never supposes *any* man ever will do what he has required. It is true he does not; but he always supposes *every* man *could* do this if he *would*, and therefore asserts that he *ought* to do it. If this be a fact, every obstruction is already removed from the unconverted, except their want of *inclination*; but is this probably, when it is so evident, that either in Mr. Fuller, or in his opposers, there is so much want of understanding? – It is affecting, that our author has so frequently forgotten his own observation. He set out with saying, that (p. 2) “to enjoy what God has not enjoined, is to act without warrant, and would be cruelty to our own species, as it subjects them to the charge of abundance of guilt, of which, God knows, they have enough in the breach of what he has enjoined!” – This observation, had it been properly regarded, would have done Mr. Fuller great honor; but alas! how seldom do we meet with that uncouth yet hackneyed term *incumbent*, either in his *TREATISE* or *DEFENSE*, where this just observation is not contradicted.

### **3. On faith.**

Faith being a capital article in our author's TREATISE, he has not been wanting of words to explain it. He has told us, what it is not, and what it is; what it includes and excludes; he has condescended to describe, define, explain, exemplify and simplify the nature and duty of believing, in a very singular manner; so that, if on this subject we should meet with any contradiction, where may we expect to find Mr. Fuller perfectly consistent? – Some perhaps would rather argue thus; if a man be not entangled in over doing on any subject, where shall such a man be found inconsistent? There is some reason to fear that this remark is, in part, too applicable to our author's *over doing* on the present article.

*What is faith?* According to Mr. Fuller (*p. 5, 6, 18, 19*), "It is not believing our own personal interest in the blessings of the gospel;" THAT, our author apprehends, "is a *low* and *mean* idea of faith." – But suppose, some should assert the contrary, and say, that faith "consists in knowing that our Redeemer liveth; crying Abba, Father! Laying hold on eternal life, and claiming interest in a crown of righteousness?" Why, then, our author is civil enough to say, "Be it so:" and, he gravely adds, "What is all this, but believing the truth?" – Suppose, Mr. Fuller is not pressed with such objections, what does he freely say of faith? – (*p. 10, 12, 14, 18*), "It is *crediting* some testimony where intuitive evidence cannot be expected. It is *belief* of the truth. It is to *view* things as God views them, or *as they are*. It is a cordial *reception* of the truth, as it is in Jesus; or a *believing* with all the heart. But, to believe only the *shadow* of truth, without entering into the *spirit* of it, is little *more* than to believe *nothing at all* about it. It is therefore, to *believe* the *qualities*, or *properties* of truth, which make a great, and even an essential part of truth. It is to *receive* a doctrine as it is." In short, "it is *knowing, crying, laying hold, claiming, believing, crediting, viewing, receiving, discerning, seeing* and *embracing*." Faith is all this; for, as our author asks, "what is all this, but *BELIEVING THE TRUTH?*" – This is the *all-containing* description, which not only includes the preceding terms, but many more; such as (*p. 18*), "drawing aside the veil, viewing things" – (not *exactly* as they are, but) – "in *some measure* as they are; or, in other

words,” (and who will say that *words* are wanting) “faith is a sweet, solid *persuasion* of the mind; a *setting to* our seal that God is true.”

Such, with a few connecting words, is an abridgment of what our author has said on faith, in the former part of his treatise; and, one would imagine that all parties must be satisfied with the detail. For what a strange believer must he be, who cannot select his *own* persuasion from such copious materials! *Sandemanians*, and the followers of another *northern light*, on theological sentiments [A Mr. Barclay; who is as much for the assurance of faith, as Mr. Sandeman was against it], may each of them meet with something they would be equally unwilling to throw away. But, that the capital definition of our author, *BELIEF OF THE TRUTH*, may be fully understood, he has introduced a particular note, and thus improved it. “Truth, in its full latitude, has, I think, with great propriety, been considered in three points of view; namely, in existence, conception and expression. It is with the first two of these we are concerned. Now, truth in existence, is reality; and if so, to believe the truth, which is here called truth in conception, is to realize it, or to consider it as real, that is, to consider it as it is” (*p. 20*). This is taking some pains, it must be confessed, to make the matter plain. Yet, to all this, explanations are added; after which, the old inference, that let faith be what it may, it is every man’s duty to have it, is thus inferred: “The question, then, will only stand thus, Is it the duty of every man who hears the solemn realities of religion, to consider them as real, that is, to consider them as they are, or is it not?” (*p. 21*) – To this question it may be replied, that by every man who *hears* the solemn realities of religion, our author either means *hearing of them*, or he does not. If he does not mean this, it is most probably that something *more* than hearing *of* the realities of religion is intended. But, if *perception* and *persuasion* be included in *hearing*, our author’s question is wanting of *propriety*. On the other hand, if the particle *of* be rightly supplied, is it not the duty of every man who hears *OF* the solemn realities of revealed religion, to *consider* what is said; and, if it seems *probable*, or even *possible*, that what is said is from *above*, to *pray* that the Lord would give him understanding?

What our author considers as the most *plausible* objection to his leading definition of faith, he has had the courage to mention (*p* 22); and after many words, which might perhaps, been as well omitted, at last condescends to make this concession (*p*. 23): “It is freely acknowledged, however, that it is in this large sense, including not only belief of the truth, but the actual outgoing of the soul towards Jesus Christ, in a way of *dependence* upon him, that faith in him is *generally* to be taken in the *New Testament*.” – This acknowledgement, though just, ill agrees with many things which Mr. Fuller has said on faith. It also implies his want of memory. For, in his preface to his *TREATISE*, he had settled the matter thus (*p*. 4): “True faith is nothing *more* nor *less*, than a hearty or cordial belief of what God says.” As if such cordial belief was no great matter, our author adds, “surely, it must be every one’s duty where the gospel is published *to do that*.” – This is no slip of his pen. It is wont to be so employed. “Whosoever among the rebellious race of men, *shall but* sincerely and penitently say, *I have sinned*, acknowledge his guilt, and cordially approve and embrace the mediator, shall not perish, but have everlasting life” (*p*. 157). Such intimations of its not being any great difficulty to perform the full extent of our duty, (assuring us that our *cannot*, is nothing else but a *will not*), from an author who boasts of his representing the moral law to be *broader* than his neighbors, may seem strange: but Mr. Fuller knew that the *widest* supposed extent of duty seldom offends us, if we apprehend it is *easy* to be performed.

How many senses of faith Mr. Fuller may be in possession of, is not for us to say. He has given us the strict, the slender, the large, and the general sense of that word; and may have other senses in reserve. That the same word may acquire a variety of meanings is not to be disputed; that thus it has been with faith, will not be contradicted; but, when our author adds, “It would be no difficult thing, however, to trace all these to one source, and to one original idea running through the whole,” it may be observed, Mr. Fuller has not yet given us any proof that he is competent to such a task. It is thought, that if he would try to substitute any one work, or phrase, for the word faith, wherever that term occurs in

the Bible, he would be convinced that this is not so easy a task as he seems to have apprehended.

On the whole, what is any man the *wiser* for all that our author has said on *faith*? What is any man taught by being told, it is neither *more* nor *less* than *belief of the truth* (p. iv); but that it *generally* includes *much more* (p. 13, 23, Def. 24)? By being told, it is not *appropriation* (p. 5); but that it is ever attended with *application* of the truths of the gospel to our own particular cases (Def. p. 25)? By being told, it is fully to credit whatever God reveals; but that this it not to be understood even of all kind of *Scripture* truth (Def. p. 24)? By being told, that all obligation to believe is founded on the moral *law*, or injunction (Def. p. 56), not on encouragement, that the *gospel* contains no injunctions at all (Def. p. 62); but that it virtually *requires such obedience to itself* (p. 57), as includes saving faith? By being told saving faith, includes a spiritual understanding of the *glory* of the gospel, and *something more* (Def. p. 24); and, that this faith is the duty of every man where the gospel comes (title page of the treat. and prop. II.); yet, wherever it *exists* it is the *effect* of divine influence (Def. p. 28)? – If any man can be much the *wiser* for these contradictions, who would not be tempted to envy his uncommon penetration? If this be to inform, who can be unqualified to instruct? If these things are perfectly *consistent*, what can be called *verbal opposition*?

#### **4. On human ability.**

Of our ability and inability, Mr. Fuller has said many things. Take a specimen of his decisions on our *inability*. “The inability of man to come to Christ, is doubtless *total*, which we never deny [p. 71]. The inability of men to *do* things spiritually good, is *real* and *total* [p. 146]. Must not that inability be total, which consists in *total depravity* [Def. p. 45]? Man is *utterly unable* to do *any thing* spiritually good [p. 154]. It is allowed, that the *flesh* will never be prevailed upon to choose, adhere unto, and delight in God; nor do we ever expect it will. Nay it might have been added, *OMNIPOTENCE ITSELF* cannot make it” [p. 181]. In

short, according to Mr. Fuller, such is “the state of all men, that unless the gospel could exhibit a condition that should fall in with men’s evil propensities, the aversion of their hearts would for ever forbid their compliance [*Def. p. 105*]. – When we compare ourselves with even *heathen* nations, *Are we better than they? No, in no wise!*”

Such are sometimes our author’s ideas on human *inability*. Are they exactly the same in the following words? “We suppose men’s inability lies *wholly* in their criminal disinclinations, and vile dispositions [*p. 147*]. Men want no more *power* to believe, than they want power to do every thing else that is really good, even so much as to think a good thought [*p. 152, 153*]. Our cannot is *nothing else* but a will not [*p. 160, 177*] It is not a natural inability that mankind are under to *do* the will of God [*p. 188, 189*]. It is impossible for any one to be under a natural inability to please God. There is no natural inability in man to do the will of God; he has all the members of the body at his command, and all the faculties of the soul [*p. 184*]. The grand defect is in the *will*. There are certain propensities which constitute a part of our nature as men, and which therefore, are simply natural [*Def. p. 32, 33*]” – (these, Mr. Fuller says, are not *derived* from Adam’s fall, nor are they *impure*; should you ask, whence come they, and what are they? Our author’s answer is,) “these, in themselves considered are a part of human nature in its *purest state* [*Def. p. 46*]. It seems,” (continues our author) “if men had but *power* to comply, all this injustice would subside. Well we affirm they have *power*.” – But suppose *gentlemen*, some should think of asking, *who are ye?* Possibly, such might not think that the pronoun WE, though it were printed in capitals, of sufficient weight in this connection, unless supported by argument. Our author may reply, and is not proper proof of *our* affirmation at hand? Why, truly, if the following *show* of argument be of any value, sufficient proof is not far to seek; but if it be not, WE AFFIRM, alone supports the affirmation. *First*, our author and his associates, say, men have power. *Secondly*; this is explained by another assertion, namely, that men have the same *natural* ability to embrace Christ as to reject him. *Thirdly*; now comes the conclusion; they *could* comply with the gospel if they *would*. – Can more *cogent* arguments be

expected? Perhaps they cannot; since it is but fair to suppose, that our author and his abettors have done their best. They must, however, unite their force afresh, and much extend their reputation in the republic of letters, before their *bare* affirmation, on such a subject, will give universal satisfaction.

On the whole; what our author has said of our *inability* and *ability* is not more *inconsistent* than *convenient*. An old and worthy minister of Jesus Christ [Mr. William Christian, many years pastor of a Church at Sheephead, in Leicestershire], meeting with opposition from some *Arminian* preachers, one of his members who seemed half gone, said to him, “Well, Sir, say what you please, they do lay men *very* low indeed!” *Never any lower, Thomas,* (replied his aged pastor) *but that with some little assistance he is supposed to be able to rise up again when ever he chooses.* At such representations of ability and inability, men seldom take offense. What should excite their aversion? What should lead them to say, *Why doth he yet find fault?* Our author and his abettors, well know that the *Arminians* would consider them as their *friends*; though it is evident they did not wish for such *excess* of friendship as *one* amongst them has manifested (*Mr. Dan Taylor*); at least they did not wish him to have shown in the *manner* which he has done, such barefaced respect to their united labors. But, exclusive of *his* esteem, who is most acceptable to *Arminians* of different denominations? Who are most caressed and applauded for their *catholic* conduct? Who are most anxious to secure, (and sometimes by methods deservedly censured,) the shadow of popularity? Who are most desirous of being *thought* very useful, and *fond* of being consequential? – When the appeal is to fact, argument against it may discover disgust, but impotent displeasure had better be concealed than exposed to ridicule, or left to rage in vain.

Of *force*, as well as of grace, it is difficult to speak with propriety. “Whether force is spiritual or corporeal, whether it remains after action, how it is transferred from one body to another, who can say?” The *origin* and *effects* of both force and grace, may be plain, when the things themselves may be misunderstood. Mr. Fuller frequently supposes that

*will* and *power* are the same thing. Is he not deceived? In many cases there may be the utmost exertion of the *will* when there is no *power* to do what is willed; and there may be a plenitude of *power* which can do nothing for want of *will*. – To affirm that men have the same natural ability to embrace Christ as to reject him, is artful; but is it argument? Had our author said, in direct expression, men have ability to embrace Christ, some would have felt themselves alarmed, who now feel themselves perplexed. To say they have the same *natural* ability to embrace him as to reject him, will puzzle man; but whom can it instruct? Does it require *ability* to reject Jesus Christ? Let this be proved. Till proof is produced, (as, in point of fact, no man receives Jesus Christ who is not born from above,) how does Mr. Fuller know that all men have the same natural ability to embrace Jesus Christ as to reject him? For, have all men the same *natural* ability to embrace the same objects with the same respect?

We are not, however, allowed to suppose, that by all our author has written, he ever meant to magnify man. He is of opinion (*p. 190*), “it does not at all tend to *cry up* human nature to say men have a *natural power*, or are possessed of all the faculties necessary to love God, and keep his *whole law*, if their hearts were but rightly disposed.” How! A natural power to keep the WHOLE law of God, if *our* hearts were but rightly disposed! Of whom is the author speaking? Of *criminal* creatures, who have gone astray from the womb; whose first feeble pulse began to beat iniquity and death; who, as they advanced in life, drank iniquity like water. What is the voice of the LAW to such a generation of vipers? What it should be, a CURSE! *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The *penalty* belongs to the law; and where deserved, it must be felt for ever; UNLESS Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse in our stead. If Christ be *formed* in us, it is certain he *died* for us: But if Christ be not received as the end of the law for righteousness, we are yet under *it*, not *only* as a *rule* of conduct, but as a *covenant* of works; and we must ever remain in the tremendous situation, till it pleases GOD to BEGET *us again to a lively hope by the*

*resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* – Is there, it may be asked, no *remedy* but in sovereign, supernatural favor? NONE. Are not men, therefore, objects of *pity* RATHER than of *blame*? Far from it. For, though they may quarrel with the Almighty for the consequences of transgression, they love to transgress. Though relief is administered with wisdom, they do not show themselves to be *men* on the report of this relief, but act in a manner that they *would*, and indeed, *do* REPROBATE on every subject of *allowed* importance except that of *salvation*.

No man should be admitted *so* to distinguish between the law as a *covenant*, and as a *rule* of moral action, *as*, in the remotest manner, to hint that he who has not *received* the atonement is not, of *necessity*, under a covenant of works. – When the law was given to Adam, was he not in a state of *friendship* with his Maker? That covenant which was made with him, was not made with him as a *child*, but as a *man*; not as a man who *grew* up by slow degrees to manhood, but as a man who was *created* in the image of his Maker. On the breach of that covenant of works which was made with Adam, as the *root* and *representative* of his numerous posterity, (and not as a *mere* INDIVIDUAL) *friendship expired*, and that *grace*, which was given in the elect in Christ Jesus before the world began, *appeared*. *For what?* To relieve the wretched. *How?* Reconciling *such* to God by the atonement, and renewing them in the spirit of their mind, by the Holy Ghost. From what *motive?* Sovereign favor. To whom *extended?* To the elect. To what *END?* To confound the *wise*; to confound the *mighty*; to bring to *naught* things that *are*; that *no* flesh should *glory* in his presence; that, *according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*.

If originally, felicity and friendship were the roots of acceptable obedience to God, is a fallen, curse, corrupt creature to be taught, that the honor of reconciliation is to come from his wisdom, or to be effected, or to be applied, by his power? Or that acceptable obedience to the law of God can precede the payment of his debt? But, must not his heart be either ill-informed, or ill-disposed, who thinks, because *the stipend of sin is death*, therefore, he, himself, *ought* to make satisfaction

for his own iniquities? If a sinner who ought to be ever cursed, unless a savior interposes, ought to *pay* his own debt, it is natural to suppose, if he be, what some would call, an honest debtor, he will *wish* he could pay it, and will *endeavor*, to pay a part. Probably with much *distress*, poor man! that he can pay no more. But what is meant by *paying* our debt? Is it not *so* to *suffer* and *obey*, that from the *value* of *our* sufferings and obedience, some time or other, we should receive a full discharge? *Ought* any TRANSGRESSOR even to *wish* he could *so* suffer and obey? Is not such a wish inimical both to the *government* and *grace* of God? Is it not, in effect, saying we are sorry that *we* cannot do what CHRIST has done? That there should be *such* obedience and sufferings that will magnify the law and make it honorable, or, if there be not, that its *righteous* and *everlasting* CURSE should be executed upon us, is admitted. That such *obedience* and *sufferings* can be found in any object whatsoever but Jesus Christ, is denied. He saw the *extent* and loved the *excellence* of that law which is *holy, just and good*. *He became obedient unto death, and in DYING. He hath once suffered for sins; the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He by himself, purged our sins; and, by one offering, he hath perfected, for ever, them that are sanctified.* It became him, in his peculiar character, *so* to fulfill that divine law which we have broken, and still break, without the least *excuse*, as it *became*, and yet *becomes* no other. – He that thinks he ought to do any thing which is peculiar, in power and glory, to Jesus Christ, or to the Divine Spirit, has an unhappy way of thinking. He that would infer, that if this be not his *duty*, his deviations from the moral law, and want of that rectitude which it originally required, are not sinful, may fancy, if he chooses, he has all the faculties of his soul, at his command; but if this be true, those faculties must be very *feeble*, or their commander very *weak*, to form such a *conclusion*.

Let those who have broken the law of God, (and who has not?) consider what is contained in the *whole law*. Let them remember, that though the deserved curse ought not to be removed by any, but by Jesus Christ; yet, unless he removes it, all men *must*, and *will*, for ever endure it. Let them recollect, that redemption and regeneration are not only inseparably

connected, but equally of grace. Let them confess, without the latter, Christ is not formed in them, nor received by them; and, that dying in that condition, the curse of the law is inevitable. On the other hand, if Christ be received, that object is received on whom the curse has spent its utmost force, and from whose fullness every *suitable* and every *spiritual* blessing, may be expected. Every deviation, indeed, from the moral law of God is still transgression. Sin is always the same. It is altogether wrong. There is no good *in* it; and *out* of IT good was never brought. Are we debtors to the flesh? Never. What then? Does the Lord demand obedience of the *believer*, under grace, as he did of Adam in innocence? No. – Among the differences between the law and gospel, which the Church of Rome delight to confound, Mr. Perkins has observed the following: the law is natural; but the gospel spiritual. The law sets forth God's justice, without mercy; but the gospel sets out justice and mercy, united in Christ. The law requires a *perfect* righteousness *within* us; but the gospel reveals our acceptance with God, by *imputed* righteousness. The law threatens judgment without mercy, and therefore is called, *the ministration of condemnation, and of death*; but the gospel shows mercy in and by Christ, if we repent and believe. Adam in his innocence knew the law; but he knew nothing then of believing in Christ. The gospel commands faith, not as a *work* done, as the law does; but as an *instrument* laying hold of Christ. The law commands faith in *general*; as to believe in God, and to believe his word is true; but, besides this, the gospel requires a particular faith in Christ the Redeemer, whom the law never knew. The law does not command repentance, for the knowledge of the law was in Adam's heart, when he needed no repentance; true repentance, therefore, is a saving grace, WROUGHT *and* COMMANDED *only by the gospel*. The law commands obedience every way perfect, both in *parts* and *degrees*, and allows none other; but the gospel *commands*, and, in CHRIST, *approves*, IMPERFECT obedience; that is, *an ENDEAVOR in all things to obey and please God, if it be without HYPOCRISY*. The law commands obedience, as a *work* to be done, for the *obtaining* of salvation; but the gospel requires obedience ONLY to testify our *faith* and *thankfulness* to God. – The church of ROME, therefore, erreth *grossly*, in confounding the law and gospel, which indeed, are *far* differing; and so we must

*believe*, if we would COME into and HOLD *the right way that leadeth unto life*. – Such were the sentiments of Mr. William Perkins, formerly of Cambridge. They are somewhat abridged; but worthy in this state, or as they stand at large, in his comment on (**Matthew 5:17**), of the reader's diligent attention; provided he enters into his leading design, and overlooks a few words which do not so happily express the author's meaning.

Mr. Fuller says (*p. 144*), “When the covenant of works was broken, the law of God reverted back to its original form, retaining only its power to command and to punish the transgressor. God no longer considered himself in covenant with man, and men *ought* no longer to obey it as a covenant of life and death; but simply as a rule of life, without expecting any proper reward for their obedience, seeing they cannot produce such a one as the law demands. Yet so far as they have gone, or continue to go, contrary to this rule, they are justly liable to all the consequences. Those especially who reject God's way of salvation by Christ, and thereby appeal, as it were, to the covenant of works for justification, must abide those consequences in their full extent.”

This period is in the true dictatorial strain; to which some readers are reluctant to submit. May we not ask, what was the *original* form of the law? May we not desire our author to prove, that at *first*, it was simply a *rule*; that, after some time, God made that rule a *law*; (for a simple *rule* is not a *law*;) and that lastly, he turned the law into a *covenant*? May we not entreat to be told how Mr. Fuller gained such information, that “when the *covenant* of works was broken, the *law* of God REVERTED back to its ‘*supposed*’ original form?” May we venture to ask, who gave our author *authority* to say, that men (meaning *all* men), ought to regard the *moral law* SIMPLY as a *rule* of life? – Let him not wonder if some should ask him, *Who* is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Where wast *thou* when God laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if *thou* hast understanding. – Between the formation of ADAM in the image, and after the likeness of the ALEIM, and the covenant which was made with him, as the visible root and head of all

men, who will demonstrate that any time elapsed? The first moment of his existence he knew he was a *man*; the *first* man; a *complete* man; the *federal* head of all men, and that, at best, he was BUT A MAN. To admit that Adam was MADE upright, and in the *image* of God, and to suppose that prior to his fall he was *gradually* taught the nature of a *rule*, of a *law*, of a *covenant*, and that he was under each a part, till the three were united, is all conjecture. Dr. Gill (*Body of Doctrinal Div. p. 497*) has much better expressed what seems to be collected from the word of truth. He says, “God gave a law to *Adam*, which was in the form of a *covenant*, and in which *Adam* stood as a covenant head to all his posterity. – The natural law, or law of nature, given to *Adam*, was *consecrated* with him, *written* on his heart, and *engraved*, and *imprinted* in his NATURE from the BEGINNING of his *existence*.” – On the breach of this covenant, the *curse*, (which every continued act of disobedience augments, which every deviation from that which is law, or right, increases), *pursues the transgressor*, and ever will, till he *flees for REFUGE to lay hold upon the hope set before us*. That *fleeing* is the effect of *favor*. Contempt of that refuge, indeed, or neglect, (which never are without preferring something else to it,) is inexcusable; but positive *approach*, as well as free *access* into that asylum which God has granted the guilty, are, alike, of God. He *only* that believes enters into rest. But to teach men that *previous* to their entering into THAT rest they are only under the law *simply* as a *rule*, or that they ought to be so; or, having entered into that rest, to contend, such persons are still *debtors to do the whole law*, is as injurious to the kingdom of Christ, as it is inconsistent. – It is to no purpose to affect to be displeased, or to feel, and express resentment. Among brethren, *authority* cannot be *very* great; but *argument* may be invincible. – If, then every man be not under a covenant of works till he is a believer in CHRIST; if it is not OF GOD that any are, in any sense, in him, and if being, by a new birth, in Christ, and begotten again to a lively hope, such persons are not become dead to the law as a COVENANT by the body of Christ, that they should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that they should bring forth fruit unto God, let those arguments be poured forth that mock resistance, and defy assault.

To *cry up* human nature, or to cry it down, if by such language is supposed we are to say anything of it, which is contrary to fact, is equally unwise. Is it, then, without dispute that there is not any natural inability in man to do the will of God? or to keep the *whole* law? Have our natural abilities suffered in no respect by the fall of Adam? Are our passive capacities and active powers exactly as his were in a state of innocence? Would they have been as they now are but for what is called *moral* evil? Is not all *natural* inability the result of *sin*? Is it not also the occasion of adding sin to sin? – Have those who have vaunted most of their *little* distinctions between *natural* and *moral* ability well considered the “Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty”? [See an *ingenious pamphlet under that title, by Benjamin Rush, M.D.*] It is supposed they have not. But is it not extraordinary that a respectable *gentleman*, who is at the *head* of an *academy*, should talk in this manner? Are not the young men who are under his care, sent to him to *improve* their *natural* abilities? Are not such improvements supposed to *qualify* them for the pulpit, so that, from his *tuition*, they may *expound the way of God more perfectly*? Do not his reputation and emolument, as a TUTOR, rise on such success? Yet a *gentleman* of this description (*p. 184*) says, “There is no natural inability in man to do the will of God; he has all the members of the body at his command, and all the faculties of the soul.” Were this as true as it is untrue, unless our frame and faculties were as perfect as Adam’s in innocence, and the will of God exactly the same to each of us as it was to him, the assertion would do this worthy TUTOR no honor. But has this *gentleman* all the members of his *own* body, and all the faculties of his soul *always* at his *command*? If such language do not cry *up* human nature, it is not likely that any man can cry it *down*. Had good old *John Bunyan* only glanced at our TUTOR’S *assertions* and *inferences*, in his quaint way, probably he would have said, “Except my *Lord WILL-BE-WILL*, all things are *now* in pretty good order in the famous town of Man-soul.”

It may be offensive to suppose, that *gentlemen* who have not only all the members of their body, but all the faculties of their soul at their own

*command*, should not see clearly the consequences of their own assertions; yet, whether they have not each of them (the worthy TUTOR himself, as well as our pious author), sowed that seed which, as it grows up and ripens, they will reap with sorrow, perhaps, it is already too late to consider.

Such an admonition shall not be softened by any apology. It was written without rancor, without a wish to lessen the good degree of reputation which each of these teachers, in their own way, have obtained, without envy, in reference either to their present, or expected felicity, without being afraid of their resentment, which their goodness will not suffer to be dreadful, and therefore, it shall remain without beseeching them not to be offended. – The sentiments which are here censured they approve: and, when it is considered in what *manner* those sentiments have been communicated, and with what *effect*, it would argue unmanly timidity not openly to oppose such opinions. *Opinions*, which under the *color* of writing against *Antinomianism*, have already been drawn out to an alarming length. For what can be alarming, or, at least, offensive, to them *who count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness which is of the law, but THAT which is through the faith of CHRIST, the righteousness which is of God by faith*; if the following *questions* and *conclusion* may not be so considered?

“Do we, by the righteousness of Christ, personally honor God? Do we, by that righteousness, experience the exalted pleasures which are only to be found in the practice of holiness? Doth the righteousness of the Redeemer capaciate for communion with God? Is it by THAT we enjoy the testimony of a good conscience, and a delightful sense of the approbation of JEHOVAH? *Surely not*. The righteousness of CHRIST not answering these important purposes, can never supply the place of our OWN personal obedience to the *moral law*, by which ALONE these ends can be answered.” – So much, at *present*, for *human ability*.

## **5. On addresses to sinners.**

Whether the following language on this subject, contain what will be deemed contradictions, or whether what is here adduced should have been classed with that kind of obscurity of which so many specimens have been given already, they who are able to determine need no information; nor is the question itself, worthy of much attention.

Mr. Fuller says (*p. 8*), “We allow, that no sort of hope is held out, in all the book of God, to any sinner, as such considered. It is to a sinner considered as *penitent*, that the gospel holds out its golden scepter; and to him, and to him only, that is convinced of sin, and of his lost condition through it, the *promise* of salvation is to be *presented*.” – But if there be no sort of hope for any sinner, as such, in all the book of God, it cannot, with truth, be said, that any thing which the sinner heard from that book, or that any word which he found in it, was the *original* ground of his hope. Some internal change, it seems, previously existed, which, as it was perceived, and thought sufficient, became the immediate ground of the *good man’s* expectation. – Till sinners are convinced of sin, and of their lost condition through it, our author thinks the promise of salvation should not be so much as *presented*. What does Mr. Fuller mean by the *promise* of salvation? Does he intend any particular promise of salvation to A or B? Of presenting such a promise there is no danger; because no such promise exists. The promise of salvation is connected with belief of that which is *testified* concerning the person and grace of Jesus Christ. So that, if the *testimony* of Jesus Christ be not received, salvation cannot be enjoyed. For, *in him all the promises of God are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us, who believe*. Must these promises not be *presented* to sinners, *as such*, but be kept out of sight till ministers shall suppose they are sufficiently convinced of sin, and of their lost condition? Are *penitents* only to hear the joyful sound? – Let us ask a prior question. What is essential to repentance? Does the law, as a law, produce *it*, unto life? The law may be, the law is, *subservient* to the gospel. It is, however, *distinct* from it, and *inferior* to it. Of the gospel alone can it with truth be said, *IT is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*. Let the law be preached; let it be expounded *ably*, and without *diminution*; but let it always be remembered, “*Lex est lux, quae lucit & offendit, non gratiam Dei, non justitiam & vitam, sed peccatum, mortem, iram & judicium Dei.*” (*Lutheri Loci Communes; de*

*ufu Legis Theologico, p. 53, 54*). As this fact is recollected, the following will be felt, “*Lex in usu suo, sine velo, occidit.*”

Suppose any man was convinced of sin, and of his lost condition through it, is this man to be told he ought to *surmount* the depravity and danger of his tremendous situation? The infamy of being conquered by corruption is indeed very great; but is not the glory of victory over sin, equal to the shame of being overcome by the corruption of our own hearts? Who *ought* to have that glory? A glory with which compared, Creation itself, seems not so great. – On the entrance of sin, it is certain, that a deserved curse, or such salvation as was equally unmerited, and unexpected by *transgressors*, but every way worthy of JEHOVAH, must be the lot of all men. If the latter, by whose *wisdom*, by what *price*, by what *power*, must such redemption be designed, obtained and applied? Surely, transgressors have neither wisdom to devise, merit to obtain, nor power to apply this *salvation*. Should however, the *report* of it be transmitted to them, (for to many it is not), it is possible they may multiply transgression on such indulgence. That the *guilty* remain rational, that they are favored with revelation, that any of them are the subjects of those impressions which are from on high, all this is not of *justice*, but of *favor*. But these favors may be slighted, or perverted. Such misconduct is *criminal*. Without superior favor to convert them from the error of their ways, it is *ruinous*. What, in such a situation, is their duty? To convert themselves? Or, for each transgressor to say, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.*

Let it be farther observed, it is not our being convinced of sin, and of our lost condition through it, that is immediately connected with the promise of salvation; because such conviction may exist with a very *legal* temper. If, therefore, the *testimony* which God has given of his *Son* be unknown, not believed, or disapproved; in short, unless IT be cordially received, the sinner is at a wide distance from the enjoyment of the gospel, and, till the atonement is properly received, he ever will. Why, therefore, withhold glad tidings from him till some preacher shall

conjecture his previous repentance has prepared him to receive the grand report? – The best way to try the reality and worth of any man’s repentance, is to lead him, if you can, to the cross of Christ. As he stands affected to Jesus Christ, and to him as crucified; as you perceive he is disposed to trust in him, boast of him, and be obedient to him, so you may estimate the sincerity, and spirituality of his penitential temper.

Notwithstanding this inadvertence of our author, it would be *unfair* to conclude that he intended sinners should qualify themselves to receive the gospel; provided we allow him to be *sincere* in the following declaration, and hence the apparent *contradiction*. For our author says (*p. 163*), “to require inherent qualifications, in order to warrant our coming to Christ, nothing can be more discouraging and perplexing to a poor distressed sinner.” – “So also, if, instead of using exhortations to sinners, *merely* that we may *use the means* which God has *appointed*, we give them to suppose (*p. 168*), that any work which is truly good, is in whole or in part, to be effected by, or ascribed to themselves, then,” says Mr. Fuller, “do we dishonor the Spirit of God!” – These are remarkable concessions. To be consistent with them a great part of Mr. Fuller’s *TREATISE and DEFENSE* must be materially altered. The duty of man seems here to be reduced to *one article*, which is, *merely the use of those means which God hath appointed*. So another author, whom Mr. Fuller has pretty closely followed, says, “God does not require more of *any* man than the right use of what he hath” (*Help to Zion’s travelers, by Mr. Hall, fen. P. 228*). But if our author, or his worthy friend, can imagine that a right use of what *any* man *has*, is all that God requires, it inevitably follows, that *no* man need *seek* for what he has *not*. How such a sentiment is either to be reconciled to the *law*, or the *gospel*, some are utterly unable to conceive.

Mr. Fuller foresaw danger on this delicate subject. He owns, there have been extremes in such addresses, and he wishes to avoid them; but it is doubtful whether he has yet found the middle way. He says (*p. 167*), “It ought to be confessed, that too many of those who have dealt in addresses to unregenerate sinners, have sadly neglected *the very spirit*

*and glory of the gospel.* In such addresses, perhaps, it has been too common likewise to go aside from the scriptural intent of them, and to dabble in Arminianism.” – If such *dabbling* be any proof of misinterpreting the scriptures, and if *Arminians* are able to judge what is friendly to their own cause, and likely to promote it, it is high time for our author to consider, whether he is not already gone a *little* further from *the very spirit and glory of the gospel* than he himself intended. – Should Mr. Fuller perceive he has been inconsistent, and be affected with the perception, let him not be too much cast down. *Pride* blushes at the sight of unexpected weakness in ourselves. But pride is more distant from true peace than *misapprehension*. *In many things we offend*, all of us. The most consistent character is only a little less inconsistent than his neighbors. Anxious and minute attention are seldom of much service. If the great *outlines* be well drawn the picture will always be above contempt. – *Be honest. Honor God. Follow what is best.* That *believer* who keeps such precepts properly in view, will never be ridiculous, but if reprobable, worthy of respect.

## **6. On the Love of God.**

Of our love to God, Mr. Fuller informs us, it may be remembered, there are two sources. One is, what God doth for us; the other, what he is in himself. Love ascending from us to the Supreme from a principle of gratitude, whose honest and affecting language is, *What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me!* This kind of delight in God, our author thinks, comparatively speaking, is but a low attainment. Love unalloyed by a sense of personal interest in Jesus Christ, ascending to God on perception of his natural, but unrelieving excellence, this kind of delight in God he extols with strange extravagance. What he considers as inferior affection, or love of a second sort, he supposes to be the duty of *some* men only, and that too, in proportion as certain favors have been granted to them, and actually received. But his purer, nobler flame, this, he contends should burn in *every* breast, and that to kindle such a passion is the incumbent duty of *all mankind*. This *pure* affection, our author supposes, may exist *without* the benefit of revelation; while that

which is *not* so pure in his estimation, is, in its best appearances, said to be *dependent on it*.

These are strange paradoxes, which *every* man will not attempt to explain; but *who* will try to unriddle the following assertion, and preserve at the same time our author's peculiarities? "*Good* men," he says, "are under exceeding higher obligations" to love God "for his peculiar *gifts* to them, as the God of all grace, than *carnal* men are" (p. 98). But why should GIFTS so *exceedingly* oblige, if all obligation be founded on *injunction* and not on *encouragement*? Or why should those gifts so much oblige *good* men, if the enjoyment of such favor be not essential to the existence of *Christian* goodness? Or if it be a *mean* and *low* thing to believe our personal interest in Jesus Christ? If it be true that such love to God is the *purest* and *noblest* (p. 88, 98), which originates, not from the *bounty* or *blessing* of the Almighty, but from such abstract perceptions of his *beauty* and *excellence*, as cannot remove transgression, or bring pardon, or peace, to transgressors, the question may be repeated, why are good men under such uncommon obligations for those favors which, at best, do not produce a *better* kind of love to God than where those special gifts are yet *unknown*, or where evidence of personal interest in such favor is actually *unenjoyed*?

"This way of speaking love to God, Christ, and divine things, namely, as for their own excellence, some may represent," says our author (p. 107), "as an *abstract metaphysical subtlety*, tending to perplex plain sincere Christians." – The author of this reply to Mr. Fuller is of that opinion. He has been confirmed in it by trials and observations more in number and variety, (and such as tend to give an impartial enquirer satisfaction,) than some people have yet had opportunities to experience and consider. Mr. Fuller, however, assures us, that his way of speaking of the love of God, "will be found, if fairly examined, adapted more than a little to the encouragement of plain sincere Christians." – What a pity, if this be true, that *prophets*, *apostles*, and other *inspired writers*, have left us so little instruction on this profound subject. How remarkable also is it, that *Arminians*, *Mystics*, and *Deists* (See, the *Minute Philosopher*, Dial. III), have been the greatest detailers and defenders of *disinterested* love! The

indigested things which our author has said on this subject are evidently imported; and he may live to see, what others have long since seen, that they are not worth the cost of importation. – Of the *excellence* of God, the writer of this section has no doubt; nor is it *diminished* in his estimation, since he has ceased to talk about it as Mr. Fuller now is disposed to talk. But, when we pass from what is thought to be *inconsistent* in our author, to that which is supposed to be *erroneous*, perhaps, it will appear, that Mr. Fuller himself, has not any view of the Divine excellence besides that which is *relative*. Neither the word nor works of the Almighty carry us any farther. All beyond it is *light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen, nor can see*.

### **7. On Humility.**

From whence Mr. Fuller has received some of his singularities, is not any where more apparent than in what he has said on *humility*. Here, it cannot be doubted that America is his market, and that Messieurs EDWARDS and BELLAMY are chiefly resorted to. – “If,” says Mr. Fuller, “a man were but to view himself as he really,” (which our author does not always suppose is difficult to do), “he would find two grand reasons for humility: the one, his littleness as a creature, and the other, his odiousness as a sinner. In the first view, he would shrink into nothing, as it were, before the eternal ALL; but in the last, he would think himself infinitely worse than nothing! The most poisonous serpent, or loathsome toad, would be inconceivably less odious in his sight, than he must know himself to be in the sight of God. He would appear to himself a most ugly, vile, filthy creature; utterly unfit for the society of holy beings; yea utterly unworthy to breathe God’s air, or tread upon his earth! He would think it a wonder that the very creation of God did not rise up against him, and send him quick to hell! He would impute it to the mercy of God that they were withheld, by his making a covenant for him with the very stones, and beasts of the field! And all this would fill his heart with holy gratitude. Yea, and when he had gone thus far, he would be far from *thinking much* of his humility. It would seem no more for him to think thus of himself, than for a thief, or a murderer, to think

himself odious to mankind. – Now *all this* is men's *duty*, unless it can be proved that they ought not to think of themselves as *they are*, and as God *has said they are*" (p. 96, 97).

"God *has said they are!*" Have we, then, through this curious quotation been reading the *sacred page*? Has our author *exactly* copied in all these coarse expressions, the oracles of God? Far from it. Had the sobriety and majesty of the scriptures been carefully consulted, such extravagance of expression, which our author occasionally has introduced, would not have sullied and obscured his TREATISE and DEFENSE. But if *all this is men's duty*, (that is, every man's duty to make himself so remarkably humble) why has our author so described this part of our duty, as leads us to think, not what *any* man is to *do*, but of an *act* which cannot possibly be his *own*? *Humility*, according to Mr. Fuller, "*consists in a spirit brought down to our condition.*" This, our author supposes, is "that humility in fallen men, with which salvation is connected." – From this definition of humility, and the subsequent remark, let us *first* observe, what is the *condition of fallen man*. It is not *unclean*? Is it *our* duty to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, or, to *make ourselves* clean? Are not *perception* and *persuasion* of moral defilement from the Lord? Why are these favors imparted to any man? Is it not to approach *the fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness*? Is it not to confess as David confessed, and to pray as he prayed, when he said, *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin*? – Mr. Fuller says humility "*consists in a spirit brought down to our condition*" (p. 194); but does he consider what spirit that ought to be? He allows our condition to be fallen and polluted. But being so, would it be a proper temper to act as if those facts did not exist, or as if WE, in our fallen state, ought not only to confess that God might be justified, and clear when he judges, but that WE ought also to rise above our fallen situation, and be, by our own might, what alone *can*, or indeed, *ought* to be expected, by the power of the Holy Ghost? – Farther; if humility "*consists in a spirit BROUGHT DOWN to our condition,*" is it not plain, that spirit which is BROUGHT DOWN, did not *bring itself down*? Is it not equally clear, if the *glory* of

that power which brings down the spirit of a fallen creature to his condition, be such as *is*, and ought to be peculiar to the Holy Ghost, he will never give either that *power*, or that *glory* to sinful men?

What our author has imported from America, he has mixed with his own manufacture, but not to advantage. For, what ever occasion Mr. JONATHAN EDWARDS may have given him and others, to talk in an uncommon style on humility, yet that celebrated professor has widely warned his followers against confiding too much in unusual, though of late sufficiently common expressions of seeming self abasement. If a man should say, *It seems to me, none are so bad as I*, Mr. Edwards answers, “Do not let the matter pass off so; but examine again, whether or no you do not think yourself better than others on this *very* account; because you *imagine* you think so meanly of yourself. Have not you an *high* opinion of this humility? And if you answer again, *No; I have not an high opinion of my humility; it seems to me I am as proud as the devil*; yet examine again, whether *self conceit* does not rise up under this *cover*; whether on this *very* account, that you *think* yourself as proud as the *devil*, you do not think yourself to be *very humble*” (*Edwards on religious Affections*, p. 233, 234).

It is supposed, our author had not leisure for such severity of examination when he wrote his *TREATISE*. So far was he from any frightful apprehension that *the very creation of God would rise up against him, and send him quick to hell*, that, without any adequate provocation, he rises up against the living and the dead with such want of due respect, as is, to say the least of it, widely distance from Christian humility. A few specimens of his *humble* behavior will convince us of something worse than verbal contradiction.

Of the litigious Jews, our author says (p. 41, 42), “They seemed to think, as *many* do now, that attendance on the means was all that was incumbent upon them, and therefore were offended with Christ for insisting on any thing farther.” The *many* here censured, and compared with carnal Jews, are *Calvinists*. Our author has too much sense to

charge *Arminians*, or *Baxterians*, with such a crime. Mr. Fuller himself, notwithstanding this censure, would be thought a Calvinist; keeping, however, at due distance from those *calumnies* (*p.* 5.) which it is supposed the enemies of the Calvinistic system have thrown upon it. Thus reformed, we see how he treats his old friends. But is this *humility*? Is it *honest*? Is it *consistent*? That it has even the appearance of *humility*, who, unless it should be himself, will once imagine? That such ill-treatment is *honest*, (if by *attendance on the means*, and being *offended with Christ for insisting on any thing farther*, we are to take those words in their usual meaning), will always be contradicted. Besides, is such behavior *consistent*? Has not Mr. Fuller assured us, that what is beyond the use of those means which are appointed, and has any tendency to make a sinner suppose he is the efficient cause of any thing which is *truly* good, is to (*p.* 168) dishonor the Spirit of God?

Our author can indulge severer censure against his former friends. He says (*p.* 89), “Men, by sin, have lost all just ideas of the beauty of God’s character, and so have sunk into a *total* disregard of him; are become dead to all sense of moral excellence; yea, and it is come to this, that they now think themselves not *obliged* to love him. Blinded, through the love of sin, to all the real excellencies of his nature, they cannot think themselves bound to love a Being of his *character*. All this is shocking: -- but should the *friends of God* join with them in it, and say, True you *cannot* love him, you have no *principle* to excite you to such a thing, therefore, we allow you to be free: this would be shocking beyond expression!” – Is this the language of profound humility? Is this the genuine effect of the *purest, noblest* kind of love that can be exercised? Is this an irresistible evidence that our author’s spirit is *brought down* to his *condition*?

Either Mr. Fuller believes that his *calvinistical* opposers, whom, in this *farce*, he calls *the friends of God*, do, in general, teach such things as he has been pleased to mention, or he does not. It is said in *general*, for if he knew of a few individuals who talk so strangely, when it is supposed he does not, would this warrant such promiscuous censure? If he does

believe it, what shall we say to such profession of respect towards them as this (*p. 6*): “I have been ready sometimes to *weep*, from an expectation of hard thoughts, and perhaps hard words, from several of those with whom I could rejoice to spend my days in cordial friendship?” – Our author, indeed, of late, has made it rather doubtful with whom he would rejoice to spend his days; but, can it be difficult to determine who were intended when he first indulged such professions of respect? Or when, (probably forgetful of his preface), he afterwards indulged such alarming apprehensions? If, on the contrary, Mr. Fuller does not believe, that those whom he calls *the friends of God*, and with whom he could have rejoiced to have spent his days, are either so ignorant, or so impudent, as he has led some to suppose they are, he might well expect their severe rebuke. But it will be more generous, and it may be as useful, to leave him to his own reflections.

For his conviction, the following questions and additional remarks are introduced. What does Mr. Fuller mean by men’s thinking themselves not obliged to love God, to love a Being of his character, and by supposing they are justified by some, in being destitute of such affection? Does he think that any intelligent Calvinist, (against whom his censures seem to be pointed) is offended with the *character* of God? Does our author fancy that such a Calvinist, believes that God is not *worthy* to be loved, *with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind*? Does Mr. Fuller imagine Calvinists are so ignorant as not to see that want of love to God is a *loss* which no created good can supply, or not to perceive it is so *vile* a disposition as admits of no excuse? Do they not always contend, that as love fails, iniquity abounds; and, that the wages of sin is death? Do they ever insinuate that want of love to God is less criminal because they have fled for refuge to the hope set before them? Or that the transgression of the law is not sin, because Christ has magnified it, and made it honorable? Do they teach it would be less offensive to God to break any of the commandments of the moral law, (as explained by our Lord himself, in his sermon on the mount) than if they had never heard of the Redeemer? Our author knows that such suspicions are as ungenerous as they are unjust. – But this reply will not

give Mr. Fuller and his friends satisfaction. They insist, *if it be men's sin to violate the moral law, it must be their duty to keep it perfectly; and that the law includes and requires, of all men, saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.* Who does not see that this is a MERE *inference*? Nor is it difficult to prove it a FALSE *consequence*. Yet, on this *inference*, hangs almost *all* the frightful things (and they are not a few) which our author has thrown together. This false consequence leads him to false alarms, and, as is usual, to be unmindful of the true. Thus terrified our author loses his temper, his former friends are treated unjustly, and, when he has *made*, and repeatedly *buffeted* a man of straw, he conceives he has disburdened the Calvinistic system (p. vi) of a number of calumnies, and brought forward clear and honorable conceptions of the divine government.

Mr. Fuller is entreated to consider, that when Joshua said unto the people, *Ye CANNOT serve the Lord; for he is an holy God;* he did not say this to “allow them to be free” from that service. He is desired to recollect, that when the ALMIGHTY said to the Jews, by his servant Moses, *O that there were such an heart in them!* Or rather, *Who will give, that they had such an heart in them as they promise to manifest,* this was not said, to exempt them from obedience; but to teach them, they could have no access to JEHOVAH without a mediator: nor with one, unless the Lord gave them an heart to serve him. For they were taught without *that* they would never serve him *acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.* Is it credible, that when our Lord said, *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. Without me ye can do nothing.* Is it credible, that he said these things to *allow* of any evil, or to *deter* from the proper pursuit of any moral good? – When the Eunuch was asked this question, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* He said to Philip, *How can I, except some man guide me?* Did Philip deny that fact? Did he conceive such an *ingenuous confession* was an *artful excuse*? Or did Philip suppose he could give the Eunuch understanding? Did he not *preach to him Jesus;* in confidence that the Spirit who said, *Go near and join thyself to this chariot,* would be with him, and make

his efforts to instruct the Ethiopian successful? Was he disappointed? Why are we pestered, then, with objections which our author dare not level against *superior* characters? Why are we teased with *innuendos* and far fetched *hints*, which have no foundation but in the *humble* apprehension of those who let them fly abroad?

Mr. Fuller is pleased to charge his Calvinistic opposers with *want of reading, with want of knowing better*, and with other imperfections not a *few*. When the CHARACTERS who are censured, on the one side, and the *reading, knowledge, and years* of their formidable CENSOR, on the other, are duly considered, will such a contrast give the intelligent reader a high idea of our author's modesty? Surely his *precepts* are hitherto too *coarse*, and his *censures* too *daring*, to captivate a tolerable understanding. Unless indeed, it should be prejudiced against the doctrines of grace; for then, coarse wit may seem wisdom, and absurdity itself may be dignified with the name of argument.

How often does our author call his adversaries *Arminians*? Yet what Arminian has disturbed his repose by resentment, or violent contradiction? Has not a reputable *Arminian* highly extolled him, and given him, and his abettors, a respectful, if it be not a cogent invitation, fully to embrace his leading sentiments? When this sensible *Arminian* talks of being *unfortunate* enough to differ from Mr. Fuller and his friends (*Observation. p. 81*), in contending for the sense of a particular text, it must be considered as a *compliment*; since he endeavors to bring them over to his own opinion. But when Mr. TAYLOR informs his correspondent, he is exceedingly obliged to him for the perusal of Mr. Fuller's pamphlet, and says (*Observation. p. 3-4*), "I desire you will believe I am *quite* sincere, when I tell you, that I *very* highly value your *pious* friend. I think it an *unspeakable* mercy that the God of love has led *him*, and so *many* other *good men*, to a clear conviction of the truth, in a matter of such *vast* moment," we cannot but give him *credit*. – From this rejoicing, however, we may infer, that after our author's best efforts to put a stop to that *outcry* of which he so much complains (*p. 139*), and to remove that *ignorance* he so much laments (*p. 192*), his brother *Taylor*

seems resolved to defeat his design. – It is an afflicting situation, when it is with great difficulty a man can be what he *seems to be*, or seem to be what he *really is*.

From Mr. Taylor's joy at our author's late conversion, we may farther infer, as Mr. Taylor admits a man may be *pious* and *good*, and may *exceedingly* oblige him in writing on religious subjects, not only while he does not hold *general* redemption, but even while he is writing strongly against *it*, it follows the *belief* of Mr. Taylor's fundamental doctrine of Christ's dying for all men, is not of that importance he has so frequently attempted to prove. – It is presumed, Mr. Taylor cannot avoid the force of this inference, unless he should plead that though Mr. Fuller has, indeed, written expressly against *general* redemption, yet his leading sentiments undoubtedly are in favor of *that doctrine*, and cannot be established without *it*. Such a plea, if fairly supported, would confirm the title of the present *section*, and show our author to be very *inconsistent*; but should Mr. Taylor make use of that argument, would it not be paying a poor compliment to *himself*, as well as to Mr. *Fuller*?

It might be dangerous to descend from these views of our author's want of temper to some particular instances of his want of respect for the *deceased* (*Mr. L. Wayman, Mr. J. Brine, and Dr. J. Gill*); this might awaken that degree of anger which, when roused, it would not be easy to rule. Let that talk therefore be omitted. As we may more safely bewail the multiplied proofs which demonstrate the deceitfulness of the human heart, so we may more profitably consider that instance which is fairly before us. For, while our author wrote his most exceptionable censures, and unpleasing paragraphs, he did both with a *hope* (*p. 11*), that he had not taken any undue freedom, with either the *dead* or *living*; with a *belief* (*p. 12*), that he had a right to demand from some, and to expect from others, a fair and candid perusal; with an *apprehension* (*p. 12*), that the man who pointed out his mistakes, would be justly entitled to every mark of honor and Christian respect, and with an *opinion* (*Def. p. 89*), that if we must dispute, we are never so safe as when we enter on controversy with fear and trembling! He assures Mr. Button God will

guide the *meek* in judgment, the *meek* will he teach his way. But of our author's *meekness*, and Christian forbearance, has either Mr. Button, or any other *opposer*, yet had the highest opinion?

Should it be said, the laws of controversy admit, that the nature of free debate requires, liberty of speech, force of argument, and sometimes warmth of expression; all this is allowed. Nor would an able and honest disputant, nor would any man who is not either a coward, or a bully, wish the laws of unfettered controversy to be abrogated, or the nature of free debate to be changed.

A man of fair views and of good courage, is ready to say to his contending brother, *Let him smite me, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.* If, however, while any man attempts to smite his brother, because he thinks he has erred, he should endeavor to wound his real reputation, this would be *provoking*. If, while so doing, he should affect to say, he thought himself *a most ugly, vile, filthy creature, utterly unfit to breathe God's air, and to tread upon his earth*; such incongruity, such unmanly provocation, under the appearance of being *uncommonly humble*, would be *very* provoking indeed. – Open rebuke may be esteemed; the burst of passion may be forgiven; but to be an advocate for *profound humility*, and, at the same time, to indulge illiberal censure, is this likely to produce conviction, or to secure respect?

The freedom of these pages will probably produce resentment. Let it come. The cost has been counted. Conscious of inward *esteem* for our author, not on account of his *obscurity, self-contradiction, or error*, but because of the *truths* he yet *retains* and *defends*; conscious of a predominant wish that in this debate he may be able to overcome every objection that is not properly supported; should it at last appear, that in attempting to count the cost, something has been left out, or not duly considered, it is still presumed that if Mr. Fuller's resentment should be kindled, or if the displeasure of his friends should break out on this

occasion, it will be born with *fortitude*, and received with some degree of real *instruction*.

It is possible that while complaining of *obscurity* he who makes the complaint may be thought obscure. Should it be obscurity of the same *kind* he has thought proper to find fault with, it would be his disgrace; but it is supposed that competent judges will not be of that opinion. It is equally possible, that on charging Mr. Fuller with being *inconsistent*, it will be thought, he who has exhibited that charge may expect to have it retorted. Should that be done, one point, however, would be gained, which he has long labored to prove; namely, that the human understanding is weaker, and less to be depended on, than either our author, or they who have adopted, or fallen into his leading ideas, are willing to suppose. – Perhaps, what has been said against its being the duty of a *bad* man to be a good man, and against its being the duty of every *good* man to be as holy as Saint Paul, will either be considered by some, as inconsistent, or as erroneous and dangerous. Be it therefore remembered, that what has been said on either of these subjects, has not been said against that which is *desirable*, or against the *duty* of *lawful endeavor*, (and no man is crowned except he strive *lawfully*); but to show, that saying it is the *duty* of a bad man to MAKE HIMSELF a good one, and that it is the *duty* of a good man to MAKE HIMSELF the *best* man, or most perfect character that ever existed, is language of dangerous tendency. For the word *duty* cannot extend to those actions which are not our *own*, or to the possession of the *power* of God. Though the Lord has obliged us to *seek* it, yet not to *possess* it; because THAT is imparted or withheld, as it seems good in his sight. The most lawful, and laudable endeavors towards relative perfection, should always be considered in that connection, which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has placed them; who having said, *Let US go on to perfection*, adds, *and this will we do, if God PERMIT*. If it be true, that unto every believer *is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ*, either that gift has *no* relation to *holiness*, or if it has, it must be admitted, however it may be our duty to *covet earnestly the best gifts*; or having them, to use our utmost efforts to find out the *more excellent way*; or being in it, to walk up and down in the name of the Lord: yet still, it must be acknowledged, that *without Christ we can do nothing*.

We can neither deserve nor command his assistance; nor is it our duty to wish that this were possible. – In short, all that has been said of duty runs on this idea, *that it is our lawful endeavor to know and do the will of God*. It is presumed most men, under no temptation to revoke this idea of duty, usually entertain it, and act upon it. On this ground, it is affirmed, it is not our duty to think we are *innocent*; because the fact is, we are *guilty*. Nor is it our duty to make ourselves *innocent*; because this is *absurd*; for where pollution *is*, personal innocence is gone for *ever*. Nor is it our duty to make an *atonement* for our guilt; because the sufferings of the *guilty* can never *satisfy* for sin; or remove transgression. Nor is it our duty to *demand* or *merit* a report of God's salvation; such *insolence* and *arrogance* ought not to be called by that *name*. Nor is it our duty, if favored with the gospel to make IT *effectual*; because we are obliged to *renounce* that idea, and to *implore* such energy to answer that end, which neither *is*, nor *ought* to be *our own*. If then our duty be *something to be done by us, being what we are*; or, if it be *our lawful endeavor to know and do the will of God*, on this supposition, the following remarks are deserving of some attention.

*First*, no mere man, since the fall of Adam, ever did the *whole* of his duty. Who, at all times, has made a right use of what he *had*, or makes a proper use of what he now *has*, and seeks, in a becoming manner, for what he *has not*? *Secondly*; could we suppose a single exception, so that any man, from his earliest infancy to hoary hairs, had always done, in every respect, his duty, it may still be affirmed, that *this* would, by no means, merit *salvation*, or be a proper ground of hope that, *for so doing*, he should possess that *immense* and *unmerited* BLESSING. His duty, however exactly performed, could never satisfy the covenant of works, or be the procuring cause of any interest in the covenant of grace. As to the covenant of WORKS, *it* could neither satisfy the perceptive, nor the penal part of that *broken* covenant. Not the *perceptive*, for all our *natural* defects and disorders, are the continued consequences of our first revolt from God. – Shall that state which has disabled itself, and is not properly affected with its disability, be allowed to plead with a *lawful* and *Sovereign* POWER, that, however disabled, *such* a SOVEREIGN ought

to be contented with the *right use* of what is *left*? – Not the *penal* part; because in this case it is not credible that any fallen creature should make an atonement. As a *fact*, this is impossible. Besides, the *honor* of making *compensation* to the divine government is such, that he who is converted to God, will not so much as wish *it* should be conferred on him. – As to the covenant of GRACE, not any thing in the compass of *our duty* can *bring judgment to victory*, or make the gospel victorious; because it was never designed, far from it, that human efforts should make *it* effectual unto salvation. *For*, saith the Lord, AS *the rain cometh down, and the snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth, and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; SO shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I PLEASE, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I SEND IT.* – We are every way left without excuse, yet does it follow that our best and lawful endeavors are sufficient for us? *We have destroyed ourselves*; we still indulge destructive principles, and are more or less addicted to destructive pursuits: but in the Lord ALONE is OUR HELP. *Ought* it not to be so? Can it possibly be elsewhere? *By NATURE, we are the children of wrath even as others. By GRACE are we saved, if saved at all, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.* Ever may we rightly recollect, *A man can receive nothing except it be given him of God!* – With this fact some may be vexed, and others sorry; to some, however, it is incontestable; and it is so, without the least offence. *What have we, whether it be an office, gift, or blessing, we have not received?* Capacity to receive, as well as good to be enjoyed, are alike of God. He that made the *light* made the eye, and every object the eye beholds. *Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

### SECT. III.

*Mr. Fuller's leading propositions considered as ERRONEOUS.*

It often has been said,

**“To err is human, to forgive divine.”**

But, whatever may be our errors, we shall always be unwilling to accept of forgiveness if we think we have not erred; or think that our error is useful. He who can, on any principle, excuse his errors, either as being *mental*, or as being the necessary result of *natural* inability, will always think himself insulted to be told, that for such errors he needs forgiveness. Terror may make him silent, or even accept an escape by *pardon*, from tremendous punishment; but he who searcheth the heart, knoweth such a man is inwardly disgusted with the degrading proposition.

It is not intended thus to insult our author. If he has erred, his errors have not been injurious to *all* his readers. On this account, indeed, he merits no praise; but he who thinks he has been in some measure *instructed*, by Mr. Fuller's mistakes, is not so likely, as others, to indulge private resentment. Errors like those which are supposed to be before us, it would be arrogant, in any man, to pretend to forgive. By such arrogance, the quiet of our author's mind shall not be disturbed by his present antagonist. As no *personal* offence has been received, as he knows not that any *conviction* will follow his present attempt to convince our author of his errors, he does not mean to affect the style of a conqueror; much less to require unmanly submission: but as the errors here opposed have been injurious to some, as Mr. Fuller himself does not contend for the *innocence* of error, as the injury arising from erroneous sentiments seems to be proportioned to the *kind* of error which is propagated, and to the *manner* in which it is received, retained, disseminated and defended, it cannot be unlawful to consider what those errors are, in our author's *TREATISE and DEFENSE*, which still may be injurious to society.

That men may be injured by him who attempts to serve them, and who would rejoice to be a blessing to mankind; that they are sometimes much injured even by authors who have, in various views, been a blessing to society, men of understanding will admit. Where is that *good* man who has done no *harm*? Paul withstood Peter to the face, *because he was to be blamed*: yet Peter was a greater blessing to society than we shall ever be. Nor was he of less public utility, nor had he less reputation after that deserved rebuke. That Mr. Fuller is a good man, that he has been of use in his stated and occasional labors, that he deserves to be commended for his vindication of truth and righteousness, in several pages of his *TREATISE and DEFENSE*, are neither unknown, nor reluctantly acknowledge: but that he has *erred*, it is presumed has been frequently manifested already, and it is supposed this *section* will confirm that unpleasing idea.

It may be recollected that *seven* articles of apparent contradiction were produced in the last section. If our author has been in so many articles inconsistent, the number of his errors must be equal. For, in propositions really inconsistent, one assertion infers the negation of the other. So that, if *this* stands, *that* must fall; or, if *that* be conclusive, *this* must be erroneous. – The inconsistent have always those advantages which they who are a little more accurate cannot expect. By being abstrusely inconsistent, they gratify men of opposite sentiments. By indulging such contradiction, their Catholicism is more likely to be commended than their incongruities are to be detected. If they should meet with opposition, they generally have as much color for evasion, as they have inclination to evade. Should you say, for instance, Mr. Fuller affirms our *cannot*, in reference to *spiritual* acts, is *nothing else* but a *will not*. He might answer, I have said the reverse; I have even used the word *cannot* where no man ought to imagine that *will not* would be a proper substitute; for, I have said, “men ought to expect no reward for their *obedience*, seeing they CANNOT produce *such a one* as the *law demands*”(P. 144). – Should you avail yourself of that assertion, and insist upon it, Mr. Fuller supposes we are naturally, as well as morally,

unable to produce such obedience as the law demands, it is probable he would be offended; because, he repeatedly assures us (*Def. 52*), “in all cases of natural inability, the party is excusable, even though he may, by his own fault, have brought that inability upon himself.” – Either this language is equivocal or frightful. What! May a man, by his own fault, increase his inability to keep the moral law, and then be allowed to say, it can, in equity, only demand a right use of what is left? Debauchery and excess (the two faults mentioned by our author) if carried to that length which he has supposed, take away the heart as well as the limbs of the transgressor; but may he who has hurt his mental powers by his own folly, consider his inability is really an excuse? The mother of Solomon was not of this opinion. She said to her royal son, Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes, strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. – Should our author say, he talked of the loss of our limbs, by our own fault, and not the loss of our understanding. It would be replied, the faults he has mentioned, may affect the one as well as the others; and, having said, “in all cases of natural inability, the party is excusable, even though he may, by his own fault, have brought that inability on himself,” he has left an open door for some to excuse those crimes which admit of no excuse. Such are the privileges of those who are obscurely inconsistent. Who would envy their felicity?

It is often easy to confute when it is difficult to convince. This will ever happen where inclination to maintain some system, or some sentiment, is very strong, and reason is comparatively weak. But success in every laudable enterprise is from above. To use what seems to us the most probable means of doing good, in the best manner we can, is the orbit in which we are ordained to move. We are not to create, but occupy; not to command, or merit, a blessing, but to entreat that favor, in the path of duty, and leave the event with God.

As the same articles are to come before us in this section as in the last (there they were considered as *inconsistent*, here as *erroneous*), and, as

there seems to be no reason for any different arrangement, let us take them in the same order as before; beginning with the *ground* of religious obligation, and ending with *humility*.

### **1. On the GROUND of religious obligation.**

To possess spiritual dispositions, and to perform spiritual duties, to do both by *that* faith in Jesus Christ which is allowed to be peculiar to the elect, and to be the gift of special grace, nay, to be and do every thing which *any* man can either be or do who is born of God, or who is most eminent in godliness, all this our author supposes *every* man ought to be and do previous to regeneration. The *ground* of such obligation, Mr. Fuller says, is the *injunction* of the moral law abstractedly considered; which he thinks is *very different* from *encouragement* of every possible description. But can there, accurately speaking, be a *law* where there is no *lawgiver*? Can there be a *moral law*, which does not contain, with its precepts, any inducement to regard it? If there be no inducement to obey, can the law itself be considered as *good*? Must not every man who endeavors to be obedient, believe it is *better* for him to obey than to transgress? Can any person imagine that the will of God, and our *best* interest, are ever at variance? The evidence of this fact may be obscured in some *particular* trial; but the nature of his will; and of those perfections which God has manifested by his law, will always give the upright *general* satisfaction. If the sons of *Belial* were told, that though they have strong seducements to violate the will of God, the prohibition not to transgress, is founded on *mere will* and not on *wisdom*, would they not have that color for disobedience which the word of truth will not allow? – Let us be thankful that our *best* interest, and our *undoubted* duty, cannot, even for a moment, be divided, except it be in our disordered imagination.

A rule may be distinguished from a law: but a law, in the strict and proper sense of that word, is essential to obligation. *Where no law is, there is no transgression. Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.* Law is the will of the

Superior Power commanding what is right, and prohibiting what is wrong. If this Superior be not acknowledged in our actions, they cannot be considered as done in obedience to his will. If he be properly acknowledged in our actions, it is plain, we consider his will as law; that is to say, as just and good. – There is a Superior Power who is every way SUPREME. Whatsoever is in opposition to his will, is not law; and therefore, not bidding to conscience. But what the will of the SUPREME is, concerning us, except in general terms, may be of difficult discussion. Confessions the most solemn, prayers fervent and continued, controversies, some of them serious, and others grievous, have, in all ages, born witness of this fact. In proportion as we know what the will of the Lord is, and are reconciled to it (which no man is further than he believes his best interest and his duty are united), we shall say, *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* We shall not only desire to be obedient, but to obey under such influence, and from such motives, as will not suffer us to question whether we have obtained *grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.* Can this be done, or be designed, without *inducement*? Why should *that* be divorced from *injunction*? What end can it answer? Will it give us a higher idea of the *wisdom*, or of the *law* of God? Will it make our obedience more humble, or more cheerful? – Our author is entreated to consider whether it was not the business of the first *Seducer* to insinuate, that if God had said to our first parents, *Of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die,* IT WAS A MERE INJUNCTION, nor was there any *reason*, to comply with such a prohibition. Let not Mr. Fuller be offended with this request. It is believed, he has no design to *seduce* his followers. Should he, however, be astonished, if that subtlety of THAT serpent which tempted Eve, is found to be something greater than he has yet conceived?

Every temper has its snare. He that wishes to extol the *grace* of God, so that, the Lord alone, may be exalted, is liable to unexpected deception. He that is zealous for the *law*, may imperceptibly depart from the very spirit and glory of the gospel. – *If while we seek to be justified by Christ,*

*we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore, Christ the minister of sin? Do we then, make void the law through faith? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? – These are specious objections. Grievous to those who love God. But some, impatient under this cross, so preach what they call the gospel, that if this offence of the cross of Christ has not ceased under their ministrations, it has not been for want of their best endeavors to roll reproach away. If Satan, in opposing the gospel, were not to do it under the appearance of preserving piety, and promoting good works, men who love to glorify God in their conduct would not be so soon deceived. It is remarkable, that they who were deceived at COLOSSE, after the commandments and doctrines of men, were deceived in things which had indeed a SHOW OF WISDOM in will worship, and HUMILITY, and neglecting the BODY, NOT IN ANY HONOR TO THE SATISFYING OF THE FLESH (Mestrat). It does not content Satan to attack the flesh by pleasures, and by objects which are agreeable to it; nor even by adversities, in order to beat down by force him that may be corrupted by enticements. He attacks piety even by that which is most holy and sacred, and endeavors to turn us from God by the love of God, or by a zeal for his kingdom and glory. Who can understand his errors? Who has not need to say, Cleanse thou me from secret faults? And to add, Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me? – Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer!*

It may be said, injunction is the *ground* of obligation, and inducement only a *motive* to be obedient. But this seems saying too *little*, when religious and moral obedience is the subject of discussion. For, in such obedience, no injunction which is not *wise*, and expressive of the *will* of God concerning us, can possibly be the *ground* of our duty. He who is willing to evidence a proper regard to the will of God, always considers whose will it is. IT IS THE LORD. This reflection is the root of his submission, and active endeavor to comply with the injunctions of JEHOVAH. He may not, in some particular cases, *perceive* why he is

called to be obedient; but even then, he has such a general and fixed *persuasion* of the *divine* CHARACTER, that he has no doubt it will be best for him to obey the Lord. Abraham, when called, *knew not whither he went*: but he knew *who* called him; nor was he a stranger either to the nature of his calling, or to the *end* of that distinguishing favor. The children of Abraham, who are circumcised in heart, obey from love; from that love to Jesus Christ which belief of his word produced. Acquaintance, therefore, with HIM whose injunctions they obey, is *always* their inducement to be obedient. Increased acquaintance induces so strongly, as to surmount all opposition. Peter and John answered their most formidable opposers by saying, *Whether it be RIGHT in the sight of God, to hearken unto YOU, more than unto GOD, judge ye*. But whatsoever is *right* is *best*. Common sense will ever be of that opinion. That which is right may be attempted to be run down; but they who enjoy it, know that grace and truth must inevitably and eternally triumph, with a glory that cannot be expressed. Such are compelled to say, *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*. – God does not only *command*, but *persuade* Japheth to dwell in the tents of SHEM. In those tents, when tempted to depart, the converted *Gentiles*, as well as *Peter*, say, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*.

## **2. On the EXTENT of religious obligation.**

If the *extent* of religious and moral obligation be not so represented by Mr. Fuller, as to make it the duty of the unregenerate to be the efficient cause of their salvation, and, in that respect, to be the authors of their own happiness, what words are likely to convey such ideas to mankind? Our author, it has been acknowledged, will not, in plain words, contend for such a position; nay, he denies it. The present question therefore may seem severe. But where we have the same authority for opposite assertions, though they cannot, indeed, be reconciled, yet we may be allowed to consider which if the two the author himself is disposed to prefer. Now, it is a leading sentiment with Mr. Fuller, that every man is bound, on the most awful punishment *for* his non-performance, to *be*, to

*have*, and to *do*, previous to regeneration, whatever any man can *be*, or *have*, or *do*, by that supernatural change, or even when that change, in the most eminent saint, is crowned with glory. This may seem to be contradicted, may be really contradicted, as in truth it is; yet this leading sentiment is always held so fast by our author, that it is most probable, should he think proper to prolong this controversy, he will disown the very appearance of contradiction.

But if the *extent* of religious obligation be such as our author has represented, once more let us consider why *prayer* is so frequently and strongly required at the commencement, and during the continuance of religious action. Can any man be bound alike, and at the same time, to *ask*, and *get* without asking? To *seek* direction, and to *discover* without supplication? To *knock*, and yet, by his own strength, to *force* open the door? – It has been seriously owned, that Mr. Fuller is a man addicted to prayer; and it is believed his own example encourages that important duty. But were he to pray in *strict* conformity to his own creed, would not our author be afraid to hear his own voice? – In such a prayer, perhaps something like the following address would make a part of his devotion.

“O Lord, I do not beseech THEE to take away a heart of stone, or to give me an heart of flesh, as if it were not my duty to take away the former, and also to make myself a new heart, previous to the operations of THY SPIRIT. I do not beseech THEE to write Thy law in my mind, or to make me an *Epistle of Christ*, as if I ought not to do these things *myself*. For I cannot conceive, O Lord, how any work in me, which *I ought* not to be the DOER of, can meet with THY approbation. Nor do I beseech Thee to increase my *natural* ability. My *cannot* is nothing else but want of *will*. What, therefore, I humbly request is, that I may have such a degree of *moral* ability to keep the moral law, as may answer whatsoever is virtually contained in the gospel.”

Could any man compose a litany entirely corresponding with our author’s mistakes, how would he be shocked at the frequent repetition of

WE BESEECH THEE TO HEAR US, GOOD LORD! Every thing that deviates from that grace which bringeth salvation, is no where so *evidently* inconsistent and indefensible as it is an act of devotion.

Whatever Mr. Fuller may feel at the thought of such worship, he is not afraid to say, “It seems difficult to conceive how any work in us, can be either necessary, acceptable, or pleasing to God, unless that work be previously our duty” (p. 43). This seems very incautious language. Consider, first, the *extent* of our author’s proposition; it reaches to *any work in us*. Let the proposition *itself*, be carefully observed. “It is difficult,” he says, “to conceive how any work in us, *can be* either *necessary, acceptable, or pleasing* to GOD, unless THAT WORK be previously *our duty*.” What does our author mean less of *duty* than the *performance* of the work? When is this our duty? *Previously*. Previously to what? To (p. 47) our being *born again*; to our being, as it were, *new made*, and while such is the *error* of the mind, and *enmity* of the heart, that we must *undergo* an entire renovation before we can be *set right*. Is this the voice of a *friend*, or is it the voice of a *stranger*? Before we too much regard it, let us reconsider whither we are going.

Is not spiritual *illumination* a work in us? But is it the duty of the *unenlightened* to *illuminate* themselves? Our author, himself, says, “The *revelation* made at the time of our first conversion, consists in the understanding being *enlightened* to see *that* which was already revealed and reported before” (p. 34). He also adds, “The word of God gives light, the Spirit of God gives discernment.” In confirmation of this, he produces (*Psalms 119:105 and Ephesians. 1:18*). But if those who are converted are *enlightened*, and if it is the Spirit of God who gives *discernment*, is it the previous duty of the unconverted to *illuminate* and *convert themselves*? – Is our author *serious* when he says, “It seems difficult to conceive how any work in us, can be either necessary, acceptable, or pleasing to God, unless that work be previously our duty?” Some may, in this instance, speaking of *assurance* (which he always supposes must be supported by the evidence of an internal change of heart), he quotes and approves the following words of (*Mr.*

*Charnock* (p. 9). “Unbelief,” says the pious Mr. Charnock, “is a *sin*; the want of assurance is *not*; to HAVE IT *is not our duty*, but *God’s dispensation*; he has obliged the *believer* to *seek it*, but not to *possess it*.” May not what Mr. Charnock has said of assurance, with so much propriety, be extended to every thing else which is God's dispensation? What shall be excepted? May we not, in many cases, be obliged to *seek* what we are not obliged to *possess*? Is not this always the case, where the blessing sought is absolutely at the pleasure of God to withhold, or to grant? Will our author give us a catalog of those blessings (natural, moral and spiritual), which are not of this description? Surely, we may be obliged to lawful endeavors, in lawful things, while our illicit endeavors, on the one hand, and attempting to be efficient causes, and exercising ourselves in matters too wonderful for us, on the other, may be as *wrong* as all our lawful and expedient endeavors are indisputably *right*?

But the important question, it seems, is this: “*Do we need the Spirit of God to enable us to do our duty?*” (p. 145) WE DO. Are we, therefore, obliged to approve of such inferences as our author is inclined to draw from this leading proposition? Perhaps, we are not. We will try at least, to stand fast in the liberty *wherewith Christ has made us free*; and if we can prevent it, no *brother*, however *respectable*, shall inadvertently lead us back again to bondage. Before the inconclusive inferences of our author be too much regarded, let the nature of *just* inference and of *real* obligation be diligently considered. Let also this *question* be well weighed. *Do we need the Spirit of God ONLY to enable us to do our duty?* – Are there not *blessings* to be enjoyed, as well as *duties* to be discharged? Blessings, which he who came to bless us, designed to be our strength? Blessings by which he turns us from our iniquities, and prepares us for the present and future enjoyment of HIMSELF? Blessings which, though they are the source and spring of *new-obedience*, must not be degraded by the name of duty? For, though the proper discharge of duty is *our excellence*, is it not confined to *our acts*? Blessing, however, is not *our excellence*, but, *as* it is imparted, and

enjoyed, it is THAT which makes us to *excel*. Why are things so different and so distinct to be confounded?

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we meet with this admirable text: *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen!* – Does it not appear to be the intention of the sacred penman to *teach us* that they who are called the sheep of Christ, are to hear and obey his voice? That they are to do this, believing that the will of Jesus Christ is the rule of Christian duty? That they are to consider the will of their Lord, and the will of his Father, to be the same? That, in *every* good work, it is the Father of mercies that worketh in believers to will and to do, of his own good pleasure? That the perfection, as well as the commencement of Christian conduct is from HIM? That such energy, as is here requested, is a favor? That such favor should be sought through the blood of the everlasting covenant? That every good work from believers should correspond with the nature and design of the New Testament? That such petitions should be presented to the God of peace in the Name of our Lord Jesus, in order to obtain mercy, and to find grace to help us effectually, and to our Redeemer's glory, in every time of need? – How these things can be fairly contradicted, or how all this should be supposed to contain nothing more than a request that men might make a right use of their *natural* or moral ability, or, how all this should *only* give us the idea that what is here requested, was previously the duty of all men, who are favored with the gospel, to *be*, to *have*, and *do*; if our author can conceive and vindicate such notions, surely he will not withhold such conception and proof from those who do not, at present, make the least pretence to such uncommon understanding.

So long as coming boldly to the throne of grace, is actually enjoyed and properly esteemed, the reign of grace will be admired. But should prayer be *so* bounded by the idea of *duty*, that we should think it not right to pray for any thing which we do not believe is *our* previous duty to

*perform*, we shall either rush into idle and vicious extravagancies of expression, or we must be miserably contracted. On that poor plan, who can ever reach the meaning of these gracious expressions? *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the house of Egypt: OPEN THY MOUTH WIDE AND I WILL FILL IT!* – When we read of the *riches of God's inheritance in the saints*, of their being brought *unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*, of their being *presented to HIMSELF, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*, is it *credible*, that *every work in us*, which made us *ask* the way to Zion above, and made us *meet* to enter on that inheritance which is both incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, is it *credible*, that every thing wrought *in us*, for those ends, ought to have been done by ourselves? Is it difficult to conceive how such operations can be either *necessary*, or *pleasing* to God, unless that *notion* be admitted?

Does not such doctrine as our author endeavors to establish, unavoidably lead to that kind of boasting which God has for ever excluded? Yet Mr. Fuller has not been induced to this by the least degree of hope that any man, previous to his conversion, will ever do, or be inclined to do, what he supposes all men *ought* to perform, and *could*, if they were entirely *willing*. It has been thought the modern question was framed on purpose to ensnare (see the introduction to these Thoughts): and Mr. Fuller, who has revived it, must know, that he strenuously pleads for a faith that never existed, nor never will; *he* and his *friends* being *judges*. To say he *must know*, cannot be too strong an expression, since our author thinks (*Def. p. 105*), “Unless the gospel could exhibit a condition that should fall in with men's evil propensities, the aversion of their hearts would forever forbid their compliance.” Mr. Fuller says (*p. 181*), “It is allowed, that the flesh will never be prevailed upon to choose, adhere unto, and delight in God; nor do we ever expect it will. Nay it might have been added, OMNIPOTENCE ITSELF CANNOT MAKE IT.” – What end, then, can our author have in view? It is this, “That while we [ministers] do our work of addressing the consciences of men, and pointing out to them what *THEY ought to BE and DO*, God may, by that, do *HIS WORK* of *convincing* them of *sin*, and so, in the end, bring them to a

compliance.” – Mr. Fuller admits, that to *convince* men of sin, is the work of God. Yet he supposes, not only that ministers should *endeavor* to convince them of sin, but that men ought to convince themselves. But what sin, in particular, has our author in view? Is it a deviation from any one of the *ten* commandments? Or is it the transgression of some *additional* commandment which he has thought necessary to impose? Some *virtual* injunction which, as he is disposed, he can find in the *Decalogue*, or in the *gospel itself*? – When men are convinced of sin, what follows? “And so, in the end, bring them to a *compliance*.” With what? Here curiosity is disappointed, and conjecture must, if it can, supply the elliptical conclusion.

That which is not possible may seem desirable. Fancy may induce the belief of falsehood. Let us suppose desire and fancy operating strongly on this occasion: operating on a mind which once embraced such sentiments as the writer of these increasing pages has attempted to defend. Let us suppose they so operate as to issue in his conversion to Mr. Fuller’s leading sentiments. What language would such a convert adopt? Probably he might thus express the pleasing change.

“I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. I was, by *nature*, a child of wrath, even as others. I was called, without mistake, a transgressor from the womb. As I advanced in life, I added sin to sin. I was in my own apprehension, alive without the law. But when it *came*, with a power I never felt before, sin revived, and I died. Yes, I through the law, became dead to the law, that I might live to God, by faith in Jesus Christ. – In those days, I never thought that any *deviation* from the divine law, whether it was by *mental* error, or by *verbal* transgression, could be defended. Nor did I ever imagine, that *want* of conformity to the will of God, could ever be *excused* by what is commonly called *natural* inability; whether such impotence was only the result of the first offence of Adam, or whether it was increased by my own offences. I *saw*, that *in Adam all died*. I *felt*, I had that which prompted me to sin like him. I *found*, I was left entirely *without excuse*. My *delight* and *degradation* met together in the leading article of my creed; which was,

*There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.* Belief of such mercy, to such an end, was *life and peace*. I was healed and humbled at the same time; and diligence and diffidence were equally conspicuous *while* I had such confidence in God. – Of late, what shall I say? I will tell the naked truth. I began to be weary of *entire* dependence. What, thought I, must I ever be held in leading-strings? Ever be unable, in any respect, to help myself? Touched with such reflections, I was prepared, in some measure, to receive that treatise, which, in those mournful moments fell into my hands. Excellent man! [*Mr. Fuller*] He taught me, what I probably should never have discovered. That every thing laudable in us, is our duty to perform and possess, previous to divine assistance. That no spiritual act is excepted: that all men have power to comply with the gospel if they would, and are as able to embrace, as to reject, Jesus Christ. – These and other assurances from *such* an author, supported, as I found he was, by writers and preachers, by no means disreputable, or unpopular, produces desires I never felt before. Desires multiplied; resolutions were formed; I forgot my former creed, burst my bonds and O -----.”

----The rest is wanting.

Happy is that convert who has *the Spirit of Adoption!* But whence that favor? – Of Adoption the Apostle said to the converted Galatians, *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons: and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* To the converted Romans he said, *Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* – John thus speaks of this unutterable favor, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!* – But who are made partakers of this privilege? By whom is that blessing granted? In what manner is it conveyed? – The operations of the Holy Spirit have been considered in this order [*Claude*]. *First*, producing those necessary dispositions in our hearts, which are essential to a cordial reception of Jesus Christ. *Secondly*, bringing us into actual communion with him, by faith. *Thirdly*, with this spiritual communion

with Christ, bestowing on believers, the Spirit of Adoption. The evidence of adoption, to themselves, is a peace that passeth all understanding; to others, it is their being *followers of God as dear children*. This order seems to be confirmed by this expression: *After, or when, ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*. – Can such peculiar privileges as these be considered as duties? Who believes, that is not born of God? *Who can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost? It is the Spirit that quickeneth*.

It has been repeatedly acknowledged, Mr. Fuller does not say, men can bless themselves, regenerate themselves, purify themselves, or be the efficient cause of any thing which is truly good. But he does say, It is their *duty* to do every thing which can be expected from the most eminent Christian. Nay, he cannot conceive, if that be not granted, how any work in us, can be either necessary, acceptable, or pleasing to God. – If you ask our author, whether any man can be a son and heir of God, otherwise than by Predestination and Adoption, he replies, No, this cannot be expected. If you enquire, whether those acts can properly be *ours*; he tells you that is impossible. If you would know whether blessings, as such, be our duty; he is of opinion, that spiritual blessings, and the divine energy which gives us the enjoyment of them, cannot come under the notion of duties. If you would know whether it be our duty, who *believe*, to be assured of our sonship; he says it is not. Nay, he contends, as has been before observed, that personal assurance, is a low and mean idea of faith. But if you ask him, whether it be not the duty of all men to *be* the sons of God, to *have* that faith which is peculiar to the adopted, and that disposition which can only exist by the gracious influence of the Spirit of adoption, he affirms that this is the duty of all men who are favored with divine revelation. – Happy is the man who getteth understanding! But, what shall we say of him who much improves his understanding by some paradoxes which our author has attempted to maintain?

*Figurative* forms of expression, in good authors, must have some *meaning*. Frequently they are *as replete* with meaning, and meaning too

of the greatest moment, *as* the plainest forms of speech. It is well known the Scriptures abound with figurative terms. Let us consider whether some of them, very significant, would be intelligible on our author's leading sentiments. He seems to be apprehensive they would not. "It is allowed," he says (*p. 173*), "that God, in his word, does represent men's ignorance by blindness, their stubbornness by deafness, and their total inactivity for God by being dead." Our author, as if alarmed at his own concession, adds, "But these modes of speaking, it must be remembered, are *figurative*." – With submission, something else should be also recollected. Our author himself is fond of figurative expressions. Would he use them so frequently if he supposed they were destitute of meaning, or more liable to be misunderstood than unfigured forms of speech? Meaning itself, however difficult to be obtained, is a plain thing. It is often elucidated by metaphorical, and other rhetorical modes of expression. The question therefore, when such words are used to this end, is, are they selected with wisdom? If they *are*, they cannot be changed to advantage. For instance, if these words, *blind, deaf, dead*, when figuratively used, are properly introduced, no alteration will be thought an acquisition. Such terms, as they occur in the scriptures, cannot be altered to answer any valuable purpose. If in attempting to explain these words in Ephesians, *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*, a Commentator should say, *That is, and you hath he RUBBED UP, or ROUSED UP, or CHAFED, or AWAKENED, who were SLEEPING, nay ALMOST dying, in your INFIRMITIES*; would such a comment correspond with the text? Such a Commentator might as well change the *pronoun*, as the *figurative* words, and say, *And you hath IT quickened*, or say, *and you have I quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*. – On the other hand, if figurative words be not selected with wisdom, can we suppose that writer to be inspired? – Let it also be remembered, that when figurative words are used with utmost advantage, they never give a *false* idea of reality; nor is the figure ever *equal* with the fact. *Adam was a figure*, and *but a figure of him that was to come*. Shadow and resemblance never give us what the Apostle calls, *the very image of the things*. The *sun* may be finely painted; the *moon* may seem to shine in the reflecting stream; but do any imagine, that the best picture of the rising sun, or the clearest resemblance of the harvest

moon, equal the splendid objects which they represent? Death may appear to us tremendous. Resurrection from the dead may seem to some almost incredible. Nevertheless, to be dead in trespasses and sins, is a condition more dreadful than what is commonly called death; and to be raised from that deplorable state to newness of life, is that *metaphorical* resurrection, but *real* and glorious change of mind and manners, which cannot *exist* but by the *exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power*. When this change commences, the *literal* resurrection of our Lord from the dead is acknowledged; and *the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death*, are so esteemed, that all pursuits, compared with these, are counted detrimental. – Plain and figured turns of speech, happily selected and applied, sufficiently conform to the nature of things to give us, in our present situation, the means of acquiring a just judgment, and ground for indulging sound belief: yet it must be acknowledged, that every form of articulation, carries with it some mark of human imperfection.

It is very true, figurative words have been sometimes misapplied; and at such mistakes some have been too much offended. On this subject, men of uncommon genius have erred [see the dispute between Warburton and Leland]. But what assistance does our author afford us to guard against an improper use of figurative terms? Does he not rather lead such untutored preachers, who may admire his leading principles, to form false apprehensions on this subject? What, for instance, would a young man make of these words, provided he had received and was resolved to retain, the peculiarities of our author? *Ye are manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart*. The *Seat* of this sacred Epistle is said to be the *heart*; not of *stone*, but of *flesh*. The *Subject* of this Epistle is CHRIST; such a *knowledge* of him as produces devotion, and issues in that transformation which, though not fabulous, it must be confessed, is marvelous beyond description. The *Author* of this Epistle is the HOLY GHOST; *ministered*, says the Apostle, *by us*, but *written, not with ink*, or by rhetoric, or moral

suasion, *but with the Spirit of the living God*. Finally, if we consider what is the *end* of producing this *Epistle*, we have reason, from the whole chapter (2nd Corinthians 3), to conclude, it is to manifest that the ministration of the SPIRIT, and of RIGHTEOUSNESS, *exceeds in glory*. So that, while the ungodly are justified, and the unclean are sanctified, while they who are both ungodly and unclean in themselves, are *vivified*, and made *vigorous* in the ways of God, by the hope of his gospel, no flesh is allowed to glory in his presence; but, according as it is written, *let him that glorieth*, whoever he may be, *glory in the Lord*. – How embarrassed must a follower of Mr. Fuller find himself, with all those notions of what he thinks the previous duty of the unregenerate to *have, be* and *do*, swimming in his head, should he undertake a *concise* exposition of the preceding text! It would be easy to put this matter to proper proof. But it will be *modest*, at least, if a young man should decline that arduous attempt.

It produces sensations not easy to be described, when a writer seems disposed, not only to contend for that which cannot be defended, but to plead for sentiments as much against *the structure of language*, as they are remote from truth. It is evident our author is not always wanting of words. Yet it may be affirmed he has found none, and it is thought he never will, to express his own ideas of duty with tolerable propriety. It is very common with Mr. Fuller so to state our duty as to describe, not what *we* are to do, but what *is* to be done, and *must* be done by another, if it be done at all. An instance of this strange inadvertence has been already given on our author's description of *humility*; which deserves additional attention. "Humility," says our author (*p. 93*), "is that state of mind, wherein, in some sense or other, it is *brought down*, or *lies low*." He afterwards adds (*p. 94*), "That humility in fallen man with which salvation is connected, consists in a *spirit brought down to our condition*, whether it respects our temporal, or spiritual concerns." Now, unless those convenient words, *in some sense or other*, save our author's reputation in this description of humility, an ingenuous confession, that he has made use of *passive* terms to denote our *active* compliance with some supposed rule of duty, would be his best apology.

Some such apology is the more necessary, since Mr. Fuller so frequently represents the acts of *another* to be *our* duty. Even when he *halves it*, as in his attempting to distinguish between *blessing* and *disposition*, we know not which is to be *first*; or what, as matter of our duty, is to be included in spiritual *dispositions*. – “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him,*” says James, “*ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.*” Would it promote becoming attention to this excellent advice should any person affirm, That it is the duty of all men to possess wisdom, and to act wisely, *previous* to their perception of its nature, their persuasion of its worth, and prayer to obtain the incomparable blessing? That wisdom is essential to our real happiness, who but the unwise will ever dispute? That it is the will of God, that we should seek it, and endeavor to obtain it, as he has directed, is incontestable. This, therefore, is our duty. Not to occupy what God gives us to that end, not to request his blessing on our occupation, not to request those positive and seasonable communications of his favor we continually need, in every changing scene, would argue either ignorance, or disaffection. But that it is our duty to be wise without prayer, without the lawful use of lawful means to obtain wisdom, or to be wise in matters too wonderful for us, or even in things pertaining to salvation, beyond what it pleases God to impart, is at least, *a little* more than any man is able to prove. – AGUR said, *Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.* He also said, *ADD thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.* Moses gives us the same admonition. *Ye shall not ADD unto the word which I command you, neither shall you DIMINISH aught from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.* The canon of Scripture closes with a similar caution, **(Revelation. 22:18-19).**

### ***3. On Faith.***

The apparent contradictions of our author on this article have been considered. His *errors*, or mistakes are now to be inspected. But in truth, he has been so *in* and *out*, and has warped so much, *this* way and *that*, on

what he has said on believing, that it is difficult to pronounce what is, or will be, his settled opinion. Should it be said, that his capital definition of faith, *Belief of the truth*, is defective, and liable to be abused (which, at least, is probable), yet, it must be acknowledged, our author introduces other assertions on this subject, which may convince the careful reader, he is quite willing to include in *Belief of the truth*, every thing that can be fairly expected. It may, however, be of some use to make the following remarks on the article which is now before us.

1. Whatever faith may be, Mr. Fuller always supposes it is the duty of every man to be possessed of saving faith; and generally, in that extent which leaves no room (*See the title of his TREATISE, and Prop 2*), objectively considered, for any addition. He apprehends, that which prevents our believing, what he believes (see Prop. iv), are ignorance, pride, dishonesty, and aversion of heart. This is the more remarkable, since our author has thought proper to inform us of his lingering so long in making his late change, before he turned completely to what he now calls (*p. 139*), *the good old way*. Can Mr. Fuller believe it was his duty to have entered into his present path, before he so much as suspected he was wandering, or while he warmly contended for those tenets he now condemns? When suspicious first approached, why was he detained almost *four* years in painful suspense? Why, for so long a period, did doubts not only occupy his mind, but, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, rise higher and higher? Was all this entirely owing to *ignorance, pride, dishonesty, and aversion of heart*? Would it have hastened his conversion roughly to have been told, it was owing to something extremely vicious, he did not sooner embrace his present opinions? But what security has any man, if our author were again to change his sentiments twenty times, he would not manifest the same impetuous disposition? – Reluctance impartially to consider the evidence of any important fact which is fairly stated, is undoubtedly an evil temper; but where this evil temper does not exist, may not our author's creed, in some of its articles, still be rejected? These thoughts have been written on that idea. Is it a just one, or is it without foundation?

2. Assurance of personal interest in Jesus Christ, is too often a subject which Mr. Fuller is disposed to undervalue. Yet, with his usual readiness to contradict himself (*p. 6 and 7*), he represents assurance as a *privilege* bestowed on believers, and, as their being *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise. If assurance of personal interest in Jesus Christ be a *mean* and *low* idea of faith, what must be considered as that which is *noble*? According to our author, it is to believe the *truth* and *excellence* of those things which are reported in the word of God, and not to possess an evidence of our *interest* in them. Let us endeavor to give due attention to this distinction. – Our author speaks of *things*, of their *truth* and *excellence*, and of our *interest* in them. The *things* of which he speaks are invisible; only to be known by revelation; only to be received by faith. Faith in these things, Mr. Fuller calls *saving* faith; and the scriptures assure us, that the end of our faith, if it be the faith of God's elect, is salvation. But how is this salvation enjoyed? First, we have the report of it, by the word of truth and grace. That report contains glad tidings; testifying of Christ, his peculiar sufferings and eternal glory. What is testified of Christ, and promised to them who receive that testimony, is contained in so many assertions, or *propositions*. In our enjoyment of this salvation, *perception* of the meaning of the divine report, in some of its important propositions, takes the lead. *Persuasion* of the truth of the things, thus reported to us, follows, with unfeigned *esteem* for the blessings of the gospel. Such persuasion is always connected with the *desire* of personal interest in those blessings. As the evidence of such interest, is by us, undoubted, *expectation* of future glory is confirmed. As such hope abounds, a conversation becoming the gospel, is constantly the effect. – Every man that has this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure.

If this view of the subject be *just*, the manner in which Mr. Fuller has undervalued the idea of *personal interest* must be *obvious*. Whatever may be the folly and danger of unsupported confidence, to represent THAT as *mean* and *low* which is well founded, is unfair.

Does not the desire of *interest*, suppose the *truth* and *excellence* of the object desired? Being preferred to all others, it is sought with anxiety, and obtained with answerable satisfaction. – Yes; but people may seek an object for their own *advantage*, and not for the truth and excellence of the object *it self*. But suppose the advantage sought by the reception of a particular Person was the honor of that Character. Suppose our being willing thus to receive him, was the best proof that could be given of the accuracy of our *judgment*, of the proper disposition of our *heart*, and of its being under the most desirable influence it could possess. Would not all this be sufficient to justify our conduct? But if this Person came on purpose to do us good; ever went about on that errand, thought himself rejected if not received as a *Saviour*, and still is exhibited to a saving purpose, are they to be applauded who magnify their speculations, and treat with disrespect an interested affection for Jesus Christ? – After all, what evidence does any man give that he has an heart affecting view of the SAVIOUR’S excellence, who does not ardently desire to be found in him? Who can love *the only Son of God*, and not wish to have communion with him? Whoever had that wish, but with some view to his own *advantage*?

**3.** The instances of the *Syrophoenician* and *Centurion*, introduced by our author, do not answer his intention. Each of them sought, and obtained an interest in our Lord’s compassion. Persuaded he was able to supply their *wants*, and to remove their *fears*, persuaded that such favor might be obtained of him, without price, and without personal desert, with such belief, they implored his assistance. Can it be supposed that what our Lord did to increase their happiness, lessened the value of *his* favor, or the propriety of *their* petitions? Another poor afflicted woman, who sought every where else for a cure in vain, said to herself, *If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole*. To that timid, trembling petitioner, our Lord replied, *Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole*. Would her act have been of greater value, if she had stood in no need of *healing*, or if she had not sought a *cure*? – Let those who have not any *want* to be supplied, nor any *fear* to be removed, nor any thing further to *expect*, amuse themselves as they can, with romantic ideas of

disinterested affection; but let them not, by incautious modes of expression, distress the *poor and needy*, who must *drink* or *die*. God allows the distressed freely to call upon him in their trouble, and upbraideth not. He sends his word and heals them; and delivers them from their destructions. He hears, with approbation, that reiterated and grateful acknowledgement, O that men would praise the Lord for his GOODNESS, and for HIS WONDERFUL WORKS to the children of men!

Belief in distress, gratitude for benefits received, and thankfulness for promised and expected felicity, seem to weigh but little with our author, and with many more, when balanced with *their purer flame*. Yet, after all the fine sayings Mr. Fuller has attempted to throw out, on something like *platonian* love, let him consider, as an honest man, how he could answer the following address from a friend who wishes, if it be possible, to receive instruction.

*DEAR SIR*, as you think yourself to be more disinterested in your religious pursuits than some ever pretend to be thought, permit me to ask, whether, in proportion as you judge you prefer the truth and excellence of things, without any direct view to your own advantage, you do not, on that very account, think more highly of your *own* virtue? Whether you do not think it more probable that by indulging such sentiments, you shall be saved, and esteemed, than if you were absolutely to renounce such pretensions? Say, *Sir*, whether the decided preference you give to that kind of love to God, which you consider to be the purest and noblest that can be exercised, is not founded on this principle, that, by so doing, you may obtain such evidence of your being a *Christian*, nay, of being an *eminent* Christian, as you suppose is not otherwise possible to be obtained?

Were our author to deny this, it would involve him in difficulties he could not easily surmount. To grant it, would be to confess, that between him and those who professedly seek their own advantage in every duty (believing their duty, their benefit, and the glory of God to be always

connected), the only difference between them and himself would be this, that they do it *honestly, openly*, and without pretence of *superior* affection; whether Mr. Fuller, who, at bottom, is exactly in their situation, disowns the fact. He pretends to sublimer ardor, soars on high, in his own imagination, and looks down on meaner mortals, sometimes with the appearance of *disdain*.

**4.** If there be any who would have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, divorced from fellowship with him, and unproductive of a desire to have communion with believers, they are deceived; and such deception is injurious. This being admitted, it may be asked, whether on the other hand, there can be much *fellowship* where there is no *appropriation*? Whether appropriation can in truth be expected, by him who supposes it either a *presumptuous*, or a *mercenary* thing, to claim a personal interest in the blessings of the gospel! Or in the favor and distinguished compassion and friendship of our Lord Jesus Christ? – They who dare not believe the goodness of their state, without an evidence of the fact, are to be commended. But is *happiness*, by the medium of glad tidings, at any time, designed to be the *source* of action? If it be not, why is it said, *Hear and your soul shall live? Blessed are they who know the joyful sound?* May not belief produce that *kind* of evidence which is followed by *another*; and which shows we have not believed in vain? It is true, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*; but it is equally true, that without seeing the Lord, no man shall be holy. That to *see the Lord*, is sometimes put for the *future* enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and sometimes for that *present* belief and affection, which are essential to the expectation of future felicity, must be admitted. This view of the text before us is safe; and superior to any opposite comment on those memorable words of our Apostle. They assure us, that unsanctified persons cannot inherit the kingdom of God: but do those words inform us that any man can be sanctified without faith in Jesus Christ?

**5.** These remarks on our author's mistakes on *faith*, shall be concluded with this additional observation: Mr. Fuller has discovered his low esteem of the doctrine of assurance, because it represents faith as

terminating principally on something *within us* (p. 6); namely, on the work of grace in our hearts. Nevertheless, in favor of those persons our author is pleased to call *modest*, sincere Christians, he says, “these being full of godly jealousy are afraid of being mistaken; and dare not believe the goodness of their state without evidence” (p. 8). But what evidence of the goodness of their state, do modest, sincere Christians want? Is it something *without*; or is it, at least, something *within*? In what, therefore does the *termination* of faith, as it is described by our author (p. 6), differ from that description which he opposes? Faith rests, on that which is found *without* ourselves. But if, in so doing, those effects follow which purify the heart, of course, they must be *within*. If any dare not believe the goodness of their state without *evidence*, they are to be applauded. If, however, they overlook the *nature* of that evidence which ought to give them satisfaction, if they are *displeased* with it, if they are *reluctant* to obtain it, or *extravagant* in their expectation of finding more than the nature of the case will admit, they should be better taught. If, on any of these articles, they are inadvertently led astray, as such negligence is discerned, it will, we presume, be sincerely lamented. If so, such persons will endeavor to be more cautious in their future conduct.

#### ***4. On Human Ability.***

Of the different and discordant assertions of Mr. Fuller on human ability, various remarks have been made already (*see preceding section*). Should the plan which has been proposed (*See the Table of Contents; the last article of which is, On natural and moral ability*) be pursued throughout, our ability, in reference to that distinction which gave *birth* to this controversy, will again be considered. At present, therefore, we shall only make the following remarks.

**1.** Our author boldly asserts there is no *bar* to believing but what lies in the depravity of the human mind; such as ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion to God. If this be true, previous to a sinner’s conversion, will it be otherwise relative to growth in grace? If true in both cases, what a picture, as has been noticed, has our author given us

of himself? What a compliment, also, is this to those who yet retain his former sentiments? If it cost HIM *four years* to get the conquest of willful *ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion to God*, before he could embrace his present thoughts, can it be expected that *others* should make greater haste? – That *inexcusable* depravity is always closely connected with infidelity, is too certain to be fairly contradicted. Even *brethren* are warned of an *evil heart of unbelief*. But are unbelief and misbelief, in all respects, the same? Depravity is concerned in both; but are those causes which Mr. Fuller has mentioned the *sole* obstruction? Belief of the truth, in matters of the greatest consequence, frequently requires that attention to facts, that self-possession, that recollection of leading principles, and sometimes that perception of the probable issue of some uncommon events, which will not suffer us to say to tempted disciples, *It is only owing to the vilest tempers ye are not confirmed believers*. He who *knoweth our frame, remembereth we are but dust*. He distinguishes between the *feeble* and the *perfidious*. Between *Judas*, when he said to the chief priests, *What will ye give me, and I will deliver him to you?* And *Peter*, and the two sons of *Zebedee*, when they *began to be sorrowful, and very heavy*. To the *first*, he said, *That thou doest, do quickly*. To the *latter*, he said, *Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation*. He graciously added, *The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak*. Such gentleness, such winning goodness, wisely applied, has a much greater tendency to promote the kingdom of God, than the evident want of such a disposition. Jacob said to Esau, *My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herd with young are with me; and if men should over drive them one day, all the flock will die*. It is happy for us, that when *subordinate* shepherds are indolent, we have a SOVEREIGN SHEPHERD who never slumbers. It is happy for us, when they are improperly severe, he can distinguish between cattle and cattle. Between the wanton, the willful, and the weak. He is the good shepherd of the sheep. As such, He shall feed his flock. He shall gather his lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

**2.** Perhaps, Mr. Fuller does not sufficiently recollect, that, in human actions, *what seems to be the reverse of doing wrong, is not always doing what is right.* Avarice and prodigality, ambition and an abject state of the mind, breaking the law of God, and keeping it perfectly, are supposed, by some, to be in the strongest state of opposition. But if the avaricious were to be prodigal, and the mean to become ambitious, this would be only changing one vice for another. If the transgressor of the law attempted to keep it perfectly, he must, by that attempt, entertain a false idea of the perfection of the law. For, in whatever part IT is *broken*, it is broken for *ever*; and can never be made *whole* by him who has offended *in any one point*. If *unbelief*, in every view of it, be as criminal as our author has supposed, does it therefore follow that *belief* is the *immediate* duty of a depraved creature? Is spiritual perception in our power, or is it properly to be denominated a duty? Is there any real danger that faith will be treated with *contempt*, or *neglect*, under the present dispensation of mercy and truth to sinful men, if it should be represented as *the gift of God*, and proved, that salvation is of *faith, that it might be by grace*? That we *may* believe any proposition concerning Jesus Christ, who that understands the nature of a proposition, can ever doubt? That we should use our utmost *efforts* to perceive the meaning of those propositions, and to embrace the truth which they contain, is equally clear; because, we cannot *prove* they are unworthy our immediate and best attention, and because, we none of us know what given powers we possess, but in the *use* of those powers; nor do we know how far it will please God to crown our lawful endeavors with *success*. Should we, however, be successful in any lawful attempt, two things will be acknowledged: One is, that God inclined our hearts to occupy his own talents; and we shall own, it is by his blessing we have that *understanding*, which is connected with *sound* belief, and with humble expectation.

**3.** Of the Almighty it is said, *In him we live, and move, and have our being*. Shall this great fact, though but perfectly understood, give way to the ingenuity of human invention? But if our *Being, Motion and Life*, are *from* God, and *in* him, we, in our highest state, can be nothing more than

*occupants* of his favor. The condition of a creature, even in heaven, will never admit of greater elevation. – Whatsoever we gain is by the *use* of what we *have*, and by entreating the continued assistance, and blessing, of him who has said, *Occupy till I come*. The *neglect*, or *perversion* of any faculty, or opportunity we possess is *criminal*. The consequences of such criminality are our *own*. Nor can any thing but that mercy which is supernatural, prevent the connection between such folly, and our final ruin. Notwithstanding this, the *reproduction* of any thing we have lost (suppose it to be our *memory*, or our *affection*), however it may be essential to our *present* happiness, or to our *future* felicity, this is most undoubtedly of God, and it is absolutely at his pleasure to grant it, or to give us up to *imbecility* and to *vile affections*. – Some have been evidently so given up of God, as to be left, by their fellow men, without further means of instruction, (**Acts 13:46**). Others have *so* sinned, that even *prayer* for their recovery, has been forbidden, 1 John 5:16. Were these things more maturely considered, the economy under which we were permitted a little longer to live, would be better understood. Holiness would appear to be what it is, a *favor*; and we should appear to be what we are, creatures without excuse on account of *sin*, and yet daily multiplying transgression by our *sloth*, or by our *presumption*. For, either we spend a great part of our lives in criminal inaction, or starting from the shameful situation of *non-endeavor*, we seem determined to pass beyond the region of *creatures*, and to be something of our own making; under a *notion* that this is our *duty*, and that we have too long delayed the mighty talk. The intelligent, if unprejudiced, will lament such impropriety. Lament it, on a consciousness of their own folly, with painful reflection. Our author's arguments open a wide door for the *second* extreme. It is not only the *reproduction* of what we once *had*, which he contends it is our duty to *regain*, but the *existence* of that which men of understanding suppose we *never had*, nor can have, but in a way of sovereign favor, that Mr. Fuller supposes it is the duty of every man, who has the gospel, to *produce* and *possess*: the *man himself*, by an *act of his own, unassisted, and prior to his regeneration!*

## 5. On Addresses to Sinners.

That sinners, impenitent and inconsiderate, should be instructed, that the gospel should be preached to them with argument, boldness, meekness, patience and prudence, is not meant to be contested. But, always to know who are impenitent, to distinguish between the classes of these unhappy men, and to know how to address each with propriety, where is the *academy* that will teach us these lessons? Where is the *man* who never errs in his best attempts to discharge this duty?

In *public teaching*, who can be certain that the *young man* who entered into the assembly *void of understanding*, intending, in the thoughtless gaiety of his heart, to do he knew not what, may not, in a few minutes, become an attentive hearer? Some objects may strike, some sentence may touch, some reflection may compose his mind, beyond human expectation. While, a stated hearer, reputable and constant as any that attends, is perhaps, ruffled in his temper, vexed with some trifle, or under the influence of some astonishing, or some extravagant temptation. – The associations of thought, the impressions of the heart, the labor of some under each, and the levity of others, under the same, or different emotions, are beyond description. The varied scenes of real life, are perpetually shifting. Godwin Sands are always called by the same name, though they are not a single hour, in every respect, in the same situation.

From this glance, at a public assembly, open to all comers, what self-possession, circumspection, and fortitude, are needful to support a public Speaker! What attention, both to his audience, and his argument, at the same time, is he obliged to give! Respectful and yet undaunted; bold yet cautious; conscious of his call to speak, conscious of his fair intention, and of his inability to insure success, a good Speaker rises up to address mankind. But *who is sufficient for these things?*

In *private* and personal instruction the difficulty is not, in every view, so great. The object is supposed to be known in the outlines of his

character, or at least, he means to give his minister such information. Yet, it is impossible to determine, in some cases of conscience, whether you have a *fair* view of the question; a *full* one cannot be expected. When instead of freedom there is reserve, tinctured with timidity, or with art, or perhaps, with temper not according with the case, what settled judgment can be formed? – Such reflections may convince us, that if mankind are not to be edified on general principles of knowledge and prudence, it is certain one man must often be unqualified to instruct another; for, it is but *in part* the most curious can expect to know of any character beside his own. – Curiosity is a potent, but dangerous principle of action. The *kinds* are various, and the *motives* leading to it are many. This, however, is clear, that whatsoever is contrary to *reason*, cannot be under the dominion of a *better* principle.

On the whole, suppose we were confident, that the object before us was unconverted, and in the bonds of iniquity; would it best become a minister of the gospel to say, *Break those bonds?* Or to say, *Pray God, if so be the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee?* To add, *Ye must be born again*, if ye inherit the kingdom of heaven; or to urge, *Be born again*; for this is your *duty*? – Should it be replied, that when our Lord talked with *Nicodemus*, he did not speak *hypothetically*, but positively said, *Ye must be born again*. This objection admits of a double answer. It is the *meaning* of what our Lord said to *Nicodemus*, or to any other person, which demands our attention, and is worthy of it. Besides, when our Lord conversed with that cautious member of the Jewish *Sanhedrin*, he had a certain and complete knowledge of this Ruler's *condition*, and of his own *purpose* in his favor. What preacher can pretend to such knowledge of any object? What preacher would dare to think there is any *effective* connection between his purpose and the conversion of a sinner? – Where we cannot be *certain*, we must be contented with *probability*. From probability, in all its degrees, down to mere *conjecture*, we must endeavor to accommodate ourselves to *fact*, and speak, either as we know, or believe, of men and things. Such a disposition would often lead us to speak with *caution*, where we are apt to be *dogmatical*; and it would, in its extended consequences, lead us to

be *firm*, where we sometimes feel the want of confidence. *Inattention* to the shifting scenes of the human mind from pain to pleasure, loss and gain, levity and languor, hope and fear; the suggestions of Satan and the whims of a fickle *heart* (connected possibly, with an unstable, uncultivated *understanding*, and with other indescribable freaks and follies that enter into the heterogeneous composition of mankind), is very detrimental to a public Teacher. To surmount such *indolence*, and *wisely* to direct our best attention, are *difficult*. That we may avoid the tedious task many *systems* have been formed, and *common places*, and compendious *schemes* have been invented to answer all questions; or rather to compel every thing to yield to their construction.

He who alarms at random, or more than is meet, discovers want of prudence; but can that which is unwise be any honor to us, or to the cause we wish to plead? *To say* (p. 8), that no sort of hope is held out in all the book of God to any sinner, as such considered, is a strange saying. To say the gospel holds out its golden scepter to a penitent, and to him *only*, may lead some men into such mistaken conclusions about the grace of God, as may not be easy for them either to resist, or to overcome. To add, that though no sort of hope is held out, no golden scepter stretched forth towards sinners as such, in all the book of God, it is nevertheless, their duty *so* to repent and believe, that their repentance and faith shall be saving, is to publish terrible tidings. To assert, that if sinners, as such, do not *so* repent and believe, they draw down on themselves, for *such* disobedience, the most tremendous punishment, is to say something which is as absurd, as it is anti-evangelical. – It cannot be Mr. Fuller's intention to alarm and insult any man at the same time: Yet, what other conclusion can be drawn from some of his assertions, is very difficult to discover. – If a false conclusion be made against our author in these, or in any other partial quotation from him, he may be assured it was owing to a bad judgment, and not the result of unfair intention. If he cannot be of that opinion, he is welcome to try what fruit a different opinion may produce. For all that can be added is, that though his *words* should not always be quoted so fully, or so exactly, as some

perhaps expected, it is thought no instance will be found in which Mr. Fuller's *meaning* has been designedly perverted in this dispute.

It is easy to perceive Mr. Fuller is zealous to promote that sort of piety which he approves; and anxious that what he is pleased to call the gospel, may not be abused. It is the *penitent* our author attempts, in a round about way, to comfort. Nor is there any doubt with us, that penitents are, in some respects, the objects of peculiar consolation. But what if the glad tidings of the gospel should be *as* essential to produce repentance unto life, as to comfort those that mourn? May not the same *joyful sound* be considered as *the word of life*, and as the support of the *living*? *Hear, and your soul shall live. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* These, and other declarations of grace and truth are yet with us; and open to every reader. Now, if spiritual life itself, as well as sanctification and growth in grace, are enjoyed by the medium of such declarations, what other tidings are the condemned to hear that they may *live*, or the fainting followers of our Lord to hear that they may be *revived*? What truth but that which *vivifies* can sanctify the unclean; or what beside the gospel can make *us* willing to serve the living God?

The leading error of Mr. Fuller, and of many more, on moral subjects, seems to be this, *a misapprehension of the CONDITION of a CREATURE*. If any kind of labor *is* possible, or even *ought* to be possible to any creature, angel or man, in a state of innocence, or as depraved, which is absolutely different from ENDEAVOR, and really short of acting EFFICIENTLY, Mr. Fuller is bound to say what it is, if he possibly can. His own honor and a due regard to the happiness of many of his readers, demand this discovery, if he has made it, to be published. Till this be done, without equivocation, he may *write*, but it is supposed

he can never write an *answer* to the governing propositions of this performance.

Since these Thoughts were arranged in the manner they now are, in a course of reading, on subjects of some affinity with the present, among the rest, the following sentiments occurred.

*“To endeavor may fully express the use of all the opportunities and powers, that any intelligent and active, but imperfect, being hath to act. For to endeavor is to do what we can: and this, as every such being may do, where ever he stands in the scale of imperfects, so none can do more. One may exert his endeavors with greater advantage, or success, than another; yet still they are but ENDEAVORS.” [Wollaston’s Relig. Nat. Delin. 7th Edit. p. 110.]*

It is remarkable, that Mr. Fuller should sometimes not only be constrained to make a similar conclusion in his own defense, (lest he should be thought, in his zeal, to propagate ideas of duty, which do dishonor to the Spirit of God), but that he should quote a sentiment so like the preceding with approbation, and yet continually overlook, or contradict, his own conclusion.

From Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Fuller has produced the following passage (*p. 161*): “God requires men’s *endeavors* to this very purpose, that men may see their *inability*, which is a great lesson that furthers faith. Nature will and doth think *it can believe and repent till it makes a trial*; and as we used to put *conceited* persons upon services to show their *folly*, and their *weakness*, upon trial, *so God deals with us.*” – If our author be of that opinion, who can account for his inconsistent behavior? Is it a likely way to humble the *conceited* by concurring with those deep-rooted prejudices, common to them all, so as to indulge their vain imaginations of their own undoubted *ability*? Will it give them a lower apprehension of it, to assert they are *able*, if they be but thoroughly *willing*, to *fulfill* the moral law? – The design of Dr. Goodwin in his fourth book of justifying faith, is both evident and consistent (*See his works, Vol. 4. B 4.*

P. 83, 84.) He says, “Men, if they saw not their own inability, would be apt to say in their hearts – My power, and the might of my hand, hath done this (**Deuteronomy. 8:17**); and they would not see their disability, but by attempting to do something.” The Doctor adds, “God hath appointed our *endeavors* and *means* to be used, not as duties *only*, but as testimonies and evidences that we do *wholly* depend on God to work all our works in us, and for us; seeing in the use of means, and endeavors of ours, God useth to come. *Carelessness* giveth over the use of the means, but when a man dependeth upon God for a thing, that dependence will make him use those means whereby to attain it, as a *testimony* he doth depend upon God; and *so* God requires it. – Even for this *reason* doth God require us to *endeavor*, though he himself works all, that when our endeavors without him have proved unsuccessful, his power in working faith at last, might appear the more.” – This great man, though not always to be followed, clearly saw that our lawful endeavors did not, at any time, exclude the power of God, and as clearly saw that Divine power did not annihilate human action. He saw, that though God doth not work faith in men for their *endeavors*, as the moving cause, --- nor by them, as *adjuvant*, or assistant causes, that reach the *effect*, yet as concomitant instruments, God operates with human endeavors. The doctor therefore, concluded (as all men, who have no fanciful system of their own to support, must be compelled to conclude), *That neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but GOD that giveth the increase.* Nor is this conclusion, as he justly observed, to be given up, because it is said, *We are laborers together with God.*

A writer of a very different description from Dr. Goodwin [Dr. Price], speaking of the Deity, in a manner, more of the pagan, or philosophical cast, than is (as some suppose), to his honor, has however, been pleased to say of the Almighty, “He is the *power* by which we act, the *intelligence* by which we understand, and the *time* and *place* in which we live and move and have our beings.” – But if this be admitted, what are we? Being what we really are, what, beside a proper occupation of every good and perfect gift which God has been pleased to bestow upon us, and *prayer* for that blessing which he has promised to grant – what

beyond all this, can be properly called our duty? Thus occupied, we could neither be idle, nor insolent. Thus occupied, the favor of God would be the perpetual spring of our endeavor; and knowing that to endeavor was our *utmost*, we should, in every lawful effort, think much more of *divine energy* than of *our own actions*. In common, alas! the reverse of this appears, but *success* in this connection, would lead us to adore and exalt the Lord alone. *Disappointment* would be born with patience. In short, thus acting, we should find our *proper* place, and *with that*, as much felicity as the nature of things will, at present allow.

## **6. On the Love of God.**

The advances which Mr. Fuller has made in favor of what is commonly called disinterested love, with some of the consequences attending that romantic idea, has been repeatedly noticed in the course of this work. Whether our author has *erred* on this subject, and whether after all, he has, or can have, any view of the *Divine* excellence but that which is *relative*, are now to be considered. Perhaps, on this article, the following observations may be worth the reader's attention.

**1.** Whoever loves God, in heaven or on earth, must be a *creature*. He, therefore, who loves God is indebted to him for his *all*: His being, well being, and preservation of both. Would it not be *madness* for such a creature, without our excepting any, to profess to love God with *disinterested* affection? What pleasure can ANGELS or men possess, or be in prospect of, which is to them *indifferent*? They may prefer one pleasure to another, their reputation to their rest, their honor to their ease, but are they ever inclined, induced, or commanded, to prefer without judgment, or to judge, that their *best* interest and *duty*, their greatest possible pleasure and obedience to the will of God, can ever be divorced? What praise can *Gabriel* give his God, and not be thankful for the occasion? Every opening view of his MAKER'S wisdom, goodness and grace, is as really his gain, as it is a new display of his CREATOR'S power and glory. When CHRIST was seen of ANGELS, he became the subject of their song. Was that song the less *sublime* because it

augmented their *felicity*? Is it possible for any creature to *admire* what is supremely admirable and yet to remain unconscious of *advantage*?

2. If *we* love God, we do it, not only as creatures, but as being in those circumstances which should make the fact very affecting. Are we not surrounded with innumerable classes of animals which, in the scale of creation, are thrown so far back as to be absolutely unable to know their Maker? But what is still more affecting is, the multitude among our own species, lettered as well as illiterate, who either know but very little of the true character of God, or who evidently do not like to retain it in their knowledge. Does not this remind us of our former condition, and of our recent change? Of the grace by which it was effected, and of the end of such distinguishing favor? May we not say, *What is any man, that God should magnify him? And that God should set his heart upon him? He calleth things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence [1st Corinthians. 1:29, 31].* Shall such creatures whose love is the effect of favor, who have been unexpectedly conquered by compassion, who must yet perish if they *look not for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life* – shall such creatures swell with the vain imagination of loving God without a direct view to their *own advantage*? Shall such shadows of being affect to treat their fellows as *mercenary* and *mean*, because they dare not extol their extravagant pretension? – Could angels blush, the follies of the pious would give them great occasion. – Some have so admired their own reveries on the love of God, that one would imagine, as the *fit* prevailed, they could almost wish to divest themselves of *being*, and altogether of dependence on God, in order to *enjoy* the most refined affection. – Hold, it will be said, this is not only impossible, but absurd. It is so: and what else is the *chimera* of disinterested love? In religion, it is something worse than *fantastic*. To suppose it possible for any man to perceive the highest excellence so as to prefer it and enjoy it, and to fancy that such affection may be separated from his *best* interest and *highest* pleasure, he who can do this, if he has any talent for composition, is qualified to write a *romance* which, *Don Quixote* himself, was he living, would be astonished to read. – Two shocking

inconveniences attend these extravagant pretensions. One is, the probability, of being thought *hypocritical*. The other is, the danger of indulging *pride*.

**3.** Our love to God is either the source of corresponding action, however that action may be obstructed, or it is not. If it be not, was it ever the subject of this promise, *And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart – to love the Lord thy God – that thou mayest live?* If such favor be the source of *life* at any time, is it not so, in the same sense, at all times? But can that life be thought of with *indifference*, or be enjoyed without *gratitude*? – Is it not the nature of love to operate with ardor? *Giving, transforming, uniting, subjecting*, these, says Mr. Shaw (*Shaw's True Christians Test*, p. 364), are four famous properties of love; which he thus explains: “to give away the mind of the object, to assimilate to it, to unite it, and to subject it thereunto.” – Can there be such effects without affection, or such affection for God, without advantage? Paul thought of this in his rudest conflicts. *If, said he, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, WHAT ADVANTAGETH IT ME if the dead rise not?* He encouraged others to be *steadfast and unmovable* on the same principle. *Always abounding*, said the Apostle, *in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye KNOW that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* – When God is the object of our esteem, do they give him the greatest glory who admire him as a *Virtuoso* admires a fine piece of painting, or they who *worship him in spirit and in truth*? Who, while they feel the Spirit of Adoption to prevail, are compelled to say, *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* This may be thought, and often has been called, *selfish* affection: but when the *Virtuoso* is tempted by distress, to sell his fine *picture*, or his finished *bust*, for bread, who, or what shall separate a believer from the love of Christ? Of the Redeemer's love to him, and of his love to his Redeemer, it may be said, *Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it.* In short, the believer always has ground for the most pleasing conclusion that ever was formed, and sometimes has strength to say, *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to*

*come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**4.** After all Mr. Fuller has been pleased to write of what he chooses to call the *native excellence of God*, and of what he thinks *God is*, IN HIMSELF, has he any *idea* of such excellence and greatness? Our author has often seen the *Sun*; but does he know what the *Sun is*, IN HIMSELF? The more he reflects on the question the less will he be inclined to appear dogmatical. Does he know what a blade of grass is, *in itself*, or even a single grain of sand? Let him read and reverence the following forms of speech. – *Canst THOU, by searching, find out GOD? Canst THOU, by searching, find out the ALMIGHTY to perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst THOU do? Deeper than hell, what canst THOU know? There is no searching of his understanding. SECRET things belong unto the LORD OUR GOD: but those things which are REVEALED belong unto US. We know in PART, and we prophesy in PART. Now we see through a glass, DARKLY. Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, INTRUDING into those things which he has NOT SEEN. GOD dwelleth in the light which no man CAN approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or CAN SEE. No man hath seen God at any time. The Only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of his Father, he hath declared him. – HEAR YE HIM! – Who that reveres these sacred forms of expression, will expect to know God, so as to hope in his mercy, without the medium of *revelation*? Or expect that the scriptures should *make us wise to salvation, without faith which is in*, and also from, *Christ Jesus*? But what do the Scriptures teach us of God which does not relate to *creation, providence, redemption, or condemnation*? What information does the scripture give us of the divine perfections, even in this *relative view*, which is not so communicated, and which must not so be received, as led *one* Apostle to say, *Now we see through a glass, darkly*; and *another* to compare even the prophetic word, *unto a light which shineth in a dark place*?*

It has been held, with that appearance of argument that invites inspection [*See a Letter in Answer to a book entitled Christianity not Mysterious,*

by Peter Browne, B.D. Senior Fellow of Trin. Coll. Dublin, 3d Edit. p. 30-38), “That we are so far from having clear and distinct ideas of those things of another world which are revealed to us, that we have no proper or immediate idea of them at all.” By “a proper and immediate idea,” the learned author means, “a conception or notion of the thing as it is in ITSELF.” By “a mediate, or improper idea,” he means, “a notion we form of any thing in our minds by ANALOGY OR SIMILITUDE.” He thinks this distinction “a very necessary one, and of excellent use to set the bounds and measure to our knowledge, and to lay open the true nature of our Christian faith: that we may clearly apprehend where *knowledge* ends, and *faith* proceeds *alone*.” – If Mr. Fuller be unwilling to approve of this remark, he may try his strength with the following propositions: *God is a Spirit. God is infinite. God is omnipresent. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. God is glorious in holiness. He is the Rock: His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he.* If Mr. Fuller can explain these propositions, without making some representation of the things contained in them, by compounding and enlarging those ideas we have either of sensible objects, or from the operations of our own minds, he shall be applauded for his pains. But should he fail in this difficult attempt, let him recollect, That analogy expresseth nothing of the real nature of that incomprehensible Being whose name is I AM; nor does it give us the least glimpse of him, as he is in HIMSELF.

The preceding remarks will be liable to two objections. They will be thought to contain a defective and vicious account of our love to God. *Defective*, because it is supposed to originate from a very *imperfect* view of the object beloved, through mediums that obscure his glory, and is limited to such narrow bounds, that men of genius, of stronger thought, and purer emotions, will be unwilling to approve. – There is no more weight in this objection, in point of argument, than there is piety in the disposition of him who would choose to support it. We are always obliged to see the *Sun* through the *Atmosphere*. Whether we look at him by the naked eye, or with a telescope; whether we view that splendid

body in spring or autumn, in summer or winter, of necessity, it is still the same. Is this to be lamented? Not at all. Let us be thankful. For, were the *Atmosphere* removed [*Rowning's Philosophy, Part IV, P. 120*], and our faculties unaltered, we who *now* admire, should then be confounded; we who enjoy the extended splendor of the Sun, should then perceive a tremendous change. – God is that glorious Being, who is *fearful in praises*. Seraphs cover their faces while they attempt to praise HIM. Their impotence to *reach*, or *approach* the subject of their solemn song, adds to their happiness. what son would repine at the immensity of his father's *greatness*, provided it had no tendency to lessen his *kindness*? “For it is less desirable to be *able* to describe the power and excellencies of him we have an *interest* in, than to have an interest in one whose power and goodness *exceeds* whatever we can say or fancy of them.” [*Boyle.*]

But still it will be urged, that this account of our love to God is as *vicious* as it is *defective*. It will be represented as *mercenary*, and as ever keeping our interest in view. – Does not this objection originate from *pride*? “It grieves us sensibly,” said the honorable Mr. Boyle [*see his Motives and Incentives to the love of God, p. 92, 93, 8th Edit.*], “to see ourselves reduced to be only *passive*, and the *receivers* in this commerce. We would fain contribute something, and cannot always refrain from devoting our wishes to increase his happiness to whom we owe all ours.” Some of those extravagant wishes which discover irregular affection and unripe reason, this author has mentioned. He has also said, “That many applauded *preachers* have, of late, been pleased to teach the people that to hope for heaven is a *mercenary, legal*, and therefore, *unfilial affection*.” To this objection, however, he replies: “Indeed, to hope for heaven *as wages for work performed*, or by *way of merit*, -- were a *presumption* to which none of the divines we dissent from, *can* be too much an *enemy*.” he adds, “nor perhaps, more so than I am” (*p. 117-118*). But then this honorable author contends, that to take in God's blessing among the motives of loving God, is but to do as they have done who have ever loved him best. In proof of this, he produces

many apposite portions of scripture; and he might have added, without any painful search, as many more.

*Philosophers*, as well as *preachers*, have, some of them, taught the possibility, and excellence of disinterested affection. Probably, as *Paul* was deserted, and *Plato* consulted, such refinements prevailed. And now, as some modern philosopher, or some philosophic Professor of Christianity is admired (and of course, the Old Testament, and the New, but slightly surveyed) singular refinements are attempted. The late Mr. David Hume admits [*See his Essays, new Edit. Octavo. Vol. II. P. 264*], that “the deduction of morals from self-love, or a regard to private interest, is an obvious thought, and has not arisen wholly from the wanton sallies and sportive assaults of the skeptics.” Nevertheless, Mr. Hume thought it was easy to oppose what he is pleased to call, *the selfish theory*. He argues thus; “We frequently bestow praise on virtuous actions, performed in very distant ages and remote countries; where the utmost subtlety of imagination would not discover any appearance of self-interest, or find any connection of our present happiness and security with events so widely separated from us.”

After having brought this matter to “what natural philosophers, after lord Bacon, have affected to call the *experimentum cruces*,” he thus concludes, “We must renounce the theory which accounts for every moral sentiment by the principle of *self-love*. We must adopt a more *public* affection.”

From this account, one thing, at least, is obvious; that *religious* dispositions are not essential to the renunciation of what is called *the selfish theory*: for Hume, though not the most honest man that every lived, was too honest to treat all religion as *superstition*, and to wish posterity to imagine that he was *superstitious*. – Those sentiments which some *deists* admire, and which men who are *atheistically* inclined extol, should be received, if received at all, with circumspection. If we are compelled to receive what is thus recommended, is there any ground to imagine that what is thus received is of uncommon value?

To Mr. Hume's argument, it may be replied, That we never cordially bestow *praise* without being *pleased*. Nor are we pleased with the report of virtuous actions, unless we *judge* them to be such. Nor do we *so* judge, without *applauding* ourselves for our decision. For we really think it contributes to advance our "present happiness and security," by increasing our *reputation*. Nor does it fail of producing this effect, because the report of those virtuous actions which excited our praise, was of actions "performed in very distant ages and remote countries;" such reports are sometimes more affecting and instructing to us, than moral actions, of an inferior kind, done but yesterday, and under our own inspection.

All men love pleasure and applause, and never rationally renounce either, but in hope of superior gratification, and of superior praise; or as a *mean* leading to such enjoyment. The reverse of this behavior, except it be in some *capricious*, or *delirious* moment, need never be expected. Of pleasure and applause our taste may widely differ. Still, we are steady in those pursuits. Why did Mr. HUME write his ESSAYS and his HISTORY? Either pleasure moved him to write, or in quest of it he wrote. He panted for fame and obtained the prize. Who can write against him, but from the same *general* motives? Dr. REID felt the force of these motives in guarding society against the dangerous paradoxes which Mr. HUME'S skeptical temper produces; and, for so doing, it is confessed, he has obtained deserved applause. Mr. TOPLADY was induced, on similar grounds, to oppose the *Arminian* tenets of Dr. REID; and, though he has done it harshly, he sought in that attempt, what is always sought, in every conscientious controversy, namely, his own *reputation*. Mr. Fuller sought it when he wrote his *TREATISE*; and in this censure of that performance, however deceived, the writer of these Thoughts never intended, by exposing them to public notice, to diminish his own *repute*. He ever wishes to regard the following exhortation: *Whatsoever things are TRUE, whatsoever things are HONEST, whatsoever things are JUST, whatsoever things are PURE, whatsoever things are LOVELY, whatsoever things are of GOOD REPORT; if there*

by any VIRTUE, and if there be any PRAISE, think on THESE THINGS.

To some men, mental pleasures are by much preferred. Of that kind are historical deduction and biographical description. Hume has excelled in both. He has set distant ages, and actions done in remote countries, before his readers. We have observed it, with different emotions. Never with a view to make ourselves miserable. Never so as to be in no respect, either the better or the worse for a diligent attention to the pleasing, instructing, delusive and dangerous effusions of his pen. – On the subject before us, it was unworthy of this philosopher to suppose, that when we are pressed with some of those arguments he has produced against what he is pleased to call the *selfish theory*, we should be compelled to say, “That we transport ourselves, by the force of imagination, into distant ages and countries, and consider the advantage, which we should have reaped from these characters, had we been contemporaries, and had any commerce with the persons.” – There is no need of such deception. The preceding remarks may possibly, be allowed to vouch for the truth of that assertion.

If it was unworthy Mr. Hume to form such an objection, it is still more unbecoming a *Christian* to follow him in this business. Christians profess to live and walk by faith. What was done “in very distant ages and remote countries,” is, in its true report, considered by them as *glad tidings*. Tidings which they cannot hear with indifference, which they cannot believe without affection, which they cannot esteem without advantage, which they cannot regard without gratitude. A Christian, therefore, may easily find out that connection which Mr. Hume supposed “the utmost subtilty of imagination would not discover.”

But those things which have contributed to raise a clamor against that kind of love to God and man which is here defended, will still prevail. For who of us, can bear to be thought *selfish*? That frightful word is enough to alarm a *hypocrite*, for it sometimes alarms too many of fair intention. – After all, *what is self*? If by *that*, you mean *concupiscence*,

*appetite, whim, or anything disreputable, to be selfish is to be abominable.* Are we thus contending for any thing *selfish* in our love of God or man? Far from it. Many have recollected these words of St. Paul, *What I hate, that do I*; and who have not properly recollected the following: *It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* This distinction between SELF and SELF, or between what is laudably, and criminally so called, would be of daily service. Could this be made accurately, we should perceive, that we might love GOD, our NEIGHBOR, and OURSELVES, at the same time. Nay, we should perceive whatever deserves the name of love is always thus connected. We should also discover, that what is sometimes called *self-love*, is neither a *social*, nor a *sacred* affection: but something which is, in every view, unworthy of such an appellation.

It has been held, that there is a *self* in every *state*, and in every *church*. It has been said, *The state must take care of ITSELF. The church must take care of ITSELF.* These sayings have not always conveyed the most pleasing ideas. Originally, however *That in the constitution of each, which was thought to be most EXCELLENT,* seems to have been intended. Now, in *individuals*, as well as in *collective bodies*, we are thus to judge of *self*. A man's self is properly said to be THAT which, in the nature of man, is the *most excellent*; that is to say, HIS MIND. In this view, which is a fair one, should not every man love *himself*; that is, desire to *polish*, and *purify* his *mind*, and so to treat his *body*, as far as in him lies, as may be conducive to its advantage? Are not the most evangelical promises granted us to produce peace of conscience, and purity of intention? Without these, have we, or can we have, fixed desires to glorify God? Let us be thankful that *the faith of God's Elect* (Polhill) completes the noblest instinct in man; which is, a thirst after *happiness*. All men would be happy, but none are so who do not believe in JESUS CHRIST. The believer's happiness, indeed, is dashed with tribulation; but it is the *earnest* of uninterrupted and unfading felicity. Shall we be *ashamed* to seek such happiness, or, so employed, shall we *affect* to be disinterested in the grand pursuit?

## 7. On Humility.

So much has been said, in a former section, of Mr. Fuller's notion of humility, as may excuse, if it does not justify, the omission of additional remarks. Those thoughts were indulged and written with this belief, That *genuine* humility is peculiar to the Christian religion: or, that the facts which Christians believe, alone produce that disposition which may be *truly* called lowliness of mind. This humility is founded on a settled persuasion of the excellence of the Divine character, so far as it is exhibited to us in the word of truth. Humility, in this connection, is not *painful* to the possessor. On the contrary, the humble wish to augment it, and to keep it free from affectation. This lowliness of mind does not degenerate into meanness; nor does it produce those improprieties of expression, which have been already so freely censured and exposed. They who think there is not any disposition in us more essential to our full enjoyment of the gospel than humility, will read, with some attention, what has been submitted to their judgment on that temper which all profess to *esteem*, but which so few, in any eminent degree, seem to *possess*. – May no altercation on this subject make us liable to forget him who was *meek and lowly in heart*; or that he has said, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God!*

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At the close of this section, it may be proper to consider what *induced* Mr. Fuller to *renounce* some of those sentiments which he once embraced, to *publish* others, and *defend* his change of opinion. It would, indeed, be dangerous to venture on the borders of *conjecture* on this subject; but surely, it cannot be treason to inspect those reasons which Mr. Fuller himself has thrown out on this occasion. These, in *number* are *six*. What they are in *weight*, every reader will judge for himself.

The *first* reason our author has assigned for his recent change, is a *suspicion that the sentiments which he has renounced were not scriptural*.

Mr. Fuller's own words are (*p. 3*), "I had formerly entertained different sentiments. For some few years, however, I began to doubt whether all my principles on these subjects were scriptural. These doubts arose chiefly from thinking on *some* passages of scripture." – It does not appear that Mr. Fuller's doubts were from *the general tenor of the scriptures*, but from *some* passages only; of which, *three* are mentioned. The *first* of the three, is the latter part of the second psalm: chiefly these words. *Kiss the Son*. But, does Mr. Fuller need to be informed, that if even Kings and Judges were to embrace the Son without wisdom, or without the persuasion that argued a spiritual understanding, it would do the MESSIAH little honor, and would do them but little good? Should, therefore, such characters, or the meanest among mankind, embrace the Son with spiritual affection, so as to *confess they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, to declare plainly, that they seek a country, they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly*; whence, it will be asked, is such a disposition? Of flesh? Of blood? Of man? Or of God? But if it be of God, *ought* it to be of any other? Be it of whom it may, must not such *power*, and the *glory* resulting from it, ever be too excellent for US?

The *second* and *third* passages of Scripture which Mr. Fuller has produced, are these: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out!* – What would our author infer from these exhortations? That the kingdom of heaven among men, *ought* to *originate* from the actions of the *unregenerate*, and to be *erected* on dispositions which they themselves should produce? – Are we not taught to pray thus, THY KINGDOM COME? As this KINGDOM advances, are we not taught to say to the ALMIGHTY, THINE *is the KINGDOM, and the POWER, and the GLORY*? But can we properly say AMEN to such petitions, if we suppose that something *ought* to be performed by the UNCONVERTED, which *should* be the *beginning* of this glorious kingdom?

In what is commonly called the Lord's prayer, (*Rous.*) "God himself teaches us, not to pray for a mere *ability* to effect, but for the *effects themselves*; even that the one may *come*, and the other may be *done*. –

He teaches us to pray down right, *That HIS KINGDOM may come, and HIS WILL may be done*, even that these EFFECTS *may assuredly be produced*. – These petitions are like so many *canons* overthrowing and dismounting the laws and *canons* of *free-will*. For by those *laws*, we cannot pray to God for these *effects*, but only for a mere *ability* toward them. Having prayed for a mere ability to make the KINGDOM come, and the WILL” of God “to be done, then, if we will pray any farther, for the effects themselves,” according to some, “we must pray to our own FREE-WILLS for them; and so put our own FREE-WILLS in God’s place”: but the impiety of such an address who can possibly approve? Who would not be alarmed, or very much offended, were he to hear such supplications as these, “LORD, *let thy KINGDOM be at my pleasure, and thy WILL at the will of my FREE-WILL, whether THAT shall come, or THIS shall be done!*” While to their own FREE-WILLS the language is “*Let GOD’S KINGDOM come, and HIS WILL be done!*” – Where prayer is so vicious, praise will be as foul. Praise corresponding with such supplications, is supposed by Mr. Rous to commence with the words of the *Pharisee*, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men!* And to conclude with this alteration, “*I thank thee, O MINE OWN SELF; or O MINE OWN FREE-WILL, that I am not like other men!*”

*What do you mean?* Some will be ready to ask. They will demand, *Does Mr. Fuller teach such doctrine? Does he ever insinuate that the unregenerate can do any thing which is really good; even so much as to think a good thought; or that they ever will?* – No; he does not. But he contends they *ought* to do THAT which should only be performed by the Spirit of grace. Nay, he thinks they *might* be the doers of every thing which he supposes they *ought* to do, if they were *willing*. So that, they who enter into the spirit of Mr. Fuller’s system, and would be consistent with it, must *lament* they have not made themselves *a new heart*, and renewed within themselves *a right spirit*. Should these operations be found as *impossible*, as the very attempt so to act (on belief of our ability to perform such actions) is unlawful, the task, as this is perceived, must be given up; or else prayer must succeed to previous presumption. Should this be done with ample conviction, and acknowledgement, it

would be a pleasing change. But this, those sentiments of our author which are here opposed, if they are *closely* followed, will not permit. They who embrace them may pray, indeed, but they must not pray to be anything which it was not their duty to have been before, by some natural, and unassisted efforts of their own.

Whether this *first* reason for our author's change of his sentiments will justify his renunciation of those tenets which he has abandoned, they who are at leisure to think about it, may judge as they please. This, however, may be added: What we renounce, we are supposed to disesteem. The appearance of renouncing any thing we continue to respect, is a species of *hypocrisy* from which Mr. Fuller is supposed to be exempted. But he who disowns those sentiments which he once embraced, should be properly satisfied that his second choice may be much better defended than his former belief. If our author has obtained such satisfaction, some of his friends cannot but wish he was better able to impart it, that it might be to them unquestionable. But this pleasure, several who esteem Mr. Fuller are obliged to say, is, at present, unexpected.

The *following* reason which is given by Mr. Fuller for his partial conversion, is thus expressed (*p. 3*): "On reading the lives and labors of such men as Elliot, Brainerd, and several others who preached Christ with so much success, their work, like that of the apostles seemed," says our author, "to be all plain before them. They appeared to me, to have none of the *shackles* with which I felt myself incumbered."

Impatience, increased by a lust of being consequential, but disguised by such a fig-leaf as this, *an ardent desire to be useful*, has already done strange things; and the same disposition will probably still push its possessors on to wide extremes. Mr. Fuller felt himself *incumbered* with *shackles* he resolved to *break*, and with *bonds* he was included to *burst* (*p. 167*). He has acted accordingly; and would first alarm, and then rouse others, to follow his example. Before we follow him too far, let us endeavor to *see afar off*, and to think of the consequences of such a step.

Has our author himself, in his comparatively unshackled state, obtained unbounded freedom? Far from it. He still trembles while he writes (*Def. p. 77*): and, as Mr. Taylor attended to what our author has written, he thus exclaimed (*Observation. p. 26*): “Alas, I cried, as I read this, *the effects of being fettered by a system!*” More *fetters* still to break, and bonds on bonds to burst! – Were Dr. Priestley to read Mr. Taylor’s OBSERVATIONS, *Alas!* he’d cry, *the effects of being fettered by a system!* Tindal, Mandeville, and Hume, were they living, would probably lament a man of Dr. Priestley’s erudition should be so *shackled* in the toils of *superstition*, as to prostitute his philosophical talents to convert *fanatics*. – Glancing at this unfettered tribe, Mr. Fuller seems distanced and in chains. Let him be contented. Ambition, pride and whim, are restless things: nor is there any possibility of satisfying a wandering disposition. The most stationary *planets* are as pleasing, and as useful too, as those lawless comets of whose eccentric paths we know but little. God, however, binds them fast; nor can their appearance frighten the vulgar, or amuse men of understanding, without, or beyond, his own permission.

*Another* reason which Mr. Fuller has assigned for his late change, is stated thus (*p. 3. 4*): “Being one day in company with a worthy minister, he suggested, that he thought we had generally had mistaken views concerning *unbelief*. Unbelief, said he, is *a calling in question the truth of what God has said, be that what it may*. I admired his thought, which appeared to me, to carry in it its own evidence. My thoughts began to swell pretty largely on this subject. I preached upon it more than once. From hence my mind was naturally led to think of its opposite, *faith*, and to consider *that* as a *hearty* credit of whatever God *hath said, be it what it may*. From hence, by an early transition, my mind was led farther to suspect my former sentiments concerning faith not being the duty of unconverted sinners. It was natural to argue after this sort – If true faith is nothing more nor less than a cordial belief of what God says, surely it must be every one’s duty, where the gospel is published, to do that. Surely no man ought to question or treat with indifference any thing which Jehovah hath said!”

In this story, sincerity and simplicity are conspicuous. The latter is lessened in its value, because it is not connected with proportionable understanding. As the tale is told, *suggestion, admiration, amplification, communication; inference, early transition, suspicion of former sentiments, and arguments against them*, rush too rapidly on the reader's mind. When Mr. Fuller is aware how *puerile* such a change will seem to some, he will feel that shame which will make him cautious of exposing to public view again such indigested conclusions. Such a hasty and partial view of things so important, must always issue in disappointment. – Unbelief is here represented as calling in question the truth of what God has said. But do all unbelievers take it for granted that the Bible is the word of God? Yet, as if they did, our author infers, “Surely, no man ought to question, or to treat with indifference any thing which Jehovah has said.” But may we not repeatedly *doubt* whether we know the *meaning* of what God has said, without treating his words with irreverence? May we not venture to *contradict* Mr. Fuller's mistakes, without being denominated unbelievers? – What does our author mean by *any thing which God has said*? This may seem a needless question. Yet as the same author assures us (*Def. p. 23-24*), “When we speak of the *faith of the gospel*, as a belief of the truth, it is not to be understood as *all kinds* of truth; nor even of *all kinds of scripture truth*,” such a question seems natural and not easy to be avoided. Mr. Fuller says, “a true believer, *so far as he understands it, does believe all scripture truth*.” Be it so; Whence had this *true believer* his *understanding*? Are all true believers bound to have the same *degree* of *understanding*? Again, if true believers are to *believe*, or to be persuaded of, nothing more than they *understand*, may not the celebrated aphorism of Dr. Forster, *Where mystery begins religion ends*, be safely embraced? To show the *folly* of such *unripe* and *rash* decisions, *A LETTER in answer to a BOOK entitled CHRISTIANITY not MYSTERIOUS*, (which has been mentioned before) is well worth the reader's perusal, if the author of these Thoughts be able to form, on this subject, a judgment deserving his notice.

An *additional* argument for Mr. Fuller's change, is a perception, in one instance, of his former credulity. He says (*p. 4.*), "It appears to me, that we had taken carnal men too much upon their word, when they told us, they believed the truth." Mr. Fuller was now convinced they did not. Thus he argues (*p. 5.*): "What constitutes the gospel, is *good news*: but what ever faith a wicked man may have in it as a piece of *news*, he hath none in the goodness of it; he is therefore, an unbeliever in the very *essence* of the gospel, or in that without which it would not be the gospel." Far be it from our intention to contend for that *belief* which is of no *advantage* to the *believer*. But, can any *news* be *good* which is not true? Is not the gospel the *word of truth*? Is it fair to call any man an *unbeliever*, who believes the truth of the gospel? Yes, it will be said, if he does not act consistently. Indeed! Who is always consistent? Is our author himself? If he be, why does he so seemingly *lament*, in public worship, his own defects, and inconsistent conduct? Why are the *best* characters on earth thus employed? It is meet they should. Yet, if *hypocrisy* slide into their confessions, who is it that such *cant* can ever please? – We should always aim to be consistently *right*; but to suppose true believers are never inconsistent, or strangely incongruous, might be so retorted on our author, as to make him renounce the shadow of such a position.

When *Mr. Button* urged the impropriety of *Mr. Fuller's* conclusion from the same premises, he asked our author these questions (*Rem. P.22*): "Do not men in general, believe they shall die, yea, really, cordially and heartily believe it? But do they act accordingly?" Mr. Fuller replied (*Def. p. 19, 20*), "Death is more an object of *intuition* than faith." Whose death? My own? How does this appear? According to our author, 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

when seduction prevails against it. In such a situation, what can they expect from their belief? Nevertheless, whether faith be *dead*, being *alone*, or whether it be *transitory*, continuing but for a *season*, *while* it exists, and *as* it appears, it should be *acknowledged*. If any man should say, *I see the better, but the worse pursue*, would it become us to say, that it is *false*, or to assert that it is *impossible*? We might, however, be allowed to say, That if it be *predominantly* so, that such perception is of little value to its infatuated possessor. Paul said, *That which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that I do not, but what I hate, that do I*. Self, is here to self opposed. This fact may be thought only applicable to *young* Christians, or to characters destitute of the grace of God. Not to dispute such an opinion at present, the author of these Thoughts is not unwilling to confess, that such language, even to this day, is not foreign to all his feelings. He owns, he is yet obliged to say, *O wretched man that he is*; and to ask, *who shall deliver him from the body of this death!* Nor does this cry prevent his hope of deliverance, or the enjoyment of that grace which will never suffer sin to regain its former dominion.

The *next* reason urged by Mr. Fuller for a change in some of his sentiments, is thus connected with the former (p. v), “To this, I may add, I think, another cause, which contributed to the same end. I had read, and considered, as well as I could, Mr. JONATHAN EDWARDS’S ENQUIRY *into the FREEDOM of the WILL*, with some other performances on the distinction of *natural* and *moral ability*.” – In this distinction, Mr. Fuller says, “he always found great pleasure.” Thinking on it, he first discovered that the *inability* of fallen men, was *chiefly* of the *moral* kind. Afterwards, he perceived it was *wholly so*. From this, our author inferred, that it was *criminal*, and *punishable*; and the next inference was, that *faith* and all other things, *truly* and *spiritually* good, are the duty of *unconverted* sinners. – What does Mr. Fuller intend? That it is the duty of the unconverted to *occupy* what is truly and spiritually good *in them*? No; for he affirms, that things of this description have no existence in the *unregenerate*. Does he mean, it is their duty to *produce* principles and dispositions truly and spiritually good? To this he answers as his temper has permitted. When severe, at least not kind, to a *creature*

of his own *making*, who is supposed to say (*p. 150-151*), “What would you have me do? *Can I create* a principle of honesty in myself? Or is it my duty to do so?” He replies, “Create a principle of honesty in yourself? – you *villain!* Whether it is your duty to *create* it or no, you certainly ought to *have* it, and you are *monster* in human shape for being *without* it.” – It is the perpetual fallacy of Mr. Fuller, that what is *monstrous*, and must be treated as such, should be *remedied* by the *monster*; and the *demonstration* is, that if you deny it, you plead for *monsters*, or, by our author’s construction, you are supposed to affirm there is nothing *monstrous*.

When Mr. Fuller is in a graver temper, and not so distant from truth, what he has quoted from Dr. Goodwin is then recollected (*see above, p. 155*). But, if what has been recently produced from Mr. Fuller, be the result of his reading EDWARDS on the WILL, *as well as he could*, either his talents for metaphysical productions are not the most excellent, or Mr. Edwards has *not* been of such use, in this instance, as might have been expected. – Coarse, rude and even comical as our author may seem to some, *to his self-created monster*, it is evident, he thinks his conduct on that occasion, whatever his opponents cannot *equal*. For Mr. Fuller says, “He that maintains it to be no man’s duty to *have* and *exercise* a principle which he *has not*, could not thus reply;” that is, as he has done. This may be true; but whether such *censure* be not a real *compliment*, is more doubtful than our author’s transitory triumph would permit him to consider. – The influence Mr. Edwards has over many pious people, and of the ground and effect of that influence, so far as it concerns the *present debate*, may be considered. In the *conclusion* of these Thoughts, if indeed, they should be continued, some respectful notice will be taken of that valuable author.

The *last* reason which Mr. Fuller has given us for the publication of his TREATISE, is the confidence which he reposed in a *few* judicious friends. Into their hands he put his *Manuscript*. They, it seems, differed in their opinion. But we are told (*p. 6*) at the request of the *greater* part of these *few* friends, it now appears in print. Thus encouraged, our

author *ventured* to come forth; but it was with *trembling*. He was ready to indulge *despair*, to resign *all hope*, nay to *weep* (p. vi.). So much alarmed was Mr. Fuller at the supposed consequences of his own resolution. – Poor authors, often as *proud*, or *vain* at least, as *poor*, to what frightful apprehensions are they sometimes addicted! The book will not be *read*; it will not *sell*, it will not be *applauded*; or if it be, some rival for fame will detect my weakness, and triumph at my expense. Terrors like these have stifled many a rising thought, and suppressed that ardor which might have been, if fully indulged, *useful*, or *noxious*, to society. Some, to avoid the storm, have *ventured* without a name into the republic of letters; and others, from the same motive, have *crept* in under the patronage of a founding name. But in *writing*, as when a man goes down to *battle*, the first onset is often the most formidable. Familiarity, even with danger, increases resolution. As to the phantoms of imagination, they operate with force only while they are kept at due *distance*, and remain, in part, *concealed*. If closely pursued, and fully investigated, or if too far off, they disappear. – As our author went on, his courage came. He has not only faced his opposers, but, in defiance of their arguments, holds fast his own opinions. Nor is it imagined, this additional attack, will beat him from his old ground. It may teach him however (is it presumption to suppose it may?) that there are more places in his TREATISE open to assault than he suspected.

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It may gratify some readers, without offending others, to be informed, *why* the author of these Thoughts engaged in this controversy. The plain answer is, *he could not help it*. If the will be moved by that which is the *strongest* motive to the agent who is moved, the fact shows, in this case, his strongest motive was to *write*; and to write what now is *written*. – Yes; but what *induced* him to write? – *His own happiness, and reputation*. – Let this be explained. – Thus then: He thought Mr. Fuller's leading propositions to be what he has represented them; *obscure, inconsistent, and erroneous*. He heard, last *January*, that, in a certain connection, our author's sentiments were more prevalent than he had expected. He thought such a report to be lamented; and the more so, as

the prevalence of those tenets, were evidently connected with *unprofitable* contention. Ruminating on these things, and some other affecting *consequences* of the opinions here opposed, he fancied he was *qualified* to say something in answer to Mr. Fuller which would be above *contempt*, and might be of some service to the churches, and to other persons, who had been *ensnared, unsettled* or *vexed* with this controversy. He was confident, that a *probability* of his being the occasion of such service, would warrant his best attempt to perform it, and that this attempt would *add* something to his own *understanding*. He saw, or thought he saw, the connection between his *success* and the *glory of God*. Thus *induced* he could not forbear making the present effort, to convince Mr. Fuller, and his followers, that their zeal for God was probably not according to knowledge.

Was Mr. Fuller a man of questionable piety, or very remote in his sentiments from the celebrated Mr. Richard Baxter, the following abridgment of a part of Mr. Baxter's preface to his CATHOLICK THEOLOGY might give him offence. But as no doubt is entertained of the piety of our author, or of his being willing to receive instruction from that quarter, on the subject here introduced, it was imagined the proposed abridgement might excite, as well as deserve Mr. Fuller's notice.

Mr. Baxter was of opinion that *misapprehensions of godliness* are one of the greatest causes of *contention* and *division*. In proof of this, he wishes his readers to *consider*, That holiness is the best thing in the world. That all good men prefer it before all other things. That it is God's interest more than ours. That, nevertheless, we all know but in part; so that, most teachers take abundance of things for true and good, which are false and evil, and for false and evil, which are true and good. That he who thinks any thing to be good or bad, duty or sin, which is not so, will be zealous in the pursuit of his mistake if he be serious before God. That they who act superstitiously (as most good people do in some things, through ignorance) will censure others by the measure of their own mistakes. That he who thinks men sin when they do not, will have a

proportionable dislike of them, and aversion from them. That all parties will be faulty, and that the greatest part of the CLERGY will be guilty of so much ignorance, pride, contentiousness, worldliness, and sensuality, as will greatly grieve good people. That such carnal CLERGY will usually hate and persecute godly zealous preachers. That godly people will run further into bitterness against the carnal persecuting party, than their suffering leaders desire. That notwithstanding this, interest and temptations will prevail with too many sufferers to connive at the bitterness of their people, if not to give it countenance. That all men have some pride, and *godliness* being the *best* thing, may become the object of pride, as well as *knowledge* and *power*; and thus many a good man hath more of pride in his profession and separation, than he perceives. That because God's word, his last judgment, and heaven and hell do make so great a difference between the godly and ungodly, too many think they must *now* make a greater difference between men, by their censures and separations, than indeed they ought. That it greatly promotes schisms, that so many good people are unacquainted with church history, and know not how just such opinions and schisms as their own, have risen up in former ages; nor how they have miscarried and dried away, and what has been the fruit of such contentions. That few men have that humble sense of their own ignorance, and badness, which would keep their suspicions and censures more at home; and would make them more compassionate to others. That very few love their neighbors as themselves, nor consider, while they hate men's sin, what is lovely in their nature. That the piety of almost all sects of Christians on the earth, is already corrupted, with so many human superstitious additions, that few can escape the temptation of censuring according as they are persuaded of the existence of such evils. That the church will always have many *hypocrites*, who quiet their consciences by adhering to the *strictest* ministers and churches, instead of aiming at a mortified, holy and heavenly heart and conversation. That persecution and hatred from others, on the one hand, and the due love of the godly, on the other, tempt too many ministers to overrun their own judgments, and to follow the more censorious sort of persons further than they ought; at least by connivance; and to be *ruled* by them whom they

should *rule*: And *thus*, says Mr. Baxter, DIVISIONS are occasioned even by *piety* ITSELF.

Of the value of these remarks, different judgments will be formed. It will, however, be running no great risk to say, He must be a man of uncommon excellence, or a man who is uncommonly corrupt, to whom such sensible observations on human conduct can be of no use. – Should the best judges be of opinion, that this quotation is neither impertinently nor rudely introduced, he that made it will be more than contented with their applause.

## APPENDIX

It has been thought there are *two* ways by which Mr. Fuller may be *fairly* answered. Each of them has been here adopted. But as they have not been pursued *apart*, nor in *form*, but appear alone, or mixed, as the nature of the original plan would permit, it is proposed, in this APPENDIX, to give the reader a distinct view of each; so that he may, if he should be so inclined, reconsider how far either of these modes of answering Mr. Fuller deserves additional attention.

If we closely consider the nature, origin, and excellence of that spiritual life, which is essential to Christianity, we shall perceive it to be *supernatural, miraculous, of GOD, and not of man* (*Stapferus, Institut. Theolog. Polem. Tom. I. Cap. iii § 1343*). But if this *may* be affirmed of spiritual life, and if, in every respect, spiritual life *ought* to be what it is, then our author has strangely erred, in those *inferences* which have led him to conclude, that spiritual dispositions, and spiritual acts, without excepting any, are incumbent on all men: and, it is presumed, that by keeping in view the *nature, origin and excellence* of SPIRITUAL LIFE, his erroneous positions will be detected and overthrown.

If we attentively consider what is the common and unchanging condition of all creatures, it will appear, *that to ENDEAVOR is their NE PLUS*

ULTRA, and, that to DO any thing beyond what is, or may be included in lawful endeavors, never WAS, IS, or WILL be required of them, as matter of duty. – If this be true, it forms another ground of argument against many propositions Mr. Fuller has advanced; and for that purpose, it has been introduced into this debate.

But, let it be observed, that neither of these principles has been first assumed to answer Mr. Fuller. For, the truth is, each of them has been used, on various occasions, by the author of these Thoughts, when as yet he had no intention of intermeddling in this dispute. – Let it also be noticed, that these two leading grounds of argument are so *separate*, that if the *latter* should fail (though it is believed it will not), yet, by such a loss, the *former* will still be found a formidable mode of opposition.

Of the nature, origin, and excellence of that spiritual life which is essential to Christianity, the celebrated C. VITRINGA has given us a valuable ESSAY [*TRAITE DE LA VIE SPIRITUELLE, Traduit du Latin, par M. de Limiers, LL.D. which Vitringa saw and approved*]. A concise account of that Work will exhibit, the *first* of these two grounds of argument against Mr. Fuller with some advantage. This, therefore shall be attempted.

For more than twenty years VITRINGA thought of indulging his *hearers* with an Essay on PRACTICAL RELIGION. His motives to publish it do him honor. He aimed at their instruction, and wished to wipe away reproach. For, whether it be well or ill-founded, men of his *Profession* have been frequently censured, as being much more addicted to *speculative* than to *practical* pursuits. His hearers, at length, were gratified; and their able *Instructor* had the pleasure to find his efforts met with their acceptance, and were attended with good success.

But this ESSAY, however useful to those for whose benefit it was composed and *read*, was soon thrown aside; and his original intention of printing it was giving up. – Conscience, not yet satisfied, awoke VITRINGA'S zeal. He heard her voice, and renewed his former

resolution. – But *now* (which was no loss to *Society*), he felt himself disposed to retrench and alter his former plan. Instead, therefore, of giving us a tedious, obscure, unanimating TREATISE of the mere PRACTICE of PIETY, urged on legal motives, he gave us an ESSAY ON SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Hear his reason. “I know,” said he, “by experience, that they who are but *novices* in religion, who only make an external profession of Christianity, are less ignorant of the *duties* of the evangelical law, than they are of the nature and principles of that state from whence those duties originate.” – Convinced of this, he attempted (if it may be so expressed), “to bring back the *streams* to their *source*, and then to draw life of life; that is to say, the living acts of true virtues [**1st Peter. 2:9**] from the principle which produces them – which is *regeneration*.”

According to Vitranga, the common character of rational life is, *a state of action, or of continued exercise, with knowledge and sentiment*. So that to live, in his opinion, is *to act with knowledge, in virtue of an internal principle*. From this view of the subject, it follows, that no kind of life, not even the *lowest*, can be considered as a pure accident of body; nor can it be explained by the *mechanical* movement of certain fluids, established according to certain laws; for, every kind of life supposes an IMMATERIAL CAUSE which produces it, and includes in itself its own *principle* from which it proceeds; and, indeed, according to that principle (however obstructed), *are all the operations of life*.

But as the same man may have *animal, rational, and spiritual* life at the same time (and consequently, be inclined to actions as various as the principles of each) – as life thus *varied*, and thus *combined*, may be united with different degrees of vigor, under different *dispensations*, and with different external and internal *accidents*, VITRANGA was attentive to all these variations. – On that *languor* and habitual *infirmity*, on those more awful *maladies* which sometimes infect spiritual life; on the *nature, causes and symptoms* of these disorders, and on some of the best *remedies* against them, he has left us judicious observations. He has also

informed us to what this life is properly *opposed*, and from what it may be *distinguished*. He has assisted us to *discover* it where it is, and taught us how to *appreciate* in ourselves, and in others, this uncommon blessing.

It is not without reason the Apostle has called this life, THE LIFE OF GOD (**Ephesians. 4:18**). Because, as Vitranga observes, the *principle* of this life is a particular gift of his grace. Because *it* cannot be enjoyed otherwise than in *communion* with God. Because, in the enjoyment of this life, God influences man *immediately* by his Spirit. In fine, because *it* is formed on the *model* of the *spiritual life of GOD*. So that they who live *spiritually*, are said to be *partakers of the DIVINE NATURE*.

This incomparable life in us, must have its *cause*; its *proper* and *adequate* cause. Or, if there be more causes than one, *each* must be proper and adequate in its own sphere. Shall we find these causes in the most extended compass of human duty? *Ought* we, in any sense, to be the real AUTHORS of spiritual life? – Vitranga says, the *meritorious* cause of this life, is *the obedience of the SON OF GOD*. That obedience which was founded on an *eternal covenant*, and which was continued to *his death* – the death of *the cross*. He says, the *efficient* cause of this life, is *the SPIRIT OF GOD*; and that every thing spiritual in us, whether it be in our *habits, affections, or actions*, depends entirely upon him – the only AUTHOR and *living PRINCIPLE of all our spirituality*.

A life so unexpected by the carnal mind, so undesired, so certainly from above; a life of which we had neither experience nor just conception till we were converted; a life which is at present continually exposed to various disorders, and yet so imperfectly understood, who of us can fully explain? – *Effects* may lead us to *think*, and indeed to be fully *persuaded*, who is the *efficient* cause of this life; from this we may ascend to the *impulsive* cause; but if we should be able to do this, with proper temper, the higher we ascend, the more we shall be inclined to say, *Even so, FATHER, LORD of HEAVEN and EARTH, for so it seemed good in THY SIGHT!*

But some, on this subject, may be more inquisitive than is commendable. In such a temper, they may ask, as NICODEMUS did, *How can these things be?* To such a question, we can do little more than repeat those words which first produced it. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* – If any thing can throw additional light on this profound subject, it is probable it must be obtained by a proper use of those *metaphorical* terms which are given us, by the sacred writers, to correct our confused apprehensions of this *supernatural* life. – Of these terms, VITRINGA has selected *two*; and, by so doing (*sans blesser la pudeur*) he has imparted instruction.

One of the terms he has selected is GENERATION: And he has observed, that as this term is applied, in the Scriptures, to the *new birth*, it was designed to teach us, that *spiritual* generation is an action of God, by which he communicates *life* to man; not that life which is *common* and *perishable*, but that which is life by way of *excellence* – SPIRITUAL LIFE. This life, is supposed, to carry in it the *image* and *resemblance* of THE LIFE OF HIM, by whom it is *produced*. Produced, says VITRINGA, by a kind of *spiritual* SEED, namely, *the word of GRACE*. He assures us, the LAW *cannot*, by its *nature*, be a proper mean of *regeneration*. This honor, in his opinion, is entirely confined to the GOSPEL: And we know and believe, without his assistance, the GOSPEL ONLY is that REPORT which ever was intended to be the power of God either to the present or to the future felicity of sinful men.

Now, reader, from such a view of this animating subject what think you of its being the duty of all men, who have the *incorruptible seed* of the word of life, to *vivify* themselves, and, by their own unassisted efforts, to make *it* EFFECTUAL unto SALVATION? – The question is not, whether it is not the duty of every man who is favored with the *gospel* to STRIVE *to enter in at the strait gate*, previous to his being able to determine whether he is *elected*, or *called*, or whether he shall be *successful*; because, *action* is here essential to *evidence*. The question is

not, whether we are not always left without *excuse* when we do not make the *best* use we *can* of the knowledge we have obtained, or when we cease to do our *best* to occupy and improve those talents which the Lord has committed to our trust. The question is not, in form, whether we *are*, or whether we *can* be the AUTHORS of those dispositions which are truly evangelical; for Mr. Fuller will not, in direct terms, say we are. But the question between us, seems to be this, *whether WE OUGHT NOT to be the AUTHORS of those dispositions?* – Mr. Fuller says (p. xiv) spiritual dispositions and acts (he excludes none) are incumbent on all men. If, by so saying, he does not mean it is the *duty* of *all* men to be the real and proper AUTHORS of such disposition and acts, by the energy of their own *will* and *power*, he has certainly perplexed us to answer a very poor purpose. If this be his meaning, does he think there *ought* to be *two* AUTHORS of these spiritual dispositions and acts; namely, the *unregenerate*, and the HOLY GHOST? – It is said of JESUS CHRIST, that *there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we MUST be saved*. Is there any *other* SPIRIT, than the SPIRIT OF CHRIST, by whom we *MUST* be *born again*? – The *works* of God, whether *towards* us, or *in* us, neither *have*, nor *can* have, any other AUTHOR than HIMSELF. If they *might*, how would they bear *witness* of him, and be a proper ground of religious *worship*? – *It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*. Is this to be *regretted*? *We cannot do the things that we would*. Is this, upon the whole, to be *lamented*? – It is true, God said, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. But what is the *sense* of those words? [Jurieu] Are we to understand them *literally* that man *really* resembled God as a *spiritual, immaterial, intelligent and free* BEING? No; it is a resemblance of pure *analogy*, like that of a shadow compared with its substance, or that resemblance of a face which may be seen in a glass. – *To whom then shall we liken God, or what likeness shall we compare unto him?*

Such is *one* of the grounds of that answer here given to Mr. Fuller. The *other* depends on the truth of this observation; *that to ENDEAVOR is the creature's NE PLUS ULTRA; and that to DO any thing beyond what is, or may be, included in lawful endeavors, never WAS, IS, or WILL*

BE *required of them, as matter of duty*. – This position Mr. Fuller will be reluctant to admit; yet to prove that this principle of argument is inadmissible, will probably be found no easy task.

Rational creatures of every description, and in every state, are in *one* respect alike. In GOD, all of them, LIVE, and MOVE, and have their BEING. If so, it infallibly follows (as indeed, it is asserted, **(Acts 17:28)**), that this is OUR condition. Nor can we believe it ever *was*, or that it ever *will* be otherwise. But if so, what could even ADAM do, when crowned with glory and honor, without his MAKER and PRESERVER? His best endeavors therefore to glorify God (as directed by him) was the LAW of his creation. *More* could not be required; *less* could not be demanded. ADAM was to occupy all he had, with gratitude for his possessions and powers, and in humble dependence on God to bless his occupation. His *best* efforts to obey the will of the Almighty, were complete conformity to that perfect law which was the rule of his obedience. – When they failed, he fell. But since that event, is it not a mistake to suppose the *best* endeavors of a *fallen* creature CAN either satisfy the *moral law*, or make the *gospel* effectual unto salvation?

The fall of ADAM corrupted human nature in its ROOT, and in its general REPRESENTATIVE. The consequences of this fall, or first offence, are tremendous; and without an interest in that redemption which is obtained by an incorruptible price, and enjoyed by a renovation which is miraculous, the degrading and painful consequences of sin must be, to every man, *everlasting*. Adam, it is true, before his fall, could but endeavor to glorify God. Then, however, his endeavors were the offspring of knowledge; they were exerted in a state of uninterrupted friendship with his MAKER, and always successful; because, in that state, they were continually attended with his *blessing*.

When *the offence*, as St. Paul calls it, was committed, what a change did the offender feel! His nature, indeed, remained the same. Though depraved (if mercifully kept from the horrors of *melancholy*, and from the rage of *distraction*) he could still endeavor; and, we have seen, or

think we have seen, his *nature* never allowed him to perform superior actions. But to what shall the endeavors of our *fallen* father be directed? Innocence *fled* from him as transgression approached; or, to say the truth, *expired*. In such a situation, his ground of access was gone; his hope of acceptance departed. A train of evils rushed in impossible to be prevented. For, the consequences of guilt are, all of them, absolutely under the dominion of God. The heavens, the earth, surrounding animals, his own frame, and his own conscience too, were awfully affected. He who was crowned with innocence, adorned with intelligence, and blessed with peace, became, at once, a dark, disordered, offending and offensive creature! Afraid of the deserved curse, but unwilling to feel its full force – flight, feeble attempts to diminish the irksome feelings of increasing shame, with that duplicity which was as silly, as he was without excuse – such bewildered actions marked his miserable condition.

*And the LORD GOD called unto ADAM, and said unto him, Where art thou?* Thus apprehended and detected, the most unwelcome guest appeared. *Despair* demanded entrance, nor could he forbid her horrid intention. – In that confounded moment, he heard the voice of God! A voice that did not *first* inform our guilty, despairing father, what *he ought to do*, or *only* inform him what *he had done*; no; but that gracious voice did ADAM hear which was altogether unexpected; that voice that filled his *Seducer* with confusion, and which instantly produced, in the darkest region of despondence, blissful expectation!

The report of the same redemption, by the SEED of the WOMAN, has (thanks be to God!) often been heard, and often amply explained, since that memorable *evening*; but from that evening to this hour, the *arm of the Lord* has been so *revealed* in the saving belief of that report, or in the existence of that faith which accompanies salvation, as to make it evident, that *the excellency of the power ALWAYS is of God, and not* (at any time) *of us*.

If this account is admitted to be just, it will certainly lead us to conclusions *subversive* of many positions advanced by Mr. Fuller, and equally *subversive* of some *popular* notions, for vending of which, too many have obtained applause. Some evidence of the force of this *second* ground of argument has already been given; and, unless it is proved to be *inadmissible*, additional evidence of its use in this controversy may be expected; with an attempt to *answer* such objections as are thought to *deserve* attention. But, in moral reasonings, the sensible remark of Monsieur BAYLE is worth our notice. He says, “In religious disputes every one is both *judge* and *party*. He who disputes examines not the reasons of his adversary after investing himself with a skeptical temper: this he believes would be *criminal*. He examines, therefore, well persuaded that the religion which he professes is the *only* true religion. *Three* probabilities on the side of our *preoccupation* prevail over *ten* or *twelve* on the *other* side; because, the attention of our minds is carried infinitely more to probabilities that *please* us, than towards those which excite *chagrin*.”

It is thus the *first* part of this *unsolicited* attempt must close. What *consequences* may follow, he that has been so venturesome may live to know. If, instead of applause from competent judges, he must be compelled to hear the prolonged tone of well supported *censure*, he will feel as much as the *humane* could wish. Yet, even at this affecting sound, he will not *despair*. For, though such censure must, on whomsoever it falls, diminish *imaginary* worth, and may bring down appearance to reality, yet the author of these Thoughts has, at least, sense enough to know that all this will be no disadvantage to *Society*, nor will it be any loss, with proper temper, to *himself*. Sterling worth will yet survive: for he must be poor indeed, if he acts *conscientiously*, who is in danger of losing *his all* in such a contest. – Mr. Fuller will be *respectable* should he be unable to secure his *expected* victory. Nor will he hesitate to say, that his present *Competitor* is above contempt; even though he may apprehend, that such an antagonist will *ONLY* give him just occasion of exerting his superior abilities in this serious altercation.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

## **ERRAIA**

P. L.

P.22 2 dele no

P.23 26 for men sin, read, men's sin.

P.35 28 for epistle, read, epistles.

P.36 2 for of, read for.

P.50 4 dele as.

P.77 28 for are, read, is.

P.151 8 for is, read, are.

P.158 5 for has, read, have.

**THOUGHTS ON THE DUTY OF MAN  
RELATIVE TO  
FAITH  
IN *JESUS CHRIST*.  
IN WHICH  
MR. FULLER'S  
leading Propositions on that Subject are considered, and his  
additional Remarks examined.**

**By JOHN MARTIN.**

**Of all the opponents I have had, none have been so AMUSING to me  
as Mr. Martin. It is almost impossible to be out of temper with him  
— The whole of what I plead for, is included in Mr. Martin's  
favourite word endeavour. Mr. FULLER.  
Suffer me that I may speak: and after that I have spoken, mock on.  
JOB.**

**PART II.  
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M DCC.LXXXIX,**

**THOUGHTS  
ON THE  
*DUTY of MAN, &C***

## PART II.

### DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE DUTY OF MAN STATED AND DEFENDED.

#### SECTION I.

##### *General idea Of the Duty of Man.*

IT is possible to disagree without indulging disingenuous suspicions, or giving way to illiberal abuse. To carry on this controversy in a becoming temper, it is proposed to forbear an examination of Mr. Fuller's remarks in this and in the following section; and in the last, where they must be considered, to treat him with real respect.

In stating my general idea of the duty of man, how far that agrees with Mr. Fuller's judgment, or differs from it, every reader may determine for himself. If our dispute be merely verbal, anything may be so called; but if it be some- thing more, yet our friends cannot be offended to perceive that we both of us hold as sacred, several sentiments of confessed importance.

A general idea of our duty may be obtained by observing what is the *rule* of moral obligation, what is the leading *motive* which induces us to regard it, and in what *manner* we should always attempt to be obedient,

I. The *rule* of moral obligation is the preceptive will of God.

For what saith the scripture? “The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law *for them*. Yea, he loved the people; all his fountains are in thy hand, and they sat down at thy feet: every one shall receive of thy *words*. ”—That do

[which is] after the *will of* your God. Ye shall not *add* unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye *diminish* ought from it, that ye may keep the *commandments of the Lord your God* which I command you. —I have stuck unto thy *testimonies*: O Lord, put me not to shame. I will run the way of thy *commandments*, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. ---Teach me to do thy *will*; for thou art my Go God. —Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his *commandments*, and obey his voice, and you shall serve him, and cleave unto him. — Wherefore, be not unwise, but understanding what the *will of the Lord* is. But be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect *will of God*. —As servants of Christ, doing the *will of God* from the heart. —The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doth the *will of God* abideth ever. — Whosoever shall do the *will of God*, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother. —Now the God of peace make you perfect in every good work, to do his will!”

Thus, it is written; and men of great abilities, and of different complexions amongst us, have clearly understood, and openly acknowledged the *will of God* to be the rule of human duty. It may be proper to produce some proof of this assertion.

Bp. CONYBEARE: “As the notion of the religion of nature considered as a religion, must refer us to God, the author and object of it, so the notion of the law of nature, considered as a law, must refer us to some superior, the author of this law, and from whose *will*, directed by wisdom and goodness, and supported by power, all obligation, strictly and properly so called, must be derived. —The law of nature, then, is to us a law, because it is and must be the *will of God*.” [Defence of Revealed Religion, 2d edit. chap. I.]

Bp. WARBURTON: “Nothing can oblige but a superior will: and such a will could not be found till the being and attributes of God were established; but was discovered with them. —Hence arose, and only from hence, a moral difference. From this time, human actions became the subject of obligation, and not till now: For though instinct perceived

a difference in actions, and reason discovered that difference to be founded in the nature of things, yet it was *will* only, that could make a compliance with that difference a duty. —For till it be made appear, that man hath received his being from the will of another, and so depending on that other, is accountable to him for it, he can be under no *moral* obligation to prefer good to evil, or even life to death.” [Divine Legation, Book I. §4.]

Mr. BOTT wrote against Warburton's notion of morality; yet he has left us this concession: “Duty, in its constant use implies submission to the *will of* a superior: For which reason” he observes, “we never speak of the duty of God; who has, and can have no superior.” [Answer to the Rev. Mr. Warburton's Divine Legation, pg. 234.]

Mr., PALEY: “All obligation is nothing more than inducement of sufficient strength, and resulting, in some way from the command of another. —As the *will* of God is our rule, to inquire what is our duty, or what we are obliged to do, in any instance, is, in effect, to inquire what is the *will* of God in that instance.”—Mr. Paley justly observes, that “such as reject the Christian religion are to make the best shift they can to build up a system, and to lay the foundation of morality without it. “But” he adds, “it appears to me a greater inconsistency in those who receive Christianity, and express something to come of it, to endeavour to keep all such expectations out of sight in their reasoning concerning human duty.” [Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, vol. I. chap. 3. 4.]

What some writers may think of Mr. Paley's remark cannot be told: we wish, however, it may be long recollected, and that it may be, of lasting service to the professors of Christianity.

Dr. GILL: “If the production of creatures into being is owing to the will of God, and follows upon it; if the several relations they stand in to one another are solely of his appointment and forming, then surely, what is fit, or not fit to be done, in such a situation, must be fixed by, and be the result of his *own will*, as determining them according to the perfections

of his nature; which determination of his secret will being *revealed*, becomes the *law* of his creatures; and being so so, this law is the surest rule of judgment unto them with respect to the difference of moral good and evil; it lays the strongest obligation upon them to do the one and avoid the other, and so must be the best rule of action unto them.” [The Moral Nature and Fitness of Things considered, p. 13, 14.]

Of all the modern advocates for what is commonly called The Nature and Fitness of Things, perhaps, the late Rev. Mr. Balguy was the best: But the best advocate can only *seem* to make a bad cause a good one. But of the *rule of our* duty enough has now been quoted: yet the danger is so great when that honour is transferred to the Nature and Fitness of Things, and to various other rules of modern and of antient manufacture, that the pious reader will not be offended at the preceding quotations.

When we seriously reflect on the dignity of personality, (dignity that depravity does not annihilate, nor even torment itself destroy!) how is it possible to suppose that anything but *will*, directed by wisdom and goodness, and supported by power, can be the proper source of personal obligation? They who have rightly regarded that rule have been truly majestic. Peter and John were full of dignity when to rulers, elders, and scribes, they said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than God, judge ye.

Things, whether tremendous or pleasing, are ever under the absolute dominion of him that made them. So are we, but in a *manner* they are not. We may shudder at the approach of thunder, tremble at its flaming attendant, be alarmed at the prospect of a tempest, or be terrified at the apprehensions of an earthquake, but we cannot treat these things with religious reverence. Such homage we pay to him alone, “Whose hand the lightning forms; who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms.” Whether chastised or blessed, it is still the same. For it is the same hand which corrects and feeds us; and to it the eye of the believer is devoutly turned. He knows who it is that says, “I will affect or act upon the heavens, and they shall affect the earth, and the earth shall affect the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall affect Jezreel.” —In short, he that has a *will* can bow to nothing that has not, and he that has

understanding can reverence nothing that is destitute of intellectual ability.

**II.** The leading *motive* which induces us to regard the will of God, as the rule of our duty is next to be examined.

The result of repeated examination on this subject, in reference to myself, may be thus expressed. I find in all my serious attempts to regard the preceptive will of God as the rule of my duty, there has been a secret and settled persuasion that it is law; and that it is so, because it is the will of the Supreme, and worthy of himself as holy, just and good. I therefore conclude it is good for me, being what I am; that as a rule it is always and altogether good, and indeed so excellent as to be incomparable : and I have observed, the more clearly this truth is perceived, the more constantly it is recollected, and the more carefully it is contrasted with any, or with every opposing sentiment, it has been followed with very sensible advantage.

It is not easy to speak of motives with precision so as to be immediately understood; and the prejudice in favour of what some are pleased to call simplicity, is very great; but in many things perhaps injurious. Genuine simplicity is undoubtedly a charming thing; yet it has its limits, and it has its counterfeits too. He, therefore, who is impatient of difficulty, who is disgusted with argument, who is unwilling to attend to close investigation, and who fancies that everything that is excellent must be easy, is liable to shocking impositions. If the following remarks on motives be obscure, my friends tell me it is a kind of obscurity which the nature of the subject will excuse; and they think that such remarks ought not to be omitted.

A motive is that by which we move; or that, by which we are determined to this, rather than to that; or by which, at different periods, we are moved to both. “If the will be determined there is a determiner.” And if it be by motive, “It is that motive, which, as it stands in the view of the mind, is the strongest, that determines the will.” So, says Mr. Jonathan Edwards; who by motive, “means the whole of that which moves,

excites or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjunctly.” He also remarks, with equal propriety, “Many particular things may concur and unite their strength to induce the mind; and when it is so, altogether are, as it were, one complex motive.”—A gentleman for aught I know of equal metaphysical sagacity, has observed, “The final cause [of action] we commonly style *motive*, by a metaphor taken from mechanical engines, which cannot play without some spring or other mover to set them at work: and because we find action usually follows upon the suggestion of proper motives, therefore we conceive them moving the mind to exert itself.” This gentleman supposes, “that motives do not move the mind as one billiard ball moves another upon their striking: but only that motives give occasion to the mind to exert her endeavours in attaining whatever they invite her to, which she does by her own inherent activity, and not by any power derived from them.” He likewise asserts, “A motive is the prospect of some end actually, in view of the mind at the time of action and urging to attain it.”

Now, if these remarks be admitted, it will follow, that he who does not *perceive* the rule of action, can have no motive, or disposition to regard it; that when he does perceive it, unless he is persuaded it is, upon the whole, *better* for him to be obedient than to be disobedient, or than to be in a state of hesitation, he can have no proper inducement to regard that rule; and we may add, that when any man's motive is commendable, it cannot operate as a motive any longer than while it is present to his mind, with some degree of satisfaction. Weights are called weights whether they are in the box, or in the scale; and springs are called springs, as well when they are laid aside, as when they are so placed as to put the machine in motion: so, motives, are called motives, when they cease to move us, or to be the mean and end of motion. But a man may be rich in arguments who is poor in motives; just as a man may possess a clear understanding whose appetites are corrupt, and whose will is remarkably perverse.

Of the strength or weight of our motives, we may observe, that is always relative: for what are commonly called the *same* motives, do not, in

every situation, move our minds in the same manner. Nothing can move the mind of man which is not present with it. “Nothing can induce or invite the mind to will or act any anything, any further than it is perceived, or is some way or other in the minds view, for what is wholly unperceived, and perfectly out of the minds view, cannot affect the mind at all. 'Tis most evident, that nothing is in the mind, or reaches it, or takes any hold of it, any otherwise than as it is perceived or thought of.” This must be allowed; but when the mind thus moves, the strongest motive, (as Mr. Edwards has observed,) only “operates to induce to a *particular* act of volition.” One act of the will may succeed another in swift succession; but without continual inducement we can neither will nor act. If a man stretches out his arm, he has some inducement to that exertion of will and power; so long as that, or some other motive to stretch out his arm is present and prevalent, his volitions multiply rapidly and almost insensibly; thus moved, he endeavours to keep his arm still extended; but as inducement decays, or is counteracted, his arm alters its position, and is either bent, or falls negligently by his side, as different motives affect his mental and his active powers.

Such trains of thought in the warmth of action, and tumult of temptation, cannot be indulged; yet they are not to be despised. For if, on consulting the pillow, it seems to us we have acted improperly, it may be observed that conclusion always runs on this principle, that we have done something which is supposed to be inconsistent with the will of God. But of that rule of action, there are different degrees of knowledge; and as it advances, and is settled, it is probable, that both in the bustle of action, and in the calm of retirement, we shall more quickly and fully discover our deviations from his unerring will.

What further apology can I make for such unpopular remarks? Permit me to say, “ If some sophisters have treated metaphysical disquisitions, in such a manner that one would swear they aimed at nothing else but to vex and torture the Understanding with difficult trifles, and to infect all language with blundering nonsense, and with the grating horror of barbarous founds which have no meaning, yet men of piety and sense have availed themselves of that science to very valuable purposes.”—“ If the reasoning be good, 'tis as frivolous to enquire what science it is

properly reduced to, as what language it is delivered in: and for a man to go about to confute the arguments of his opponent, by telling him his arguments are *metaphysical*, would be as weak as to tell him, his arguments could not be substantial, because they were written in *French* or *Latin*. The question is not, whether what is said be *mathematics*, *Latin*, *French*, *English*, or *Mohawk*? But whether the reasoning be good, and the arguments truly conclusive.” Mr. Edwards in his Careful and strict Inquiry into the *modern* prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will which is supposed to be essential to moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, reward Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame, from which the preceding observations are quoted, has much to the same purpose. He affirms, “it is by metaphysical arguments only, we are able to prove that the rational soul is not corporeal ; that lead or sand can't think, that thoughts are not square or round, or do not weigh a pound; that we can demonstrate that God is not limited to a place, or is not mutable; that he is not ignorant, or forgetful; that it is impossible for him to lie, or be unjust; and that there is one God only, and not hundreds, or thousands:” nay he affirms, “we have no demonstration of anything, excepting mathematical truths, but by metaphysics.”

A more modern and elegant writer, (though not equally serious nor consistent), has this remark: “I am no less surprised at Mr. Knox's precipitate censure of metaphysics: and I desire to ask this gentleman how he can strictly and properly demonstrate any proposition that relates to the Being of God —the dependence of his creatures —the nature of our souls —the truths of natural religion, &c. &c. but by metaphysics? If he deny us the assistance of metaphysical argument, we must withdraw our attention from some of the most elegant, most useful disquisitions in the theory of science. But notwithstanding the levity of a frivolous age, I trust that *real knowledge* will be safe by its solidity; and that the ponderous erudition of Aristotle will be had in reverence, when the fugitive trifles of a modem essay, like Gallic Balloons, will mount by their lightness and be lost in the regions of oblivion.”

For my own part, I *now* suspect that I do not always know what is, or is not metaphysical; and I am therefore resolved, never to speak against it

again, till I better understand the subject: and then, perhaps, I shall not have any inclination.

III. Let us next consider in what *manner* we should attempt to regard the rule of our duty in our present Situation.

Here it is of great consequence to recollect what we really are; since if we forget it, or deny it, if we suppose ourselves to be either better or worse, the conclusion must affect our behaviour. When the sons of Zebedee requested the highest honours, Jesus said, “Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am to be baptized with? They say unto him, we are able.” But how ridiculous was this precipitate pretension?—On another occasion, our Lord asked his disciples, “Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, saying this man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace.”

Everyone sees the good sense which is here recommended, and which, in common life, is both approved and followed. Why, then, are we so reluctant to sit down and count the cost when we are going to build for eternity; and why are we so unwilling to request conditions of peace by that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel's, that our building may be erected safely, and fixed upon a foundation which shall never fail? But, alas! instead of being taught to give proper attention to the consequence of his disobedience, by which many were made sinners, and to act accordingly, we are urged to consider what we *ought*, to do, and what we *might* do if we *would*, and to believe, that were we thoroughly willing, there is yet some hope even in Babylon, of building “a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven.” In short, modern extravagance is so like antient folly, that it may be described by the same

terms. Of both it may be said, “And this they begin to do; and now nothing can be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

Zeal, however great, if it be not according to knowledge, is as offensive to the unerring judge as indolence. “Israel, which followed the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, “Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence; but whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” This writing, though antient, deserves our best attention. The zeal of Uzzah, in the reign of David, drew down vengeance. David, though a pious king, was offended at it; but, when better instructed, he said, “The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we fought him not after *due order*.”

Never are we first in excellence; never do we take the lead in goodness. God claims that honour to himself. To be *followers* of him is all that grace will admit; and to that end grace is given. Our sufficiency is always of God; it should be so; and he who calls that fact in question, or is displeased with it, will comment with confusion on the sacred text, and will exhort with erring apprehensions.

It is difficult to say what form of speech has been more mismanaged than exhortations. By them, from the first dawning of our understanding, we were taught to think improperly of ourselves; and, indeed, of him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Yes, erroneous apprehensions of our birth, our condition in life, and the principles of piety, were formed and fixed under what is commonly called religious education. Nor can we wonder at it, since so many teachers, of all denominations, so frequently err in what they are pleased to call practical reflections and devout improvement.— A reverend gentleman, zealous to recommend infant sprinkling to parental, and to pastoral attention, informs us, “that original sin implies at least a privation of some *moral* quality which infants *ought* to possess, and therefore argues them the subjects of a moral hate, and of course of moral obligations.” Had not Mr. Fuller been a kind of wholesale dealer in *oughts* himself,

and at this time a *little* out of temper, such language from a Poedobaptist's, might have made him smile. No, I am disappointed; for though in his recent and *rapid* remarks he says, "A child of ten years old is not supposed to be capable of understanding so much as when he becomes a man of thirty though he owns, "nor is a man *obliged* to believe faster or sooner, that he has the means of obtaining evidence," yet he contends that "both the *child* and the man, are *obliged* to be of such a *disposition* as shall cordially embrace the gospel when it is revealed, and its meaning comes within the reach of their understanding."—In a proper place, what Mr. Fuller may mean by *disposition*, (and whether that term denotes a leading principle of human action, in the sense which he seems to suppose,) will be carefully examined.

But as they who adopt the common method of domestic instruction, may wish to know what to do were they disposed to lay it aside, the following remarks are submitted to their judgment: viz. that our first impressions are frequently deep and lasting; that it ill becomes us to teach without adequate understanding, and that it is better to be silent than to speak at random on serious subjects. That we should consider God *is* good, and not to be made so by our acts or dispositions; that his goodness first affects us, and is the source of real religion; that the scriptures make the only infallible report to us of his favour, and that in all our moral instructions a deviation from the sense of scripture is injurious. This however, might be made familiar: and parents for the instruction of their children, would be well employed in communicating the sense of scripture in that easy, engaging style, in which they so frequently excel. But I am not able, in detail, to direct them how to discharge their duty. Yet I beg leave in general, to recommend to their attention the animating and humbling sentiments of the hundred Psalm. It is a prophecy of that mercy which has long since been extended to the Gentiles; and, of the effects of that favour. The three last verses of that noble Psalm run thus: "Know ye that the Lord, he, is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise, be thankful

unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth to all generations.”

It is time we should consider how far we have advanced, lest by going round about, (sometimes to pluck up a weed, and sometimes in quest of something better,) we should lose our way, or forget at least, how far we have travelled. —We have shown, then, that the preceptive will of God is the rule of our duty, that satisfaction with this rule as good, is the leading *motive* of approved obedience, and that the *manner* in which we should endeavour to regard it, is, in every instance, to act, not as independents, but as creatures who neither can, nor should accomplish anything without divine concurrence. We therefore, conclude, that a general idea of our duty may be thus expressed: It is always our duty to strive by lawful means to know what is the will of God concerning us; and as we obtain that knowledge, to regard it strictly with religious reverence: He who is not thus employed is self condemned; and he who is thus occupied, may be conscious that no higher sphere of action can be the lot of humanity. More than this my opponents never attempt to do: nay, Mr. Fuller himself has acknowledged, the whole of what he pleads for is included in the word *endeavour*.

In the preceding pages it will be observed, that moral and religious ideas and actions, are united. This was designed; and if any man can keep them perfectly distinct, to answer any good end, he will do more than has been yet affected. Antient and modern philosophers have made the attempt, but to which of them shall we turn? The best have been consulted with disappointment. In attempting to *divorce* morality from religion, “They have dealt deceitfully as a brook; and as the streams of brooks they pass away. They who looked and waited for them, were confounded, because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed.” Of this fact, they who need conviction may obtain it, by reading *The Light of Nature Pursued*, by Edward Search, Esq. in which they will find the best sentiments of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other antient philosophers, together the sentiments of Locke and Hartley, and other modern philosophers, on moral and metaphysical subjects. Who is able to pursue the light of Nature much further than that penetrating author? Yet, when it is *divorced* from

revelation, as he has shewn, it leads a fallen creature to despair. The pursuer, like him who ventures too near the north pole, advances till light becomes tremendous; because it discovers horrid prospects, regions where the wanderer can never settle, and leaves him without a ray of hope that by still pursuing, he shall ever reach to milder skies.

This section shall be concluded with the following remarks:

I, If it be admitted that the preceptive will of God is the rule of moral and religious action, yet what that rule directs to *in everything*, is not *knowable* by any man. “Who can understand his errors?” Who is he, and what, that need not say to the Almighty, “That which I see not, teach thou me? Teach me thy paths; teach me thy way; teach me thy statutes; teach me thy judgments; teach me to do thy will; shew me wherefore thou contended with me?” Where does that man dwell, who must not confess he “knows but in part,” he sees but “through a glass darkly;” and that he knows not perfectly what he is, or what he shall be? —If this be allowed, it follows, that we all are fallen creatures; that justification by our own obedience is impossible; that to be proud of our sanctification is intolerable, and that forgiveness with God is the only source of human hope, and the true principle of moral and religious action.

II, Though the rule of moral and religious action is not so thoroughly known, by a fallen creature, that, at any period of his life, his knowledge of that rule, as applied to the whole of his own conduct, is *infallible*; yet our labour is not in vain in the Lord. He that said, “Occupy till I come;” likewise said of the slothful servant, “Take from him the pound, and give it to him who hath ten pounds. —For, I say unto you, That unto every one which hath, [occupied,] shall be given: and from him that hath not, [occupied,] even that he hath, [in possession,] shall be taken away from him.”

III, To make what is commonly called the moral law, the *only* rule of religious action, in the *manner* that some do, is inaccurate, and it is perplexing to the minds of men. It seems much more proper to say, that the preceptive will of God is the rule of such action. —But it is said, all

law is derived from, and contained in the moral law; and that the whole decalogue, is contained in two namely, love to God and man. But what that law may contain is one thing, and what we can learn from it alone, is another. All law is of God. He is the fountain of it, and both our lawgiver and our judge. He gave his antient people different laws by Moses: speaking “at sundry times, and in divers’ manners.” Nor would it become us at all to say, that the second law was a mere exposition of the first, or that the third, was nothing more than an explanation of the second. Let any man who has read with care the twentieth chapter of Exodus, read with equal care the twenty-first and twenty-second, and, if he has leisure, let him read also the whole book of Deuteronomy, and seriously consider, whether he should ever thought of so expounding the ten commandments. To which of the ten, for instance, would he reduce these words? “If a birds nest be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.” — “When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shall forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.”

Who is so skilled in the art of reduction as to bring back these precepts with precision, and many more which might be mentioned, to any one of the ten commandments: nay, why should we be perplexed with such a proposition? The preceptive will of God, in its true and relative meaning, is law wheresoever it may be found, and that is enough for them who wish to be obedient.

It will perhaps, be said, we are not now at Mount Sinai. This, with gratitude, is admitted. But if we are not there, why are we ever treated worse than if we were? The law was then given after the Passover had been slain and received, after the people had been delivered from the house of bondage, and was given also by a mediator: but now, we too frequently hear the moral law so stated, and so urged, that what Paul said of some Jewish zealots, is much more applicable to certain modern

expositors than a benevolent mind could wish. The words alluded to are these; “Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”

When the moral law is said to be the *only* rule of life, the meaning must be, it is so, as expounded by some Commentator, or without such exposition. If without the aid of an expositor, then, every man's unassisted apprehension of that law must be, to himself, his rule of life; and if so, he must either endeavour to follow the letter of that law, or to pursue what he conjectures it may virtually contain. To contend rigidly for the *letter* of the law, would be severely to censure those who have attempted to expound the ten commandments; and it would be applauding those transgressors which St. Paul reprov'd: but it would ill become those persons to do this who think it right to give up the Jewish sabbath, and to keep what is properly called, the Lord's day. On the other hand, to contend for what the law is supposed *virtually* to contain, this, will certainly introduce expositions; which, we know, must be the work of expositors: that is to say, of men of like passions with ourselves. But which amongst them are we to follow? Dodd and Cleaver? Mr. John Wesley, or Doctor Gill? The authours who are quoted in Pool's *Synopsis*, or those which are mentioned in the *Critica Sacra*? Or are we to ascend into the higher regions of antiquity, or to descend to the hackneyed and critical remarks of yesterday.

Will it be objected, that a deist might multiply such questions? It is allowed he might: but certainly not to answer the same end. For the object now in view, is to make it evident, that “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of *any* law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.” The assembly of divines, formerly meeting at Westminster, gave us that definition of sin which has now been quoted; and it was worthy of them: but to infer from it, that it is our duty to be holy without divine concurrence, and previous to such assistance, seems to be an inference propped up with pious pretences, and to be as elusive as it is anti-evangelical.

IV, If it be both inaccurate and perplexing to make the moral law the *only* rule of life, it is yet more perplexing, and dangerous too, to preach it chiefly, or as if the gospel was subservient to that law; when in truth, all law, since the fall of Adam, is made subservient to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are plainly told, the “law was *added*, because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made, and that it was “ordained by angels, in the hand of a mediator.” We are also informed, even by Moses, that the law given to Israel at Sinai was *for them*; which the decalogue, abstractedly considered, could not possibly be: since by that view of it, the offence abounded, and the people could not endure what was commanded; and so terrible was the sight, when that law was given, that Moses said, “I Ex-ceedingly fear and quake.”—Moreover, it may be observed, that Moses frequently speaks of the body of the divine laws published by him, (which were not to be *divorced* and rent asunder,) as closely connected with the deliverance of Israel from Egypt; and, as a *body* of laws, peculiar to themselves. So, we are taught by the following declarations: “And God spake *all* these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” —Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: *therefore*, I command thee to do this thing.” At the close of the book of Leviticus we read, “These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses and in the last verse of that book it is said, “These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel, in mount Sinai:” and long after his days, David made this grateful acknowledgement, “He hath shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.”

Should any person, on reading this, exclaim, ‘So, then, unless we are redeemed, we are not, it seems under the moral law!’ such an exclamation would be immature: because what has been said tends only to prove, that no man, since what is commonly called the fall, was ever

under the law abstractedly considered by any external dispensation of divine government; though perhaps many have in the dispositions of their own heart. God will be known to fallen creatures as the God of grace: and everything from him, however it may be perverted by us, is subservient to that idea. But then, he “will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and will shew mercy to whom he will shew mercy.” Though the Jews were a peculiar people; yet God left not himself without witness of his compassion and kindness in any nation. As for us, now in Great Britain, surely, he must be very inattentive to the nature and number *of* our mercies, or very unthankful for them, who does not think it more eligible to live in this country than to have lived in the waste howling wilderness with Moses, or to have lived at Jerusalem in any period of the legal dispensation.

But wheresoever we live in this world, it is certain the law is made by the Lawgiver himself, subservient to the gospel. All of us indeed, deserve to die as transgressors; for continued transgression, daily committed, there is no excuse; nevertheless, for disobedience there is no remedy, and over corruption there is no victory, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is of faith that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed: we cannot therefore, but conclude, that every attempt to make men moral or holy, without any hope of salvation, or to give them any hope of that, without being religious, or of being religious, without believing in our Lord Jesus Christ, or of being believers in him unto salvation, without distinguishing grace, is an attempt which is at once illicit, impotent and in vain.

## SECTION. II.

### *Leading Articles of religious Obligation.*

AS this treatise is written to promote that piety which is possible to be performed, the principles on which it rests, and the union which is here

formed between moral and religious action, always keeps that end in view.

In practical piety, there must not only be a rule of action, and motives to regard it, but those means, and those succours also, which may lead the believer to prefer the preceptive will of God concerning him to every other rule of life. Nothing is possible to us, in the whole extent of duty, without divine concurrence: therefore, in everything which can be so called, it becomes every man that would be obedient to say, this will I do, provided the Lord is pleased to grant me his assistance.

When Caleb asked for his inheritance, then in the hands of the Anakims, he said to Joshua, “If so be the Lord will be with me, then shall I be able to drive them out, as the Lord hath said.” Joshua well understood this hypothetical assertion; for in all his conquests, he obtained victory on that belief. He went forth to subdue the land of Canaan with this promise: “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee: Be strong, and of good courage.” As he went forth, so he finished his course; for when that servant of the Lord drew near his death, thus he took his leave of Israel: “The Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: —take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.”

The inspired writers were very careful to keep up these animating and humbling ideas. Moses said, “Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself; cities great and fenced up to heaven; a people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak! Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee, as a confirming fire: *he* shall utterly destroy them, and *he* shall bring them down before thy face: *so* shalt thou drive them out and destroy them quickly, *as* the Lord thy God hath said unto thee.” And thus, it was that Israel actually obtained the promised possession: “For

(as David devoutly acknowledged,) they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them.”

These important lessons are strangely overlooked by some, in favour of a distinction too highly valued, and too little understood. You do not, say our opponents, distinguish between natural and moral ability. We reply, you do not sufficiently consider the close connexion which subsists between the limited and dependent powers of man; nor do you always recollect how you are disposed, on certain occasions, to represent the *total* inability of fallen creatures.

Permit us, for a moment, to ask, whether our invisible enemies are, in no respect, *greater* and *mightier* than we? If they are, favour us with a solution of this question, How are we, in our own strength, to be victorious? It is said indeed, “Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.” But from whom does Satan flee? The graceless and the proud? No; but from the humble, to whom God is pleased to give “more grace:” and he flees from them, not merely because they resist him, but because the Lord is pleased to *rebuke* their adversary. If Satan flees from a polluted worm, it is because the Almighty has said “Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness. —Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the holy one of Israel.”

To shew that no action *of* ours is less laudable when we are animated by such promises, and walk by faith, (being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,) is a task that no man of ability need blush to undertake. But such disquisitions, were we able to pursue them, must, at present, be declined. Having believed, we speak: satisfied that the credibility of this part of our creed will bear the crucible of critical inspection. —But the leading articles of religious obligation are now to be considered. To know what they are, depends on a question seldom agitated in the schools, and but rarely pursued, even in the pulpit. *What is the religion of a sinful creature?* is the important question. For, if “by nature we are the children of wrath, even as others;” if, though partakers

of grace, we are yet in such a situation as ever to have reason to say, “Forgive us our debts,” (which is on both sides admitted,) it follows, we are so shut up,” that unless we may be religious while “encompassed about with infirmities, there is no possibility of our being religious in this present evil world.”

The absolute dependence of a creature on God is the root of all religion. For, as a creature cannot have any thing but what he has from his Maker and Preserver; as he cannot ever act without him, it follows, *all* that such a being has, (in that *manner* which God is pleased to direct) should be devoted to him. The first wish of a creature to act independently of his Maker, was mischievous madness; and every wish of ours to be completely independent, is of the same complexion. That which leads to such a wish, may be considered as the *proton pseudos* of error in religion. —We yet “err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”

Of the religion of innocence, we know nothing by experience; nor can we expect we ever shall: for in heaven, the ransomed of the Lord will say, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” As therefore, our religion must ever be the religion of them who forget not they have sinned, nor by whom they are redeemed; and as our religion, at present, if we have any, must be constantly connected with confession of sin, and hope of forgiveness with God, the question that has been proposed, is, to us, a question of considerable importance. Let us be thankful, we may ask it without being too much dejected: For though “the law entered that the offence might abound, yet,” we are assured, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

When the nature and the consequences of our fall are properly considered, we are compelled to conclude, that a sinful creature can have no religion which yields him satisfaction without the hope of salvation; and we are certain, without a Saviour, he can have no such hope; but must either languish in despair, or endeavour to, content himself with

something that is delusive. This conclusion is affecting; but that which affects us, we survey with deep attention. We consider whether the affecting object be desirable and possible to be obtained. If it seems to us desirable, but at the same time, absolutely out of our reach, we are driven to despair: but if it appears to us possible to be enjoyed, that view of the agreeable object produces hope; and hope animates to that action which it alone excites: for every distinct affection of the mind has its proper and peculiar force on our active powers. As we cannot however obtain anything without the use of means, we next consider *how* that object on which our mind is fixed may be obtained; whether by any independent efforts of our own, or only by the favour of another. If it can be obtained only by the favour of another person, the question then is, whether we are disposed to be supplicants for his assistance, and are willing to submit to the consequences of ingenuous, and, if the case require it, of repeated solicitation. If we are not, the object desired, was only desired on condition it might be obtained by some other way than this; it therefore, keeps its distance from us; but when the only way in which we can succeed meets with our cordial approbation, we may be confident that way will be instantly regarded, and surrounding obstructions will, if it be possible, overcome.

Now, if salvation is, in truth, our object, and we perceive that “with man *it* is impossible,” and are persuaded, “with God all things are possible,” then the nature of salvation, the manner in which it is to be enjoyed, and the end and evidence of such felicity, will occupy our most serious meditations. Many who have been thus occupied have been thoroughly convinced, that the stone which was set at nought by the Jewish builders, is become the head of the corner; that neither is there salvation in any other; and that salvation is not to be enjoyed, even in Jesus Christ, but by the energy and grace of the Holy Ghost. Without him no man can call Jesus Lord; without him, believers themselves cannot mortify one corruption.

Of these sentiments is the writer of these pages; and on these principles, which appear to him both certain and safe, he ventures to say, that the leading articles of religious obligation are, Attention to the word of God

and prayer. with our best efforts to possess and keep a single eye, and to pursue that path to which it may direct us; 2nd, to do this in the whole course of our religious conduct, without turning aside either to the right hand, or to the left. It has been proved, that the preceptive will of God is the rule of moral and of religious action. But where can we so soon, or so well, expect to discover what is his will concerning us, as in his word? Not to say how much must ever be unknown without it. To that therefore, our attention must be turned, if we mean to be religious. Yet that very word informs us, we are not only called upon to “search the scriptures,” but also to “lift up our voice for understanding.” It assures us, “the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding;” that he hath “shewed us what is good, and that he alone putteth wisdom in the inward parts.” If so, not any attention of ours to that which God hath shewed us in his word, can supersede the necessity of prayer. But when these duties are united, all our diligence and devotion must be disgraced, unless we possess a single eye; and that would be imparted to a poor purpose, if we did not attempt to pursue that path to which it leads us. That path, the whole of things considered, is always best; but if it be, to turn aside from it, must be without excuse.

What the leading articles of religious obligations are, in our opinion, and why they are so called, has now been plainly told. But if the reader prefers a different arrangement, or wishes to multiply the number of these articles, he is welcome; should he however, suspect from any thing which he may meet with in these Thoughts on the Duty of Man, that he who wrote them imagines any want of conformity to the will of God is innocent, or harmless, he may be assured such suspicion is, in truth, as groundless as his heart could wish. The negative idea of our not being holy, with the blame and misery attending it, without the least exception, is neither opposed, found fault with, or extenuated, in this performance: but the inference, that therefore, we ought, being sinful, to be holy, by some act of ours, previous to any gracious operation of the Almighty, this positive idea is thought to be both preposterous and pernicious; and as such, it is here attempted to be overthrown.

To guard, with additional care, against misapprehension, let us distinctly re-consider what has been called the leading articles of religious obligation, in that order in which they have been already introduced.

## I, Attention to the word of God,

That there is a book called the bible, that it contains a narrative of many things of very great importance to us, not knowable by any other medium; that it is directed to the sons of men; that those men who have been most rational, have, in all ages, admitted that the bible contains those precepts and those promises, which are truly divine, every man of good sense, who is tolerably impartial, must acknowledge. —On the contrary, who can disprove the credibility of that revelation, or prove it has not been a blessing to every believer? With such views of the bible, every man who has them is obliged to treat it with reverence. —But these views may vary, or they may not exist. It may be so; yet every view of this object, or of any other, and indeed the want of discernment as well as the power of perception, has its own cause, and it has also its own consequence: he who weighs this fact with skill, will derive no excuse from it to gratify a trifling temper, or to indulge a sensual disposition.

When, however, the bible is read with reverence, he who so reads it, either fears he is yet destitute of the grace of God, or he thinks he is possessed of such favour, or he is doubtful what is his real situation. If he is doubtful, he should consider that many are left without any doubt of their being destitute of distinguishing grace. If he concludes he is possessed of nothing more than a moderate share of rationality, still how valuable is that gift! how many have it not! and, whose power was it imparted, and is it yet preferred? But, while he thus reads, and thus reflects, if the bible informs him of a supernatural power, and assures him that the salvation of a sinner cannot be enjoyed without it; if his bible also informs him, that this power is freely extended to men of every description, “without money, and without price,” would there be any *reason* why he should be offended with those declarations?

After all, since our best attention to the word of God is never carried by us, beyond our efforts to understand it, and to submit to its injunctions; (which endeavours God crowns with success, or withholds that blessing from us, as it seems good in his sight;) since this is that fact which every sober man admits, how rash would it be to read the Word of God without prayer? but who dare pray for promised assistance, that does not endeavour to read both the law and the gospel with reverence, with circumspection, and with a wish to derive advantage? We see, then, that these two duties are inseparably connected. Having considered the first, let us now glance at the second.

### *I, Attention to prayer.*

Prayer, from the preceding paragraph seems to be essential to our edification. Where can be the wonder? Every creature is necessarily, and always, dependent: for he who is now a creature, once was not. His very being is entirely owing to the will of him that formed him; and his first appearance in life his condition in it, and his continued preservation, are, every moment, suspended on his Maker's pleasure. This is the state of every creature without exception; but in this world, the whole host of creatures are not only dependent on the Almighty, but in a state of perpetual dependence on each other. We see no kind of inhabitants in this world superior to ourselves; but on what do we walk, or feed? In what medium do we see, or breath? On what materials do we labour, and how many are they who must labour daily to support us? Can any man ask these questions and be insensible of his situation as he is a creature? Can any man be wholly ignorant of his additional ground for being subject to God who owns himself to be a sinful creature? Who can unite these ideas and not confess the propriety of saying to the Almighty, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Prayer is founded on a sense of our wants, and on belief of the grace of God to supply them. Why should that man pray, "if such a man there be," who is not sensible of any want, or who concludes he is so sufficient for himself as not to need divine assistance? If, on the contrary, any man perceives he wants that good which he is utterly

unable to procure, or to deserve, he is allowed to ask it of God: provided he is willing to seek it entirely as a favour, which God may withhold without injustice, and which if he bestows, the supplicant is not to consume upon his lusts. Nobody can possibly pray for that which, in his own opinion, is not in some respect good, but to that which is good, a transgressor can have no claim: he therefore, that prays for intellectual, or for spiritual good, prays for that which it is neither possible, nor proper, he should be able to confer upon himself.

The importance of prayer, in the apprehension of the apostles, may be collected from their conduct on the choice of deacons. For when they were first chosen in Jerusalem, they said, “look ye out among you, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” From this resolution we may infer, that they considered the word which they were to minister, as the basis of their profession. On it they meditated, and to the sacred text they gave themselves up, without reserve, that their profiting might appear to all. But conscious of human imperfection, and fully persuaded that all their sufficiency was of God, they not only read the old testament with caution, and considered its scope with circumspection, and in what manner the gospel might be preached with propriety, but continued instant in prayer, that they might be found able ministers of the gospel, workmen not needing to be ashamed.

It is true, we are not apostles, nor too much like them; but if *they* acted in this manner, though the first- rate ministers of Jesus Christ, can any man think himself exempted from such circumspection and from such devotion, who wishes to enjoy their comments on the old testament, or who wishes to be edified by their testimony in the new? Surely, that book which contains the whole of everything which is peculiar to Christianity, should be carefully consulted by every man who wishes to be a Christian; and, if in that book he should be told that what is there revealed cannot properly be enjoyed at any time, unless “the Lord gives us an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear,” the consequence is, he that would properly enjoy the gospel, must either

pray to the Almighty for understanding, or, if his word be the word of truth, he must perish in his folly.

But notwithstanding these facts, all our attempts to pray must be in that order which our faculties and the nature of things will admit. For if any man does not perceive his want of wisdom, or is not persuaded that God “giveth to all men liberally, and upraideth not,” how shall he avail himself of such a privilege! Our next obligation is

III. An attempt to possess and to preserve what our Lord himself has called a single eye.

He said, “The light of the body is the eye.” He has also said, “If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” — Mr. Balguy has properly observed, that “the most natural signification of a *single eye*, in relation to the mind, seems to be that purity, integrity, and simplicity of judgment, which consists in being directed and governed solely by evidence [such, however, as the nature of the subject will admit,] “without regard had to any other consideration. The sight of the mind is then properly single and undivided, when in the view of any case, or the examination of any question, it looks at nothing but evidence, and judges accordingly; without being influenced by any other regards or motives whatever. —On the contrary, an *evil eye*, is an eye distempered, distorted, and depraved; and when spoken of the mind, denotes an understanding clouded with prejudices, and a judgment disturbed and disordered by sinister views, and irregular influences.” From this explanation of a *single eye*, Mr. Balguy has inferred, “If reason or understanding, which is the eye of the mind, and the light of the soul, be vitiated by prejudices, and blinded by partiality [as he might have added is the condition of all men not converted from such corruption;] the consequence is not only darkness instead of light, but darkness to a high degree; such as fills the mind with errors and absurdities. disorders and confusion.” Thus, he introduced his text, when he preached from these words. “If the light which is within thee be darkness. how great is that darkness?” [Balguy’s sermons. vol. I. serm. XI. On the Causes and Consequences of intellectual Darkness.]

A single eye may possibly be the boast of some who never had it; but they who do not wish to secure that prize, are certainly running at random. Yet where do we see those sacrifices evidently offered up, which may convince us that some men have such a prize steadily in view? But indeed, what have they gained, in every age, who have been most resolute to get, and if possible, to keep a *single eye*? Nay, what suspicions, and what censures have they not drawn on themselves? Be it so, yet they have gained in this noble pursuit the testimony of a good conscience, and that felicity which party interest cannot bestow, and which popular clamour, with all its rattle, cannot take away. This felicity, whatsoever it may cost me, I would enjoy. In quest of this, unsolicited, I thus write. To what a happy purpose, should the reader by it be inclined to press towards the same mark! May he at least, remember, without a *single eye*, as here explained, and as extended to denote a benevolent disposition, scripture must be perverted; and, may he not forget that the final consequence of such folly will be confusion!

If, indeed, a man could be found who has not any suspicion of his own ignorance, nor any conception of what is called a *single eye*, it is not easy to say what would be the duty of such a man; for one might almost as well talk of the duty of an *oyster*. It is not possible that any duty can be performed by us, unless we are willing to discharge it; but to will, is to determine; and to determine is to perceive, and to prefer. That man, therefore, who is without perception, is in a most deplorable situation; existing, if he exists at all, without envy, and without excellence. For such an object we can do nothing more, or better, than to pity him in our hearts, and to remember him compassionately in our prayers.

If one duty does not generate another, we may say, that duties are inseparably connected. For, if it be any man's duty to read the word of God, it must be his duty, as difficulties occur, to pray he may understand it. But without a *single eye*, his understanding must be disordered; should that however be granted, it must be his duty who is so favoured, to pursue, if it be possible, that path to which it may direct him.

IV. *This attempt, without turning aside either to the right hand, or to the left, is the last obligation proposed to be considered.*

One end of our actions is always our own reasonable satisfaction; and it should be so; for, if our actions, at any time, are justly offensive to ourselves, whom, by such actions, can we expect to please? Light is not imparted to amuse us, or to be concealed, but for use. — “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. —Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. —Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as the children of light. —Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others: but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night: and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.” Such is the language of the new testament to them who profess to be followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But what difficulty, what labour is needful to prevent those evils by which the mind of man is darkened and depraved! In order to this, in Mr. Balguy's opinion, it is necessary, “That we carefully guard against prejudices of all kinds, and take special care to preserve the light of our minds pure, clear, and uncorrupt. That the eye of the soul be kept *single* and sincere; fixed at all times upon evidence alone, and viewing every object in its own proper light, and genuine colours. That we accustom ourselves to observe and follow invariably the rule of truth; steadfastly purposing to resist every temptation, and to withstand every propension, that may tend to draw us from it. That we neither submit to custom, nor authority, without examining, to the best of our power, the grounds on which they stand, and the reasons brought to support them. That we keep a strict watch on our own inclinations; lest they insinuate into our understandings, and give a wrong turn to our judgments. In fine, that no principle of vanity, no views of interest, be suffered to break in upon our integrity; but that we ever seek the truth in the love thereof, with all simplicity and sincerity of mind. By a careful use of these means, we shall be, in a good measure, fortified both against erroneous judgment,

and vicious practice; and the light which God hath given us will not only be maintained, but continually improved. Thus, our faculties will have full scope, and be exerted to the greatest advantage. And of how great consequence this is to us, we cannot be ignorant. All our hopes and all our welfare depend on the *use* of those talents which God has given us:” [or are inseparably connected with it] “If we suffer them to be corrupted and spoiled, the damage must be great, and the loss irreparable. On the other hand, if we employ them wisely and well; our care will turn to the noblest account, and we shall reap the fruits of it for ever. It behooves us then, to be watchful and circumspect in a matter of so great a moment; and, to render our *endeavours*, the more effectual, to implore the assistance of heaven in all things; that so we walking in the light of *his truth*, may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

To this exhibition of the leading articles of religious obligation, let us add the following remarks

I. No man is *obliged* to do anything who has no *inducement* to perform that action. It does not appear, that the greatest extremity will produce an exception to this fact; taken as we wish to have it understood. Suppose a thousand men on board a man of war; suppose that at midnight and far from shore, their ship took fire; that the flames burst out, that all on board, officers, passengers, and crew, were, reduced to such a dilemma that, in a few minutes, they must be consumed by the increasing flames, or perish in the regardless sea; in such a situation, some would probably be at their wits end, but the question is, whether any one of all the thousand, to avoid being burnt to death, would leap into the ocean, unless, in some respect, that dreadful leap seemed better for him than to abide in the ship? —For my own part, I cannot conceive how a voluntary action can exist without the influence of *inducement*; nor that there is any reason to wish we should ever act without it. For, if we could act without inducement, we might act without motive; but if we could act without motive, we should act without having any determinate end in view; but he who acts to no end, might as well have been inactive. If such freaks must be dignified by the name of actions, surely it will be

admitted that conversion is not requisite to produce them; nor can it be denied that religious actions are as distinct from such capricious movements as they are every way superior.

Should it be said, We are undoubtedly obliged to do many things we are not induced to perform; it may be replied, he that supposes we are, would find himself perplexed if he were to be asked, what things? Inducement is of great extent. We may be induced to act from motives more numerous than most imagine: by fear of offending, by hope of honour, by expectation of advantage, by delight, or at least by amusement in the action proposed; by a junction of each, or by some supposed consequence which leads us to prefer action to inaction, or this action to that; or by other motives yet unnamed; but when any proposition, or purpose is before us, we always determine as some inducement, or as something seducing affects our mind. —Abraham was induced to offer up Isaac; and, by so doing, he not only gave glory to God, but obtained by faith, a good report. —Achan, on the contrary, was seduced to transgress the divine commandment at the siege of Jericho; and, by so doing, he dishonoured God, and, by his unbelief, brought upon himself reproach and death. He saw with ardent eyes, a tempting object; his ideas and impressions were vivid; his will was instantly moved; God permitted him to resolve, and the forbidden deed was done. — “Every man is thus tempted, when he is drawn away of his own hearts lust and enticed; then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

II. Our obligations cannot be diminished unless inducement decays; consequently, if they ever are diminished, our degradation and misery must be proportionably increased. Inducement may be diminished two ways: First, when a person has not ground to believe that his character, or behaviour, can be so pleasing to the Almighty, as once they were. Such was the situation of Adam after he had sinned. Secondly; when we have not a clear perception of the hope set before us in our fallen state. Who will assert that he who has, and who has not a clear perception of the hope set before us in the gospel, are equally induced to serve God?

Yet, shall we from hence infer anything in favour of rebellious angels, or of rebellious man; anything that would diminish their misery or their shame? Far be it. The premises are very remote from such a conclusion. If, for the sake of argument, we may rate the obligations of an intelligent, innocent and happy man, at a *thousand*, it is easy to conceive, that this sum is supposed to bear some proportion to the nature and extent of his present felicity, and his capacity to enjoy it; nor is it difficult to conceive that the sum of his obligations may be come *greater* as his perceptions are enlarged, and as his felicity is more and more enjoyed; but what should make it *less*, but that which makes him miserable and contemptible? It will be objected, Are not the miserable and the contemptible as much obliged to God as they who are partakers of his grace, or as they who are now in glory? —Let us, if it be possible, understand one another.

We admit, God is worthy of praise in the punishment of transgressors and in the chastisement of believers; because, he is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. We admit, in every continued transgression, they who are punished, or chastised, are left without excuse. But still, we believe that punishment is punishment, and that chastisement is chastisement, in their nature and effects; and we think it cannot be otherwise. “When God hideth his face who can behold him? whether it be done against a nation; or against a man only.” In such a situation, whether what is called the hiding of his face be partial, or complete, they from whom God is pleased to withdraw the light of his countenance, cannot have the same perceptions as if they continued to enjoy it. —But such want of perception is owing to their folly. —This may be granted, without admitting that our darkness and distress in *this* world, are always equal to our criminality. Remember Job. We are, without exception, in a state of darkness prior to our conversion, and remain in it till *called* out of darkness into marvelous light: this shows the hand of God to be upon us so as not to be removed by any but himself. Besides; when deliverance comes, and any man is translated by the Father of mercies from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, even he who is thus favoured, knows but in part; after his translation, he may be suffered to walk in obscurity, both as to the

dispensations of divine providence, and in reference to his being a subject of that peace which passeth all understanding. —This will not satisfy. A sinner is bound with nothing but the cords of his own iniquity, which he *ought* to snap asunder. —How contrary is such a position to the testimony of God. It declares, that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that by one man's offence death reigned; that by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; that Jesus Christ was anointed to preach good tidings to the meek [or to the poor Luke 4: 18.], and sent to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: in short, it assures us, that nothing but the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, should make us free from the law of sin and death. —To what does all this tend? —To convince us that it is an evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord; and to prove that in him, from whom we have revolted, is all our help; that the way of our return to God, light to see it, and strength to enjoy it, are so many demonstrations of his favour to disobedient and gain-saying people.

III. No sinner can be saved by a *mere* attention to his duty. This seems to be impossible: since that must be done for us and in us, if ever we are saved, which it cannot be our duty to perform: because if we are saved, we must be bought with a price, and be begotten again to a lively hope; we must also be preserved and renewed daily, in the spirit of our minds, and continually protected from visible and from invisible opposition; each of such a nature as not to be overcome but by divine assistance. Can it be our duty to buy, beget, preserve, renew and protect ourselves? Could we do these things, boasting would not be excluded.

At the end of some prayer, after some recent backsliding, on our attempting to join a church, or under some overwhelming calamity, we are perhaps advocates for the grace of God with becoming zeal, and probably disposed to say, May the Lord alone be exalted! But alas! how soon, and how often, are such words forgotten? — When we were little in our own eyes, it went well with us; what has been the consequence of entertaining a very different opinion of ourselves let our own vexations say.

IV. No sinner can have any ground to expect salvation who is habitually unmindful of his duty. For, there is what may be called a present salvation, as well as that which is to be enjoyed hereafter. But if we are not saved in this world from inattention to the word of God, and from being inattentive to prayer; if we are not also saved from an evil eye, and from that crooked course of action to which it would infallibly lead us, what hope can there be of finishing our course with joy, or, of ever being at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore?

Thus, in a manner undisguised and free, what is supposed to be a *general* idea of our duty, and what are thought to be the *leading* articles of religious obligation, have been distinctly stated: to which, additional remarks have been annexed. What may be the final consequence, who is able to foresee? As to *approbation*, may no man approve of any thing in this treatise of which he will ever have just reason to repent! As to *censure*, should it fly abroad without the sanction of that authority it would be criminal in me not to revere, or be multiplied without that kind of argument which only makes it truly keen, it will probably come and go without having any power to disturb my quiet. As to *complaint*, should I learn from it, that any of my real friends are grieved, that, indeed, would grieve me also; but, unless they could convince me, I have erred from the truth, neither my principles, nor my purpose in interposing in this controversy, will suffer me to be disconsolate. As to *reputation* and *success*, they are where they should be, and will be as upon the whole, is best. Few men are more sensible than myself that neither my political sentiments, nor my theological, are such, as, at present, are likely to be very popular: but they have been culled with care, they have been searched and lifted with attention, they have been again and again compared with what seems to be the sense of scripture, they are retained with a good conscience, they are published without the frenzy of a party spirit, or a wish to form one; and therefore, unless the popular taste, within my observation, was more correct, and promiscuous applause more precious than at present I am able to discern, they will be supported as my abilities may admit, till better tenets come within the reach of my understanding. As to such *objections*

as Mr. Fuller has formed and published, they will be examined in the following section.

### SECTION. III.

#### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

*In three Letters to the Rev. Mr. FULLER.*

#### LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

SHOULD this second part of my treatise fall dead from the press, it will prevent my publishing an abridgment of the first, of the same size and price with this, which is intended, if the present pamphlet should be well received. When I wrote the former part, such inquietudes occurred as do not now exist. It was therefore swelled beyond my first intention, and it is in some places more inaccurate, and in others, more intemperate and unguarded, than I now approve. If a second edition should be published, those errors are intended to be cashiered. That, however, must be left where it is, in the region of possibility; at present my business is to examine your remarks.

As you have reason to expect my observations will be made with such temper as may manifest total respect to you \* {See Page 1}, it would give me no pleasure to think you will be disappointed. You will, Sir, distinguish between respect and homage; the first will be granted without regret; the second you will be unwilling to receive. You will also distinguish between respect and flattery; the latter you do not wish me to indulge; and, in polemical epistles, it would appear in an awkward situation. But, treated as I am, and being the older man of the two, it seemed more civil to direct my letters to you, than to make them anonymous, or indeed than to adopt any other mode of answering your objections.

Something like satire and severity may well accord with real respect; how else can we account for such strokes in sacred epistle's? \* {To The

Corinthians and Galatians). Should you be of opinion my letters are overcharged with such unwelcome blows, consider, you are not, on this article, the most impartial judge.

In what manner shall I proceed? Shall I examine your letters in the order you have arranged them, or by a careful selection of homogenous matter, shall I first weigh the worth of your complaints, next consider the value of your compliments, then, the nature of your concessions, and lastly, with tenderness, inform you how crude and immature your observations seem? If I knew your wishes they should be gratified. But as they are not known, I must resolve without the benefit of your assistance.

It is, then, my resolution, to take your letter as they lie before me, and to pass over nothing which, in my own apprehension, seems proper to be considered. It is probable our judgments will not go just alike on this business. Much is of importance, in an authour's eye, which few readers are able to discern. You have condescended to examine but little of what I have said in this controversy already; and, to say the truth, I commend you. For as some things were not so deserving of your inspection as could be wished, others you did well to wink at, because it might have been troublesome to have surveyed their meaning. — Enough of preamble. Let us now attend to your *first* letter.

You say, Sir, "I cannot help observing, that the *spirit* in which Mr. M. has conducted his performance, renders a sober and serious reply to it very difficult." If by *spirit* you mean "my personal qualities as a writer, and as a Christian," you have determined, "that such things do not require an answer." "Nobody expects," you are pleased to say, "that you should go about to defend your own abilities for writing, or the *spirit* in which you have written." Am I then bound where you are free?

When I proposed to consider your lead propositions as obscure, inconsistent and erroneous, it was not imagined you would applaud the design. Ingenuous concessions from Mr. Fuller were not expected. But you surprise me when you say, (after throwing together almost all the bad qualities a writer can possess,) "now suppose all this were true, what

do nine parts out of ten of it concern the reader?" Could I adopt this strange way of thinking, it would ill become me to write another line.

You do me justice by supposing I was reluctant "to lay hands on a single obscure individual." Permit me again to repeat it, I have no personal quarrel with you; and had I sooner known that what you have written had been so little read, even amongst our own denomination, your repose would not have been disturbed by me. But your errors, apart from your attempt to spread them, are very common: and such is my disposition, if all other things were nearly equal, I had rather oppose *such* errors in one of my own denomination than of any other.

Those gentlemen which you say I have associated with you, are, in my opinion, of different complexions. Has not one of them disapproved of your thirst for disputation, and told you, with his usual benevolence, that he disapproves of your leading sentiments? It is true, he has attempted to defend the association letter from Aulcester, and has justly rebuked an inconsiderate man, who, for some supposed personal allusion to him, dealt out promiscuous censure. But does this worthy friend of mine approve of that obnoxious obnoxious paragraph which I have found fault with; or do the association at large, approve of such language? I will not believe it; and if you press me to say why, you shall have my reason. As to the other names you have mentioned, I hope, Sir, I may treat them with due respect, without believing those gentlemen are exempted from mistake: and, may I not be allowed to take notice of such mistakes of theirs as fall in my way, without one wish to do any of them the least injustice? It is not *their* writings, nor is it *yours*, that I am disposed to attack; no such thing; it is nothing more than those *parts* in each, which I think are not to be defended; and I am happy to say, were all those parts expunged, much would remain worthy of notice; which would then be read with greater advantage.

You apprehend, that "some truths would be evident even to the mind of a heathen, were he but the subject of a right spirit." What a right spirit may be prior to the perception and influence of truth, I cannot divine. But everything, in some men's opinion, (though not in yours,) is now,

alas! supposed to be right without regard to truth. The poor sophism of Mr. Pope, is; by many, thought a pretty thing. To hear a poet, or a deist say, “For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight; His can’t be wrong whose life is in the right,” could create no no surprise. But that men who are not poets, and who will not allow us to call them deists, that such men should adopt this language is much to be lamented. May you never listen to that siren song!

The heathens to whom you refer us, without a right spirit, both saw and felt the force of truth. God shewed it unto them. It was the work of the law written on their hearts. But had they, or could they have, without his word, any light that led them to the hope of salvation? \* (1st Corinthians 2: 7—11).

When you speak “of God's requirements as being *in themselves easy to be complied with*,” what can you mean? Are they not, all of them, relative? and must they not be easy, or difficult, in reference to them who endeavour to be obedient? You say, they have nothing hard or difficult in them, but what arises from the depravity of our hearts:” and yet you acknowledge such depravity is not to be overcome but by that power which is almighty. Your conclusion that the power of God is necessary to subdue the reign of sin is just; but, when it suits your hypothesis, you seem to leave but little for such energy to affect. Besides; is it true, that there is nothing hard or difficult in God's requirements, but what arises from the depravity of our hearts? Have you never found when the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak? Never met with obstructions from the corruptions of others, as well as from your own? Never been hindered by the devices of Satan? Never wounded by his fiery darts? —The scriptures you have quoted at the beginning of the sixth page, properly expounded, will not answer your purpose. But when their connexion, the design of the prophets in each, the period in which their words were, uttered, and the situation of the people to whom they spake, are overlooked, they may be pressed to serve purposes you yourself would disapprove.

You seem to think, Sir, it is our duty to have *more* wisdom than is “actually and effectually imparted to us by the Holy Spirit.” May I ask,

by what *means*? But instead of granting me such information, you tell me, if it be not so, “then it is no man’s duty to be wiser than he is and then, say you, “there could be no reason in that complaint, *O that they were wise!*” Seriously, Mr. Fuller, what would you do if you had it in your power? Would you persuade us, that when Moses predicted what would befall the tribes of Israel in the latter days, because they were resolved to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of their hands, that he wished they would make themselves wise? Or do you not rather think his prayer was that they would hear with patience the reproofs of their own inspired prophets, and humbly beseech the Lord to give them them increasing understanding? Can you conceive that Moses, of all men then living, would have thrown out any sentiment which should have had any tendency to have diminished either the dependence or the devotion of the children of Israel? As to myself, you know, Sir, that if I think no man is obliged to make himself *wiser*, or more *spiritual* than he actually is, I think at the same time, *all* men ought to occupy the powers they possess to the glory of God; you likewise know, I believe there is not any excuse for the slothful, and that boasting is excluded from them who are disposed to improve their talents, to the greatest possible advantage. My reason for this conclusion is, because no mere occupant can possibly be successful in anything, without that blessing which he can never purchase, nor ever command. Is this, “the same thing as proving there is no such thing as sin in the world?” But you have probably blushed already that you have drawn such an inference; formed, as you may one day acknowledge, without the least foundation.

The remaining part of your sixth page has been noticed before; \* {Page 19-20}.except what relates to the word *disposition*, which is yet thought proper to be postponed. Far be it from me to contend with you for contention’s sake; but if you choose to think so, I can only wish you were better only wish you better employed. —I have reconsidered what you have said of “an assurance of a personal interest in Christ,” and I still think you have indulged a levity on that subject, of which, in your advancing years, you will repent. It is allowed there is “nothing mean or low in a man’s pursuing his own interest in subordination to the public

good; or his own reputation, in subservience to God's glory:" and what could tempt you, my dear Sir, to imagine that I wish to contend for either out of that connection?

You have said, all that I know, or *can* know, of your reading American writers, is, that you have read and approve of their sentiments. Yet you are disposed to say, about fourteen years ago, I maintained your present sentiments, without any such restriction. But lest I should be vain by being told *you* "received some advantage on the subject now in debate, by hearing me preach upon it," you add, "*you* disliked the violence with which I then maintained my present sentiments, and the supercilious language which I used of those who differed from me; who you then understood to be GILL and BRINE, or writers of that stamp." Is it possible, my friend, that even fourteen years ago, I could make use of terms more supercilious, or vulgar, than you have now selected in reference to those judicious and respectable writers? That I ever treated those worthies, whom I knew and loved while I was yet young, as you are pleased to *represent*, cannot be admitted; if it had been so, and they were yet living, I would beg their pardon. Upon the whole, however, my sermon "set you a thinking," and you now believe "I was of use to you." If I was, you must own that good temper in a minister is not essential to your edification; and it looks as if you had presumed that your being in a good temper was not essential to my instruction.

My sermon on (Romans 10: 3). "entitled the Rock of Offence the Sinners last and only Refuge, which ascribes men's non-submission to the righteousness of God, to *voluntary ignorance, prejudice, pride, and self-righteousness*, appeared to you to carry in it considerable evidence in favour of those principles concerning the truth of which, [when you read that sermon] you then hesitated." If Sir, you then hesitated, whether Jesus Christ could be a Rock of Offence to any man but from such depravity of mind, I am sorry for it, and thank God that I was, as you are pleased to inform me, instrumental in your conversion to a sounder way of thinking: but if you would infer from any thing I have said, that Christ *should* be our only refuge without effectual calling, and affirm, that he *ought* to be enjoyed both as our Refuge and our Rest, previous to the

beginning of that good work which is of the special grace of God, permit me to say, the inference and affirm affirmation are entirely your own; nor will you be envied by me either the credit, or the consequence of such a conclusion.

You ask, Sir, Whether I have not derived instruction from the works of men, as well as my neighbors.” When you are next in town pay me a visit, and you shall see my study; from which you will probably conclude, if I have not gained some advantage, it must be owing to my want of capacity, or to my want of prudence.

That the writings of Mr. J. Edwards are *honored* by my “warmest recommendation,” is a remark descriptive of your politeness. No, Sir, the writings of that great and good man, stand in no need of my applause. You do me too much honour to suppose it possible. But I still think a judicious abridgment of his treatise on Religious Affections is much wanted; nor do I recollect any work of his, which would not be much the better if it were well abridged. The style of Mr. Edwards is frequently coarse, and often quaint; his manner is tedious; and, though a great man, he is occasionally trifling ; his sentiments are sometimes difficult to be understood, and sometimes not worth understanding; but his writings, when pruned of everything useless and unpleasing, would still contain so much of piety and argument, as in the same compass are seldom to be met with, even in works of merit.

You admit, I have discovered “many apparent inconsistencies” in your treatise; and you allow, there are “many opposite things asserted” in that performance; but you seem to comfort yourself with plebeian conflation. If you have been incongruous, I have been absurd. But suppose I was every way as inconsistent as Mr. Fuller, what would you, or your reader, gain by a proof of that affection? To support your censure, my sermon on (Romans 10: 3). is again quoted; but the impropriety of your *inference* from it, has already been exposed.

If, in the course of seventeen, or eighteen years, any of my religious sentiments have been changed, you seem to think my *integrity* is at stake

for want of “honest acknowledgment, and for not answering my *own* arguments.” Permit me, Sir, to say, that for a course of *thirty* years, few people can be mentioned, who have read and thought for themselves, whose theological sentiments have altered less than my own. About that distance from the present time, my change of sentiments was great in my own eyes, and in the judgment of better judges. They glorified God in me; believing that I had obtained mercy: nor are you disposed to assert, they were deceived. Since that period. I have not been without variegated temptations, nor always unaffected with them, or unhurt by them; far from it; but the leading articles of my my creed have continued with me to this hour; in which, by every conflict, I have been in the issue more and more confirmed.

It seems, my friend, the more uncivil in you to hunt after the appearance of anything inconsistent in my writings as far back as the year 1763, in the first juvenile production that fell from my pen, since in writing to you on the same subject, you were told, that the charge of your being inconsistent would be entirely confined to your *treatise*, and that I thought it would be very unfair to search for anything of a *prior date*. For this resolution, the following reason was given; namely, that the *last* pamphlet is always supposed to contain the *present* judgment of him who wrote it. In this respect, I observed, it was like a man’s *last* will, which should ever be so interpreted, as if he had never made any other. \* {Part I. Page 39, 40}. In another place, you were informed, my ideas of the excellence of God were not diminished since I *ceased* to talk of that subject as you are now disposed to talk. \* { Part 1. Page 80}. Overlooking these remarks and concessions, you still say, If my sentiments are altered, why did I not honestly acknowledge it? I think, Sir, that has been done, as much as the case demands. But you wish me, it seems, to be more explicit. I will, because it is not my design to withhold anything from you which may give you satisfaction.

On my first acquaintance with religion, I was sufficiently calvinistical. But as my thirst for reading, and addition to thinking continued, they were too frequently indulged without discretion. Early in life, I learned that the ancient Romans gained much by suffering their enemies to

instruct them in the art of war; by their adopting such measures, building such vessels, and making use of such weapons, as they thought were better than their own. Their maxim seemed noble; on the strength of it, I resolved to learn of every body; but alas! not having judgment and prudence equal to my zeal, shadows were sometimes overvalued, and sometimes such whims embraced, as a riper understanding induced me to renounce.

While I lived in Leicestershire, Mr. Jonathan Edwards was mentioned to me as an oracle; and it was my lot to read him with that want of caution which is too common to persons in such a situation. The effect of such folly was soon felt. Facts now began to be my favorite study; with them, I soon saw Mr. Edwards's notion of disinterested love would not agree; nor was it long before it seemed to be as inconsistent with the doctrines of grace. Grown more cautious by reflection, Mr. Edwards was read with greater care; the consequence was, my raptures were diminished, but real respect for his writings remained; nor is it yet destroyed.

With men and books my errors have been much the same. Ever eager to read both, passion too frequently got the start of prudence; but I have been severely taxed for that folly. On removing to town, my change of situation was considerable. In the country, surrounded with *Arminians*, many of them serious; in town, surrounded with *Calvinists*, some of them not so serious as might have been expected. Being a stranger to a trimming temper, what seemed reprehensible was opposed by me with as much sincerity as if I had yet been in a village; and probably, with as much want of patience. This ill directed zeal, however well intended, issued in a separation. The separatists having left us, we found ourselves, as a church, in peace. That peace has now been enjoyed for thirteen years; and it has opened a door to some improvements, and to many useful reflections. Among the latter, thoughts on a misguided zeal to urge men to the practice of piety, in the manner you have attempted, have often been indulged. Both my own mistakes, and the mistakes of some who are of reputation, gave me ample occasion to multiply such reflections. The cause of legal violence, the consequence and the cure, were often thought of before your treatise was written; since that period,

you may well imagine such trains of thought have been rather multiplied than diminished.

After all, it would be a great addition to my happiness to possess more correct ideas of men and things, and to be able to divulge them with greater propriety. My controversy with you, before it closes, promises to be the occasion, in some degree, of such advantage. Cheered with such a hope, every concession, which a good conscience does not prohibit, as far as my faults are perceived, I am willing to make; and more than this, you cannot wish to extort from

Your respectful humble servant,  
*Windmill Street, Tottenham Court Road,*  
*July 14th, 1789.*

## LETTER II.

**DEAR SIR,**

YOU inform your anonymous friend, you “knew a man, that everybody around him reckoned to be very *proud*.” Probably, Sir, you knew a church too, which was anxious, at that very time, to procure this proud man to be their *pastor*. Ask your worthy friends, (by whose favors your manners have been altered,) whether if I had consented to their respectful request, they were not resolved to confer upon me that honour. You must confess they who wished me to form that relation saw some commendable qualities in Mr. Martin; nor can he forget the friendship, or the fellowship of those “around him,” while he lived in the country. When, indeed, he came to London, the case was altered. Let me not be so wicked as to say why. If you choose, when you are in a good humor, to guess at the ground of the alteration, it is probable your guess will be worthy notice.

I am sorry an argument of great distinction, and tending to bring the matter in dispute between us to some issue, should have been overlooked. Thus, you state it: “Every man ought to be Christ’s *friend*,

or his *enemy*, or to stand neuter, and be *neither*” This argument, you thus support: “To suppose the *first*, is to grant all that is pleaded for; to suppose the *second*, is too gross to need a refutation; if then neither of these will satisfy, it must fall upon the *third*, but this our Lord declares to be an *impossibility*; *He that is not with me is against me.*”

On this dreadful dilemma, the following remarks are at your service:

1. When “to be, or not to be,” is the important question, it seems easy, in common, to understand what is intended; because it evidently relates to some action to be done by him who asks it, though he is yet unresolved. But you say, “Whether it is the duty of men to *make themselves* good men or not, is not the question; such language, or such ideas,” you add, “never proceeded from my pen. The thing” you say, “which I affirm, and which he denies, is, that it is the duty of a bad man to BE a good man.” But what this BE can *be*, when it is so stated, I honestly own, I am unable to conceive.

2. To say, “every man ought to *be* Christ’s *friend or enemy*” seems to be an awkward saying; unless you were speaking of such men as were *neither*; but that, you say is impossible. To ask whether he who *is* an enemy, ought to *become* an enemy, is throwing your *ought* into a disgraceful situation. The question should stand thus; *Being* enemies to the empire of Jesus Christ, by Christ, by hereditary depravity, and by wicked works, *how* may such enemies be made his friends? But from this question you shrink as if you saw your danger.

3. To support your assertion, that it is impossible for any man to be in a *neutral* situation, you quote these words of our Lord, “He that is not with me, is against me.” But however impossible it may be for any man to be *neither* the friend, nor enemy of Jesus Christ, you wish not say it is impossible for a man to be in *doubt* whether he is for him, or against him. But it is your manner to argue from that which is not evident, as if it were out of dispute. Were you not so fond of abstract propositions, incautiously stated, but more contented with that junction of ideas the scriptures teach, neither you, nor any of your friends, would be losers by

such an alteration. —As to the text you have quoted, many Commentators have thought Satan was chiefly intended. He is emphatically, the adversary of Jesus Christ; and, the blasphemy of the Pharisees who said, “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils,” was, by our Lord’s answer properly exposed. If you would extend the interpretation, remember, to be with Christ is to be on his side, in a manner that denotes *conversion*; but conversion always is by the Spirit of God; it is his work and his glory. “If,” said our Lord. “I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, *then* the kingdom of God is come unto you.” But if this kingdom cannot approach *towards us* without “the Spirit of God.” can it be *in us* without the efficacy of his power, and the influence of his love? Nay, suppose it thus to be commenced, we may affirm, unless his gracious operations are continued, those who were set among princes, would sink down again to the dust and dunghill, and die in a state of degradation. —Such are my remarks on that argument which you say you had “urged pretty much;” whether you will continue to urge it “pretty much,” must be left to your discretion.

Your notion “of a perfect *future* conformity to God’s law,” let me entreat you to reconsider. If the moral law requires personal and perpetual obedience, without allowing or forgiving one offence, then, whoever has once offended under that law. should renounce the idea of *his perfect* future conformity to it. Every continued violation of the moral law is without excuse and is an increase of that which is blame-worthy; but after the entrance of sin, nothing in a sinner, here, or in heaven, can be perfect conformity to the moral law. Since Adam sinned, and came short of the glory of God. Christ alone, is the end of the law. The law, in my opinion, is dishonoured by your language; should you ever think so, you who are so zeal zealous for the law will thank me for this observation.

But, at present, instead of thanks, possibly, I am again in danger of saying something which you “should not have imagined that any man in his *senses* could have called in question.” What can be the cause which calls for such rebuke? Why, I have called in question what you have taken for granted! Dreadful temerity! —Ay, but the thing. —Why the

thing which you have taken for granted is this, “that so far as anything is charged upon men as their sin, so far the contrary must be their duty.” But, my dear Sir, how am I to know how far your *so far* extends? What is his name who is able to understand you upon this subject? You add, in your usual manner in talking of me, “he speaks of men’s being given up to *vile* affections — allows such affections to be *sinful*; and yet will not allow it to be their duty to profess the contrary!” After an additional exclamation, you ask your anonymous friend, “On what principles, and in what manner is such a *writer* to be reasoned with?” May he be allowed to tell you? Then, good Sir, his request is, that you would reason with him on the principles of Christianity, and treat him, if you can afford it, in a manner that is a little more consistent with common civility.

In the evasions you have been constrained to make on figurative expressions, you are to be pitied; your ascribing to me a talking of being rubbed up by the Spirit of God, is forgiven. You must know that phrase was put into the mouth of a Commentator more like yourself than me. — If some people would have thought that rightly to *use* or *occupy* what we have, would be to seek that which we have not,” their thoughts meet very much with my approbation. But should a sinner, seeking what he has not, say, I *ought* to have that favour which I beg without begging? I ought to be, before I have it, as wise and as holy, as if it, and every other favour, had been a thousand years in my possession?

After much amusement, you ask your dear friend these modest questions: “What does he mean? what is he about? Has he any sentiment upon the subject? Or does he mean barely to oppose?” If this be your language concerning me when you are *amused*, what must be expected should your wrath be kindled?

The subject of natural and moral ability is by design avoided in these letters, because in my *third* part, a section on that subject is promised. Should that section be published, you may have some reason to conclude I am as far from being a *lunatic* as your benevolence towards me will

suffer you to with. — My description of the case of Sampson, and your inference from it, are as near together as Kettering and London.

You say, “Mr. M. has greatly abounded in *misrepresentation*.” But this is a charge you are unable to support. Never, you may believe me, never have I yet willfully misstated your ideas; that could not be done without *design*, and I am not conscious of forming such a purpose. To the best of my understanding, when I quoted anything from your treatise, your ideas were carefully conveyed; your words indeed, have sometimes been omitted, or altered, as the nature of my period required. But this is a liberty every man is allowed, even in making quotations from the word of God. All parties allude to it, take a single verse in the order it stands, or by way of transposition, without rebuke: and, provided this be done without any fraudulent intention, no man forbids the practice.

On the charge of misrepresentation, you assure your friend in your *second* letter, “you will but mention one instance more.” But since you again and again renew that charge, if he was not one of your *dear* friends, he might be tempted to suspect, not your veracity, no, that is safe, but your want of memory. —By the way, let me beg your excuse for not always producing the pages of your Remarks as I go forward. Such figures do not please all eyes alike. Besides; it is too much for me to believe, that you and I have many readers who will trouble themselves to compare my answer with your invectives.

It is well if your nameless friend be not wearied with your questions. You say he has a knowledge of my character; and indeed, it is needful he should to answer some of your queries. You ask him, to what he can impute my applying what you have written upon humility in the *abstract* to your *own* humility? Whether this worthy friend will impute it “to *ignorance*, or *malevolence*,” let me know when he, has settled the business of imputation, and sent you *his* account. In the meanwhile, hear my *own* account. What I have written on humility, was written with a wish to convince you of the impropriety of talking abstractedly of that grace; since all humility must be the humility of some subject; it was written also with a wish to convince you that what you call your *own*

humility, is blended with such incivility and accompanied with such rudeness. that, if it be not corrected. you had better suppress publishing additional thoughts on that remarkable feature of the new man.

It seems you are persuaded. “you ought to be free from prejudice:” yet who would think so from the manner of your writing? Forgive me if I say that unless both your writing and reading be a little altered, you are more likely to have your prejudices rivetted than subdued. — When our Lord said to his disciples. “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken;” it is evident, he spake of his resurrection from the dead, and of their reluctance to attend to the sense of the prophetic word on that important subject. You either knew this, or you did not; either way, that text had better been omitted, than produced as it now appears.

If I am one of those *Calvinists* who “treat the distinction of inability into natural and moral as a new invention” — “it would be no want of modesty to tell me, that my reading must be very small, or to very little purpose.” It may, Sir, be no more want of modesty in *you* to tell me this, than to send me, at second-hand, many other handsome things. When you are a man of *reading* such censure will shock your feelings.

In the middle of the last century, Peter Moulin, Pastor and Professor of Theology at Sedan, in his Defence of the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches, has one chapter on this very subject. This chapter, were it translated, would begin thus: “A new doctrine requires new distinctions. Our innovators, in order to perplex us, introduce a cloven-footed distinction. They say, there are two sorts of inability, the one natural, and the other moral.” But more of this in its proper place \*{ Part III. § 6. Yet unpublished}. You see, Sir, this Sedan Professor, considered this distinction as a *new one*; and we are not wont to call that old on theological subjects. which was justly considered as new in the day of Oliver Cromwell. If Mr. Edwards, Mr. Toplady, and Dr. Gill, in contending with *Arminians* availed themselves, in a limited view, and with sobriety of such a distinction, this is no reason why you should fiddle upon it. like some scraper on a broken violin; who, unwearied

with his labour, though our ears are filled with dissonance, scrapes on as if he was charmed with his uncommon skill.

It seemed of some importance to you, to inform your friend it were *puerile* to have any dispute with me. whether you were approaching to *Baxterianism*; would it, then, be *manly* in your opponent to attempt to persuade Mr. Fuller that he is a *Calvinist*?

In another of your questions you ask, “Is it so inexcusable a fault to be wanting in what we are not obliged to *have*?” You know, Sir, in my opinion, he that is conscious of any obligation is induced; but to talk of a man’s being induced to do nothing; is not very common language; and to say a man is induced to *do*, or to *have* anything, without any mean of performing the action, or of obtaining the object, is to talk above my comprehension; and probably, above your own.

Was it my friend, in some rapid flight of yours, you looked down on your present antagonist so much to his mortification? Now I am *proud*, then then a *lunatic*; now *foolish*, then *profane*; now *ignorant*, then *malevolent*; now *beneath resentment*, *incapable of blushing*, then *envious* and gaping after academical *emoluments*. You either think so, my dear Sir, or you do not; if you do not, why am I thus aspersed? But if you really think I deserve such appellations, how is it, that of all the opponents you have had, none have been so *amusing* to you as Mr. Martin?

Why, among the rest, do you charge me with being *profane*? Have I, like Esau, for one morsel of meat, sold my birthright? No such thing. But reputation is an end for which I write, and the applause of competent judges *seems* to be the summit of my wishes. Yet, Sir, your conduct shows you cannot bear reproof; and more than once you condescend to appeal to “competent judges:” nay, I am afraid you have stooped so low as to be content with their applause whose judgment is yet too green to make it worth your notice. Hard is my lot indeed. You seem to have procured a patent to say anything, and to reprehend me severely if I call anything you say in question. But I have introduced the authority of St.

Paul to justify my *folly*. For *this* you charge me with being *profane*. Suffer me, my friend, to say, with what propriety? Though Paul never said to the Athenians, “Now, I praise you brethren;” yet to the Corinthians, he indulged that address. In another part of the same epistle, to the same people, he said. “Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.” May we not infer from such behaviour that if the church at Corinth had been as dead to his praise as the beasts he fought with at Ephesus. or as the Stoics who disputed with him at Athens, he would not have treated them with such marks of respect? He that is dead to prudent praise, is not alive to well supported censure; and he that is dead to both, must be taught, if he be taught at all, as Gideon taught the men at Succoth. —If you please to consult Cruden’s Concordance under the word *praise*, both as a noun, and as a verb, you may possibly think better of that motive of action than you are yet willing for certain reasons, *openly* to own.

Why should you imagine I am so *heroic* as to have no dread “of the anger, or resentment of others?” You have been told, if I must be compelled to hear the prolonged tone of well supported censure. I should feel as much as the humane could wish. \*{Part I. Page 208}. But you have overlooked that information. Believe me. Sir, I much, dread the displeasure of sensible men, when their good will towards me is as conspicuous as their censure. If you will have it, that *therefore* I am not out of temper at such remarks as yours, you will certainly do yourself an honour by making that observation.

Fond as you say I am of fame, on whom do I fawn? whose support do I solicit? when do I call myself an ambassador? when do I profess to be profoundly humble, or eminently holy? when do I dress as a clown, or as a fop, to gain attention? when do I tell stories, or jest, in the pulpit, in hope of pleasing those who love to be tickled, and not to be taught? Yet you know who by such craft have been caressed, and who by such tricks have obtained learned distinctions. From such follies, you are, in part, exempted; may you find grace to renounce the whole; and everything else which may improperly affect your growing reputation!

That anything has been hazarded by the questions I have asked \*{Part I. Page 58}, or that your interrogations \*{Remarks. Page 20}. will expose me to any danger, has not yet been discerned. These things will not compel me to deny a fact which is not my disgrace, nor by any means peculiar to myself. I confess, it is my wish to undertake nothing which is not of good report; and having engaged, it is my desire to act as being willing to deserve it. Contempt of honest fame is contemptible; indifference to it is injurious; a thirst to enjoy it from our fellow creatures, without, or beyond desert, is madness; to feel this vicious thirst, and to affect we have no wish to be applauded, is something you you are perhaps, better able to describe than I am able to depict.

Degrading others is as distant from honest fame, as my heart is from the most distant wish that you should be degraded. Believe me, my friend, your jewels are untouched; you are in no danger of losing anything by me you should wish to keep; We pair our nails, and cut off other excrescences without regret. Such warts and wens you have indulged too long. Was it not some tumor that wanted amputation, which lead you to conclude I must *swell* with an improper idea of myself, because it was supposed you would not hesitate to say, that your present competitor was above contempt? You often call me your *opponent*; and, on the authority of Johnson, I used the word competitor in that sense. Now, that I should fancy, I was qualified to say *something* in answer to *Mr. Fuller*, which would be above *contempt*, surely, Sir, unless you were somewhat off your guard, you would not have called this in question.—Where I have said my arguments are *formidable*, is not just now recollected ; but it is easy to infer, if you have not felt them to be of force, you might have answered them better, and written with less appearance of being angry.—All conclusions that are good, are in my opinion *inevitable*, so that if either I, or you, have formed, any good conclusions, they are of that description.

You are too indulgent, though not exquisitely polite, when you say of me. “Allow his heart in *one* instance to be better than his system.” This, Sir, is what I cannot allow. My system is made up of sentiments; and my heart is no better even in *one* instance, than the truth it has received.

What the human heart may be uninfluenced by principles, or better than the principles which it prefers. I cannot understand. But the term *heart* is a favourite; and, like other favorites, too frequently esteemed without understanding. On the contrary, the *head* is a term a little suspected; and, like other suspected things, it is often treated with too much contempt.

In the note at the close of your *second* letter, there is something so like ill-nature, that were you not the good man you are, I should call it by that name; and really, as the matter stands, I do not know by what softer name to call it. That advertisement which is published at the end of the Christian's Peculiar Conflict, was as much applauded by a sensible man as it is condemned by you. It was well intended; and had my progress in writing well, been as conspicuous as my intention was good, it would give me great pleasure to reflect on what is there with too much truth acknowledged. But alas! I have yet written nothing but what a good abridgment would make much better. Should my life be spared, my leisure admit, and I should fancy my ability equal to the task, I may possibly publish without subscription, an abridgment of all my papers which I deem to be worth preservation.

How dear to you must have been the disposition to find fault with your poor adventurous friend, when you wrote that strange note. —In what manner it is customary for the associated ministers and messengers to revise, alter, and correct their annual letter, the letter from Aulcester, and others beside it, bear witness. Candour, perhaps, has not yet suffered them to be over nice in this business. But, that I may not be thought wanting in kindness to my old friends, let me entreat you to assure them, I have not forgotten the pleasant days which their friendship gilded; nor their wholesome remarks, by which I was, in these days, repeatedly instructed. Mr. Isaac Woodman can never be thought of by me without continued satisfaction; yet, even from him, I dared, in some things, to dissent, and do not repent of that resolution. But his prudence, his peaceful turn, his cheerful call, his sagacity to perceive what was relatively right, O Fuller! these were gems I admired in that dear man. God grant that I may live to admire as much in you! He is dead, or I would not have said so much: but tell my brethren, who yet, as well as

myself, survive him, I love them all; and that I believe it would be to my advantage to love them better.

Let me hear no more of my association letter; it was written on Election; a subject as important in my estimation now as then. Assure them, I did not refer to sentiment but to style; not to what we use to call the “subject matter,” but to the manner of its being drawn up, when I put it among my “fugitive pieces.” When they know this, as they have never wished to value themselves on so poor an attainment as what is commonly called a good style, they will, at your request, be as cordial with me as ever.

That I am not a competitor with you for fame, may be owing to your renunciation of it as a motive that induced you to write your treatise, and your recent remarks. If, Sir, fame was not your motive, every good judge will think, so far at least, you acted wisely. Till your labours are more replete with learning, manners, critical acumen, and sound divinity, it is said, I may be confident I shall not be *envied* the honour of being your antagonist. But who believes all that is told him? Whether I am, or am not envied, the honour of entering the list with you, nothing, if it be possible, shall prevent my being, with due respect,

Yours in our Lord,  
*John Martin.*

***Windmill Street, Tottenham Court Road, July 22d 1789.***

### **LETTER III.**

DEAR SIR,

I BEGIN to be alarmed, perceiving, now it is too late to alter my plan, that in *one* letter three of yours must be noticed. Indulge me with your best temper on this occasion; and since you wished me to make this part of my treatise cheaper than the former, bear with the want of *enlarged* attention to your remaining remarks.

Your concessions on the subject of disinterested love, though they are as they are, are accepted for all they are worth. You admit self-love to be implied in our being required to love our neighbors as ourselves; but you ask, “Does it follow, that because a pursuit of God's glory cannot be separated from our best interest, therefore it cannot be distinguished from it?” It is of no moment whether it can or not; since that pursuit and our best interest are so inseparable, that without the former, the latter cannot, in any instance, be at all promoted.

Tutored by you, who can remain destitute of understanding? You have said, “you know of no such properties in the Deity in which his creatures have no interest;” nay, you have said, “that *whatever* excellency exists in the nature of God, that excellency *is* engaged in favour of people;” yet you immediately ask, “But does it follow, that because, if I am a christian, there is *no* excellency in God but what I *have* an interest in, therefore, such interest is the *only* possible consideration, for which I can or ought to love him?” If it does not, something which is neither *excellent* nor *interesting*, must be the object of your esteem.

“In one sense,” you allow, “it is true you know not what God is in himself.” Shall I presume too much to ask what that *one* sense is? I am interested in the solution of this question, because you still assert, “we must necessarily love God for what he is in himself—antecedently to our enjoyment of him.” You ask, “Do men ever seek a portion in earthly things, without viewing that portion as good and desirable *in itself*; whether they have it or not?” One would think, the portion which a man *has*, he need not *seek*. When the cock, (according to the fable] found on a dunghill, a diamond, he said, ‘Had a lapidary found this treasure, his heart would have been elated; but for me,’ (continued our prudent cock,) ‘I should have much rather found a grain of barley!’ We cannot wish to be degraded to the condition of a cock upon a dunghill; but surely, to prefer that which is relatively of no value to us, to that which is, would be no proof of our good understanding. When foolish and disobedient, we preferred ashes to bread, and that which satisfieth not to that which is every way substantial; but how were we called from such

delusions? Was it by the tinkling sound of disinterested love, to feast on mental error, or on some abstracted notion, idle as it is abstracted? No; “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness;” this was the language which roused our attention, and raised in us a hope of our being made partakers of “the sure mercies of David.”

That *you* “can distinguish between the affection which you bear to a man on account of his kindness to you, and that which you feel towards him on account of his general character,” it hardly becomes me to contradict. But in each of these views, it is observed your affection towards this man, is said to be “on *account*.” On account of what? If you knew his general character to be *cruelty*, would you love him on account of *that*? But must his *kindness* lose its value, because you were a distinguished object of his benevolence? This may discover what some may call *your* humility, but who will think this to be a part of your best understanding? —A good character among men cannot exist in any man, unless he has some capacity, inclination and opportunity to do good; nor can it be perceived and approved, without some advantage to them who enjoy it. When Paul said to Timothy, “Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;” he had the good of believers in view. Believers, therefore, from that period to this, have been thankful for such examples; have wished they might be multiplied and continued, and have lamented they should be so few in number, and that their lives should be so short. But where would be the good sense of all this, if they derived no *advantage* from such examples?

My quotation from Mr. Boyle seems to have given you offence. Thus, you express your displeasure: “what can be thought of Mr. M.’s ingenuousness in quoting from Mr. Boyle against the doctrine of disinterested love, when everyone who reads his performance, must see that *that* doctrine is there expressly and largely defended?” Ask a worthy friend of ours and he will tell you. For when he collected the Concessions of so many Pedobaptists in favour of believer’s baptism by immersion, he said such testimony to him, was worth a thousand others.

When you inform me, that “the sum of all the rewards contained in the gospel, is God himself,” I give you credit. But how is God himself the reward of any man? Is he not so by covenant? By a covenant ordered in all things and sure? By a covenant containing all our salvation, and all our desire? To some, “our God is a consuming fire.” But to the elect, he is a sun of righteousness, arising with healing in his wings. If we have any reward it must be of grace; and that grace is our best interest. That I once said more than became me on disinterested love, has been acknowledged. But you ask, in capitals, “Did he then think himself a *wiser* man than he does now?” —HE DID.

When a man reads any affecting story with emotion, he cannot examine it with minute attention. But when affection subsides, he may say, what doth it? If he perceives the narrative to be well founded, and judges his emotions to be productive of good effects, he will read it again with closer inspection; but if he thinks it fabulous, and its effects noxious, he throws it aside. On these principles, I have not read Sir Charles Grandison since I was a boy: but on the very same principles, I read daily, some affecting narrative in the word of God.

The charge of *hypocrisy*, of all others, was the least expected. But this affront is easily surmounted; because it will gain no credit. —Every good author has written when he should have slept. Even Homer nods sometimes. If the Drs. Goodwin, Owen and Gill; if Mr. Charnock and Mr. Brine, have talked of loving God for his own excellence, yet not to answer your purpose. If they have, it is obvious, you take and leave what you please of their writings. Am I bound to take the whole?

When I mentioned having had trials and observations more in number and variety, than some people have yet had opportunities to experience and consider, it is plain I had no person in view who was *older* than myself.—If you wish me to feel what I have not felt at your rebukes, write with caution, correct with care, and postpone your publication till you have very little to hazard by its appearance. But what counsel can be more unwelcome to your ardor? The first notice I received of your rapid

Remarks was thus expressed, in a letter to a friend who sells your publications.

“More trade for the Booksellers! Shortly will be published, Remarks on Mr. Martinis late performance; entitled Thoughts on the Duty of Man, &c. by Andrew Fuller; price 6d.”

“About six weeks ago, I set about it. It has been finished about two or three weeks; except copying it out for the press. Of all the opponents I have had, none have been so *amusing* to me as Mr. Martin. It is almost impossible to be out of temper with him. You may mention the above *in whom you please*.”—Who could be terrified with such tidings?

When you had “*finished*” your Remarks, they were sent to London. To whom? Published as they now appear, one would imagine young men had the revision of your manuscript. If elders were permitted to see it, they seem to have treated you as an object unable to bear contradiction; or if they were faithful, you have convinced them you were not to be instructed. — At the close of your pamphlet, is the following advertisement: “N. B. A reply to Mr. Taylor’s XIII Letters will shortly be published.”— I hope, Sir, your *shortly*, like my *soon*, is not to be understood strictly. Unless you *make haste slowly*, a man of Mr. Taylor’s abilities will compel you to make “more trade for the Booksellers;” to speak more properly, to give them additional trouble; for Booksellers would starve by selling such pamphlets as yours and mine.

In the beginning of your fourth letter, though you had promised to the contrary, you again renew the charge of misrepresentation. You how complain, because I have represented you as “maintaining that it is men’s duty to produce spiritual dispositions, to be born again, to vivify themselves, to make the word effectual to salvation, to convince themselves of sin, and to be the sons of God.” But you suppose, “all I would abide by is, that these are the just consequences of your principles.” Of this, from the following quotation, without a Comment, let the reader judge. “Whatever a person *is*, or *does*, in respect to spiritual *dispositions*, and *exercises*, when he is regenerated, we think it

*no more* than what HE ought to have *been*, and *done*, prior to that period, as well as at the time \*{Treat. P. 131}.

If you have been inconsistent on this subject, you have formed that plea upon it which was expected \*{Part I, P. 103—105. m P. 20}. However, if you wish it to be known that you do not believe it is “men’s duty to produce spiritual dispositions, to be born again, to vivify themselves, to make the word effectual to salvation, to convince themselves of sin, or to be the sons of God;” I am willing to extend your concession as far as I can. But have you considered the consequence? For you may depend upon it, sensible readers will say, “With many a weary step, and many a groan, Up a high hill he heaves a huge round stone; The huge round stone resulting with a bound, Thunders impetuous down and smokes along the ground.”

If my reasonings affect anything, you say, “it is not the duty of believing in Christ, but that of being the subject of spiritual dispositions.” Of this subject, I have promised to take some notice m; and I venture now to assert, no kind of dispositions can exist in us, without sensations; nor sensations without motion; nor motion without a mover. If a man feels pain in his great toe, he is disposed to pull off his shoe and search for the cause; if he perceives his pain to proceed from a thorn, or from some internal disorder, or only from a sharp piece of gravel lodged between his stocking and the part affected, he acts accordingly. When a man is fast asleep, till some internal, or some external sensation affects him, he sleeps on; but when thus disturbed, according to the nature and degree of the sensation, so is he disposed to act. If he finds himself awaked and in health, and perceives it his usual hour of rising, he is perhaps disposed to rise; but if he hears the watchman say, ‘Past three o’clock,’ it is more probable, he is disposed to sleep a little longer. If when he is determined to get up, such sensations and ideas rush upon his mind as he disapproves, he is disposed to dismiss them; if he succeeds, and a better train of thoughts occur, he is disposed to pursue it till he meets with some obstruction. —Now, Sir, I wish to know, whether what you call spiritual dispositions, holy dispositions, a right temper, a right spirit, a frame of heart, and so forth; *ought* to exist without sensation and

perception. If it ought, what may we call this strange thing *capacity*? But whence is that? Are any of our religious friends ripe for another revolution of sentiment, and ready to hear it is our *duty* to have both *capacity* and *genius*? Are they willing to be told, if this be not the duty of *all men*, it is difficult to conceive how capacity or genius “can be either necessary or acceptable to God?”

Having told us, “Every sinner is required to love God with all his heart,” you infer, “this implies a right spirit and add, “a right spirit, in *this* view, is a duty.” In what view? As it is *required*? But are the precepts and promises to be divorced? Are we *ever* required to consider the precepts abstractedly; to be affected with them, and to act upon them, as if such injunctions alone existed? Were we under law *alone*, we could not be under grace; but he who is not under grace, is under the dominion of sin. In the empire of Jesus Christ, grace reigns. If so, it takes the lead; and it is both the cause and conservation of all moral excellence. Yet when I ask which must take the *lead*, the blessing or the duty, you call this an “unmeaning question.”

Softly, my dear Sir, softly, I beseech you. “Mr. Martin’s *best* friends *detest* these principles —they must always be *detested*. If this be not *antinomianism*, nothing *ever* deserved that name!” What have I done, Rev. Sir, to deserve this holy rancor? Why, I have said, it is not the duty of a bad man to make himself a good man. Indeed, Sir, you glory over me too much; since you yourself have said, “Whether it be the duty of men to *make themselves* good men, is not the question.” You have assured me, “such language, or such ideas, never proceeded from your pen.” But, wo worth the day! I have also said, it is not the duty of every good man to make himself as holy as St. Paul. Yea, and “there “there was a time, when Mr. M. himself, considered such notions as not only *dangerous*, but *despicable*.” If the abused reader should consult your proof, what must he think of your candour? In a sermon published in 1776, I have said, “But to infer that Christ obeyed moral precepts to obtain liberty for us to break them; or that since he has magnified the law and made it honorable, it is of less moment for us to regard it, than if he had not, is highly absurd; nay—such conclusions are as dangerous as

they are despicable.” Such were my sentiments; and on this subject, my thoughts are still the same. But what are *yours*?—As to my *best* friends, if they choose to withdraw their friendship from me, unless I profess to believe it is the duty of every good man, however he may be employed, assisted, tempted, or deserted, to be in every moment of his conflict, nay, while he is asleep, as well as when he is awake, as holy as St. Paul is in heaven; it will only prove that some of my best friends are far more intolerant than I expected. But that I have any friend disposed to treat me in this manner, or who is unable to perceive your intention, is incredible.

“If a righteous king confer with a number of his rebellious subjects”—What then? Must the God of all grace, speaking to us by a Mediator, model his compassion, and adjust his conduct, after your description of an earthly king expostulating with his *fellow* men; so that, if they who are rebels against God, be not instantly willing to come under divine government, the “conference must immediately break up?” You may reply, your similitude does not rest on such a supposition. If it does not, it is useless; and if it does, it is injurious. Men dead in trespasses and sins, are not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be. If such men are saved, they must not only be reasoned with, but converted. But in conversion, God takes away the stony heart out of their flesh, and gives them a heart of flesh. For he speaks to them by that Son who has “received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” At such compassion, the converted say, “Who is a pardoning God like THEE, or who has grace so rich and free!”

“The language of the bible,” you inform me, “is not, use such and such means to get those dispositions of which we are at present destitute; but, BE YE HOLY, *for I am holy*.”—The bible is a book of considerable size; and the language of it must not be judged of by a few preceptive sentences. The contents of the bible are various, relative and connected. When you are properly attentive to the *whole*, you will not quote the sacred text in a manner so partial and unfair; nor will you apply that to the unconverted, which evident evidently belongs to them who are passed from death to life. Your mistake is as great as if you would form

your judgment of the holy anointing oil, from *one* of the principal spices by which that ointment was compounded. (Exodus 30: 22-25).

But if the language of the bible be what you represent it, whose language is this? “If instead of using exhortations to sinners, *merely* that we may use the *means* which God has *appointed*, we give them to suppose that any work that is truly good, is, in whole, or in *part*, to be effected by, or ascribed to themselves, *then* do we *dishonour* the Spirit of God?” What *these means* are, you teach teachers to pursue; and assure us, “Nor hath God left off to work by *these means* still. \*{Treat, p. 178}. Was ever any good man so unlike himself?

In my opinion, the following quotation is worth your notice: though neither in it, nor in what I have quoted from Mr. BALGUY, nor from any other AUTHOR, are you to suppose that I approve of every word. Vice will never be chased out of the world with invectives; nor virtue advanced to her empire by panegyrics. The most prudent advertency, and the most manly resolution, the most rational love, and the most generous indignation, that ever opinionative moralist could conceive and fortify his bread withal, will never be able to secure a man against the subtle approaches, or or violent assaults of sin. ‘Tis only the divine assistance that is our castle and defense, and the vital spring of all our good habits; and whoever terminates his hopes, even of serving and pleasing God, upon the confidence of any other strength than what is derived from God, his hopes are impious and he must miscarry. ‘Tis true, that rational arguments are proper, nay, necessary, to excite a man to his duty; which is a rational service, and effected by rational *endeavours*; not by lazy presumptions. But then, this is the point, a man must likewise know, that when he is about his duty, *he* is not *sufficient* for that which he is about; for God hath reserved a partial *agency* to himself; and he does as much command our application to him for this assistance, as he does demand all the rest of our duty: — therefore, he who shall undertake to reason and argue a man into his duty, without insisting on the necessary application to God, does the same thing in resemblance as if he should cut off the traveler’s *legs* and provide him with staff \*{\*Sermons by the Rev. Mr. E. Young; Vol. I. p. 16-17}.

Neither presumption nor despair can be nourished by such doctrine; but, “if it be alleged, that telling sinners it is their duty to *be* of such a temper of mind as they must know they are not. and telling them of *no means* by which they, without professing any true desire after it, may become of such a tempter, must drive drive them to despair.” you reply, “*first*, It is impossible, in the nature of things, for any means or directions to be given, which those who have no direct desire after a right temper of mind, may use in order to obtain such a temper.”—Would you act on this principle if you were requested to be a *mediator* between two contending friends? Would you wait to discover a *direct* desire for reconciliation on both sides, before you interposed, and desist as soon as you saw *direct* desire, on either side, decline? A young man who has no *direct* desire to sit at your feet, may, by some *gossip*, be prejudiced against you; when, if he did but know half your worth, he might covet that situation. Shall no step be taken to undeceive him? —No, none at all. — Alas! Sir, why such severity? —“Because the use of a mean always *implies*, the existence of a *desire* after the end.”— True; but what does that desire *imply*? Does it ever exist without a *cause*? without any *perception* of the end desired? Does it produce *itself*? Or, like the drops of dew, hath it a *father*?

Your *second* answer is worthy of the first. “It is true,” you say, “such a doctrine as this, *must* drive sinners to despair; but it is *such* despair as *must* lie at the foundation of *all* well-grounded hope.” I hope not; because this doctrine teaches men to be holy by a *direct* desire of their own: self-begotten and supported, previous to the use of any mean, and previous to the communication of any distinguished blessing. The curse which transgressors have deserved, increasing as sin abounds, I can in some measure, understand. Forgiveness with God, productive of peace and of new- obedience, I both believe and enjoy. But your OUGHTS confuse me; they confuse my betters: to some they may be amusing, but at best they are productive of nothing but contention.

My notion of endeavour is next to be considered; and if you may be trusted, it is “a compromising notion; it has no certain connection with the thing endeavoured after; it is used in opposition to profession; it does

not imply any direct inclination, or desire after the things sought; it can have no virtue in it; but on the contrary, it is the essence of hypocrisy. Mr. M.'s endeavours." you say. "are destitute of all true virtue; have nothing in them truly good, or acceptable to God; on the contrary, they are abominable in his sight, as containing the very essence of hypocrisy." You close your account of what you are pleased to call my notion, by saying, "Thus. Mr. M.'s notion of endeavour, either obliges men to be hypocrites, or places him in the same situation as those he censures, and answers the substance of his own objections."

The reader will perceive your THUS, is very emphatical; and when he considers your zeal for "*perfect* future conformity to the moral law," especially especially for a practical regard to these precepts, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" will not be astonished at the invincible proof you have given of a right temper, nor be amazed to be a witness of your pacific disposition. But take care of over doing. At the commencement of the preceding Comment, you say, "This is the ground on which he has taken his stand;" and towards the close of your Paraphrase, you make this modest concession; "Truly, I do not know that I have any material objection to comprehending the *whole* of human duty in endeavour." This is humility like your own. But whether *your* objection will be thought so important as you seem to suppose, is not at present, out of doubt. —A concession so singular seems to have been extorted from you. I had said, if any kind of labour *is* possible, or even *thought* to be possible, to any creature, which is absolutely different from *endeavour*, and short of acting *efficiently*, you were bound to say what it was, if you could." But both your natural and moral ability were unequal to the task. What followed? An ingenuous acknowledgement? Nothing like it. Pushed into a corner; unable to conceal yourself, or to get any further, and afraid to return, you cry out, "Truly, I do not know that I have any material objection to comprehending the *whole* of human duty in *endeavour*." But to save appearances, you have this *salvo*: "*though* not as explained by Mr. Martin." What your *better* explanation may produce let us now consider.

“*First*, endeavour,” according to your Paraphrase, “includes the utmost exertion of all our natural powers; but the utmost exertion of all our powers, towards spiritual objects, *is* spiritual exercise.” Yet of these very powers, you say, “Seriously, was ever any question made of the *weakness* of the human understanding? Was it ever denied that our *natural* faculties are *impaired*, as well as our bodies subject to *disease* by the FALL?” What! the utmost exertion of our impaired *natural* powers, in a diseased body, on spiritual objects, *spiritual* exercise? But what other powers can be intended? None but natural powers have been mentioned in your criticism: besides; you have expressly denied *moral* ability is a talent which may be *used* or *abused*.\*{ *Remarks p. 15*}. If I misunderstand you, teach me your meaning; but if, to evade rebuke, you should say, as no man exerts his natural abilities to the *utmost*, no inferior degree is *spiritual* exercise, that evasion will be treated as it deserves.

Your *second* critical improvement is, that “Endeavour to perform spiritual actions, and to obtain spiritual blessings, instead of being opposed to the profession of a spiritual disposition, necessarily implies it.” That endeavour implies desire, desire discernment of the thing desired, and a disposition to seek it, who disputes? But whence that illumination which precedes spiritual desires? Will you say THAT is our duty? Or are you, in a fit of good humor, willing to comprehend the *whole* of human duty, in the dark, and self-righteous endeavours of the human mind? You ask, whether I have not intermeddled in a controversy I do not *understand* and you say, “the *weakness* of my understanding, possibly, may never yet have been called in question.” These are strokes as impolitic as they are impotent; for if, under this description, I should prove your equal, what will be the consequence? I indeed, shall, have no reason to be elated; but, on reflection, a man of your disposition must feel himself dejected.

Had I been a *booby* you could not have possessed greater confidence of my inability to detect your paraphrastical chicanery. Of this, I will produce another instance. I had said, “Human perceptions, and everything which is built upon *them*, are liable to fluctuation: but in *all* our prayers, unless

we verge to *hypocrisy*, we must *rigidly* regard reality: in short, whenever we pray, we must pray as in *truth* we can, let our frame, or state, or the consequence of so doing, be what it may.”\* {Part I. p. 26}. This was your Text. Now for your Comment. “That is, if we have *no desire* after God in our hearts, we are only to take care we *pretend* to none; and in this way we may pray with integrity and uprightness.” Is it “*in this way*” you amuse yourself? No, this Comment was not the fruit of your leisure, but of your love to me. Yet on reflection, you seem dissatisfied with your labour. For you say, “I can hardly persuade myself that Mr. M. really means to plead for such endeavours as these.”—This is kind. — “He would not wish however, I dare say, to be an advocate for any other than *sincere* endeavours”— This is very kind. — “But if this is what he pleads for, then *all* the ends to be answered by it are *lost*”—Hey day! what a change is here! Sincere or insincere *all is lost!* You drive the jest too far. —In your levelling humor, which is often uppermost, you assert. “Mr. Martin in pleading for *this* [namely, sincere endeavours] as the duty of man, pleads just as his opponent does, for that which never existed nor ever will.” This, Sir, is a full confession that you plead for *impossibilities*. But why am I charged with this folly? Because I have said in a sermon, published in 1771, “A freedom from condemnation sinners want to obtain, but a life of faith in Christ, and holiness from Christ, they do not so much as desire to enjoy; nor ever will, until the Lord takes away the heart of stone. and graciously bestows a heart of flesh.” Is this pleading? Is it not an assertion? Yes, and of a fact I am surprised you should produce; because it refutes what you would *infer* from that discourse, and is every way unserviceable to your hypothesis.

From such an advocate, what accusations may not be expelled? Where have I supposed that endeavour should take the *lead* of desire? On the contrary, have I not said, “If the desires of men be vicious, let us endeavour to convince them of it, and attempt to raise the reverse; but let us always remember man will never act without *desire*, nor beyond it.”\* {Part I. p. 28, 29}. Every occupant must, in my opinion, have something he can occupy; something which is not the fruit of his occupation, but that which is given him to profit withal, But the distribution of those gifts is sovereign. However, what God has imparted

to us, cannot always be known, by mere reflection. Action is frequently essential to evidence; and when it is, our desires and endeavours must be multiplied, if we would know what *lieth in us*, and obtain a settled satisfaction of our present situation. This, Sir, “is the ground on which I have taken my stand”; and, I cannot but wish you enjoyed the wholesome air of this ample region. It is too keen for the hypocrite to approve; it torments the idle; it terrifies them who build castles in the clouds; but it disposes the most active and sober to be cheerful and humble. You see I do not “mean, at any rate, to indulge despair;” though I perceive you are resolved, at all events, to conclude your correspondence with as little ceremony as you began.

Near the close of your last letter, you observe, “Had Mr. M. but given me leave to speak for myself, I cannot tell how much I might have said in his praise.” Not more, I hope, than you *ought*; and if you have suffered yourself to say less, *ought* you not to repent? But if you are of opinion you *ought* to have written just as you have done, confess that word is, in your hands, to yourself injurious, and to your antagonist, an insulting syllable. *Your PRAISE*, It seems, is of some value. Is it so because you are a *competent* judge; or because you are *disinterested* in your decisions?

When the author of the Night Thoughts called “Fame a bubble;” he strove to grasp at it as much as most men of his profession. It is well known, that he who said— “like thee, *Meonides!* Or, *Milton!* thee; ah could I reach your strain!” was a disappointed man. But you have not distinguished the language of ambition and chagrin from that of humility and good humor. Were I to form a judgment of you from your five letters alone, what must be the conclusion? But that would be as unfair as it would be to form a judgment of the splendour of the moon while she was eclipsed.

What could seduce you to finish your last letter in a manner so uncivil? Not in a sportive humor, but grave as when we grudge, you ask your friend, “Seriously, is not Mr. M. *ashamed*? If he is not must not his *best* friends be *ashamed* for him? and not only *ashamed*, but *grieved*, for the idea he gives the world of the motives of those who are engaged in what

he calls a serious altercation!” You, and some others, with all your OUGHTS, love, now and then, to *nibble* at a man’s *best* friends. Some have felt your NIBBLING; so may I. Such hollow attempts would be insufferable were you less eminent in *moral* worth. Hitherto, I thank God, neither my best friends, nor the Baptists, nor dissenters at large, have had just grounds to be ashamed of my doctrine, nor of my general conversation. Till they have, your *innuendoes* cannot make me tremble.

What shall I say more to such behaviour? Nothing. We have all of us a time to nod; a time to be vexed; a time when we cannot conceal, nor suppress, our vexation; and we have time, I trust, in which we are willing to confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another that we may be healed. You wish, it seems; to have “access to me.” How am I to believe this, when you have rejected that private correspondence with me, which might have prevented the publication of those letters I have here examined? If, however, you wish to have access, you are always welcome. Grant me a visit. Who knows but after mutual concessions, you and I may form an alliance use useful to each other, and pleasing to them who wish us well. Were it not that such men as you have always their admirers who abet their cause without discretion, I should have hope. But if you suffer yourself to be teased or tickled by them, (as you have done already,) I must despair of such an interview. Every man has his favorites; some of them perhaps, of little value; but he is truly great who in argument and judgment has obtained *a single eye*. May the blessing of Levi rest upon you!\* {Deuteronomy 33: 8-11}.

Thus blessed, your letters will command attention; and I shall think myself highly honored, if, under the influence of that blessing, you will condescend to write a letter to

**Your respectful friend,**

*John Martin*

***Windmill Street, Tottenham Court Road,***

***August 7th, 1789.***

**POSTSCRIPT.**

WHAT you are pleased to call by this name, might be contained in a single page. Yet within such narrow bounds, what a torrent of complaisance! In your postscript, YOU REPRESENT ME, as “intoxicated with ideas of my own reputation:” Do you mean since I have ventured to dispute with you? As “incapable of respecting the character of other men:” Yet you say, “there are *several* authours whom I still recommend.”\* {Remarks p. 8}. As “not discovering much of the *christian*.” You only mean as compared with yourself. As “not discovering much of the *gentleman*.” This, of course, most shock your feelings. As “daring:” What a contrast to your meekness! As “swelling with self-importance:” What a foil to your self-annihilation! As “throwing out bold dashes of insolence:” This was sufficient to hurt your humility! As “beneath resentment:” But you did not mean to say, beneath your resentment. As “not having the vanity to expect it from Mr. Evans:” Why, then, am I “reckoned to be *very* proud”? As “inspired with courage on this principle”: Yet “of the anger, or resentment of others. I am supposed to have no dread.” \* { Remarks p. 18}. As “thinking I have shewn myself the man:” Do you mean mean the man that was to be of use to you?

What could lead you to wind-up your matters in this manner? Was it to vindicate, or was it to vex Mr. Evans? Or was it done to gratify your *dear* friend? But Mr. Evans must not be blamed for your officious tempers? Some might say, What will he do, if you have been so bold? But I shall only observe, that if Mr. Evans thinks fit to honour me with any notice, he shall find I am not afraid to vindicate what appears to be defensible, nor ashamed to retract anything which cannot be supported. —The zeal of a pupil (such perhaps as your anonymous friend lately was at Bristol,) may show his attachment to his matter; but I beg permission to say, though I have many *brethren*, I have not any other MASTER than JESUS CHRIST. Your ardor for a *Tutor* may throw a veil over your real want of tuition; and could my ignorance be thus concealed, I might be tempted to follow your example.

You think, Sir, “ a very small share of candour and common sense would have construed Mr. Evans's words as meaning no more than that men in

*general* have the *command* of all the members of the body, and the *use* of all the faculties of the soul." But I will venture to say, that this Comment is partial, and the sense of it indefensible. There are motions in our members over which we have not *command*; and we all of us possess faculties we are unable to *use* as we could wish. But you first determine what power we *ought* to have, and then fancy we possess it. Had I room, I would quote at some length, facts we mutually acknowledge, and observe what sort of influence your leading term, applied as you apply it, would introduce. For instance, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." But it *ought* to be. "Our sufficiency is of GOD." But it *ought* to be of us. "A man *can* receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." But he *ought* to receive everything, and to be everything, and to do everything, "prior to that period, as well as at that time!" Such, in my opinion, are your notions. By shew of *right* you are drawn into a gilded fault.

The knowledge which your friend has of my character, made him of "two hard words" to choose the softest. You think my treatment of Mr. Evans was owing to *malevolence*; but he is inclined to impute it to my *ignorance*. Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to play together with the character of a rival brother!

*Envy*, you imagine, has led me to harp on the subject of *emolument*. But what have I said that can be called *harping* on this subject? Neither my necessities, nor my inclination, at present, induce me to be a *Tutor*. A character, in my opinion; truly, honorable when it is well supported. But I am best pleased with communicating my Thoughts from the pulpit, in conversation and from the press. These channels of communication are sufficient for me; and with them I really am contented.

Should you recollect it was my purpose to treat you with real respect, and fancy I have not, I can only say, that, when I gave you that expectation, I was sincere, and that I have not, in my own judgment, receded from that intention. But when I proposed to carry on this controversy in a becoming temper, though I had read your Remarks, I had not compared them with your quotations. This I did as I went

forward with my last section. In this business I met with unexpected provocation; such *as*, impartially considered, will, I think, acquit me of being wanting of due decorum to Mr. Fuller.

***FINIS***

**THOUGHTS  
ON THE  
DUTY OF MAN  
RELATIVE TO  
FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.  
IN WHICH**

The supposed Advantages of Mr. FULLER'S leading Propositions are called in Question.

**By JOHN MARTIN.**

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.* Eccles. xii. 13.

**PART III.**

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THOUGHTS  
ON THE  
DUTY of MAN, &c.

PART III.

THE SUPPOSED ADVANTAGES of MR. FULLER'S  
LEADING PROPOSITIONS CALLED IN  
QUESTION.

SECTION 1.

*On the Law of God.*

THE present section brings us to a very serious subject. Our Lord hath said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." He added, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments., and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

If there be any thing in the following pages unmindful of these cautions, or opposite to these assertions. it may be imputed to ignorance; it cannot be of design; for they are written by a man who firmly believes the law is holy, just and good; and who is fully satisfied "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious."

But what is the law of God? It is the decree of the Supreme obliging unto obedience. But as all creatures are under the Supremacy of God, each must be obliged according to its kind: and, as all of us "live, and

move, and have our being in God,” we cannot be obliged to obey him just as an inferior in *civil* life, is obliged to obey the decree of his superior. They have the same general human nature. But God is not a man. The decree of the state, if law, is subordinate to the law of God, and not in opposition to any divine injunction. It reaches only to our external conduct; and even there, it does not extend to the tenth part of our actions: whereas the law of God requires internal and perfect obedience.

What God hath decreed, to operate as law, amongst *men*, must be published. When published, we are to consider whether any man, or all men, are by transgression, really under the *penal* part of the law. If they are, the question is, Whether the original law, once broken, can ever be fulfilled by the future obedience of the sinner? If it cannot, it becomes us to enquire, what additional laws have been given, on what foundation, in what order, and to what end. —Law, as it now stands, may, with sufficient propriety, be considered as unwritten and as written. The *church* of God, for *two* thousand years, had not the written law. It was given by Moses: not to all men, but to a peculiar people. The *Gentiles* were without law *four* thousand years. While the second temple stood, the middle wall of partition could not be thrown down. Were they left then, absolutely without law? No, “the work of the law was written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another; —so that they were left without excuse.”

The *written* law of God is nowhere extant but in that book which we call the bible. In general, it is that part of God’s word which commands things just, honest, and godly. By the Jews, it was considered as ceremonial, judicial, and moral. Yet beside these laws, they had some injunctions not easy, if possible, to be strictly referred to either of the three. This was of no moment. The will of God was their law: and *when*, and *as* that became manifest, obedience, in the manner which he approved, was their wisdom.

The moral law was written in the mind of Adam, and the remnants of it are in every man; it commandeth perfect obedience, both inward, in thought and affection, and outward, in speech and action ; it curseth every one that faileth in the least duty thereof, though but once, and that in thought only; the *sum* of it is given in the ten commandments, which many can repeat, but few understand \*{a a Perkins}.

It is certain, the written law is but *one part* of God's word, and the gospel *another*; revealing another part of God's will besides that which the law made known; for it adds a qualification to the law, moderating the rigor thereof, after this manner: He is accursed, saith the *law*, that faileth in any commandment: Except, saith the *gospel*, he be reconciled again in Christ, and in him have the pardon of his transgressions \*{ Perkins}.

The gospel, in the opinion of Mr. Perkins, is that part of the word which promiseth righteousness and life everlasting, to all that believe in Christ. The difference between the law and the gospel he has thus expressed: "The law is natural, and was in man's nature before the fall; but the gospel is spiritual, revealed after the fall, in the covenant of grace. The law sets forth God's justice in rigor, without mercy; but the gospel sets out justice and mercy, united in Christ. The law requireth a perfect righteousness *within us*; but the gospel revealeth our acceptance with God, by *imputed* righteousness. The law threatneth judgment without mercy, and therefore is called the ministration of condemnation, and of death; but the gospel shews mercy to man's sin, in and by Christ, if we repent and believe. The law promiseth life to the worker and doer of *it*; Do this, and thou shalt live; but the gospel offereth salvation to him that worketh *not*, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly: not considering faith as a work, but as an instrument apprehending Christ, by whom we are made righteous."

Here the difference between the law and gospel appears to be great, and the latter to be glad tidings. But, in fact, the difference is *greater* than this good man has supposed, and the tidings *better* than he has stated. For God in the gospel does not *offer*, but *bring and give* salvation to him

that worketh not, and consequently, *bestows* on the elect “all things that pertain to life and godliness.”

From what has been said of the written and unwritten Law of God, it appears, that though the canon of scripture is completed, we cannot say it contradicts the *unwritten* law, or that it is of no use in a christian country. For as many have the bible who are unable to read it, or who are not disposed to read it, as the word of God, if some *unwritten* law did not operate on their minds, the laws of men would be insufficient for our common safety.

It must be owned, a law designedly obscure, were it alone, and led to nothing better, is not an adequate rule of action: but those events, and those impressions, which make darkness visible and light acceptable, are to us important. Men of understanding wish no doubt, in every serious business to act with full conviction: but all men are not wise, and the wisest are sometimes compelled to act, in cases of consequence, without leisure, and without being able to form a deliberate decision.

“Doth not even *nature* teach us?” Are not. *providential* events instructing? But as these means of information may be strangely disregarded by some, and as strangely misconstrued by others, it was necessary to guard, the credulous against the silence of the supine, and against the extravagance of private opinions. Formerly, prophets were raised up for this benevolent purpose. The *written* word has long since supplied their place. Without it, we know enough to make us blush; but without it, we cannot prove that any man is made wise unto salvation.

When we are tolerably instructed by the scriptures, we perceive that Christ is the sum of those sacred oracles. The law of his Father was in his heart, and having fulfilled it, all that can be called law is in his hands. Law never was intended to be *alone*. The very heathens had no notion of religious obedience, without sacrifice. Tradition taught *them* its importance; but revelation teaches *us*, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; and that without faith, it is impossible to please God.

We believe that God is *immutable*: but then, he is so with a plan and purpose, which requires repeated revolutions. That divine dispensation which flourished in its season, decayed, waxed old, and vanished away. Another succeeds, established upon better promises; yet it will not continue, as it now stands, for ever \*{ 1st Corinthians 15: 28}. But the question is, during the present dispensation, How far, and in what manner, is the law of God affected by it? For nothing can be law to us, which is not subservient to the reign of grace, under the *present* distribution of favor. What precepts are now repealed, and what are still in force; what is the exact difference between that covenant which has vanished away, and that which is now established ; in what order, and in what manner, we should now endeavour to be obedient to God, may be, and is disputed; but without dispute, “the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity, a change also of the law.”

Under the former dispensation, a select order of men was appointed, trained up, and liberally supported, to *expound* the law of Moses, and to *judge* according to those laws which were then in force. At present, law is neither so complicated, nor so mysterious, as under the Mosaic economy; yet to this day, many desire to be “teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” When Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart: and till *it* is more effectually turned to the Lord, the vail cannot be taken away.

There are yet sins of *ignorance*: and in cases of considerable moment men of the best understanding, are as dependent on God for special information, as when he answered by *Urim* and *Thummim*. I am fully convinced, that no man *knows*, or can know, at all times, and in every case, what is his duty. But little as we comprehend of the will of God, in some situations in life, and certain as it is, that we know but in part at any time, yet, in general, we know more of his preceptive will than we are disposed to regard. We may add, were we obliged to search for our rule of duty in those legal comments which too many love to consult, we should be more ignorant of it than thousands are who read the word of God for themselves, unencumbered with such tedious and erroneous expositions.

The broad line which many writers have drawn between what they are pleased to call positive rites and moral duties, is of disservice to religion, and without authority. It is allowed, that when the *letter* of the ceremonial law was more regarded than the *spirit* of that law, sacrifices were justly considered as vain oblations: but when believing Jews had communion with God in his own appointments, their offerings were accepted, and their lives approved.

No man was more attentive to the ceremonial law than David; yet what King in Israel was more devout than he? The statutes and ordinances of the Lord may, in any period, be misunderstood, considered as grievous, and called the *mere* externals of religion; they may be treated with neglect, or talked of as injunctions too sordid for men of sense and spirit to regard, or for men of abstraction to admire; but are people of this description more sagacious, or more moral, than the man who said, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to *all* thy commandments?”

The laws respecting Levitical *sacrifices* are long since abolished; yet while they were in force, they were neither to be neglected, nor to be subject to the will of man, on pain of excommunication. The same remark applies to other *positive* institutions; nor could any appearance, or plea of morality, sincerity, love of peace, or catholicism of temper, prevent the disobedient from being cut off from their people. Had not these laws been founded on the wisdom and authority of God; had they not been connected with that doctrine which is, in every age, and place, essential to salvation; had they not, when rightly regarded, been calculated to promote moral and religious behaviour, who can account for such severity to such transgressors?

After all, is there, or can we prove there ever was, a divine precept *entirely* positive? I begin to suspect, we have been incautious in putting baptism and the Lord's supper, on that foundation. For say what you please in favor of those institutions, if you admit they are *entirely* positive, thousands are taught to think that between positive institutions,

and moral behaviour, there is but little proportion, and but little connection. We know not *all* the reasons of any divine appointment; we know not the *particular* reason why Adam was forbidden to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden; (for conjecture is not knowledge,) yet we know God cannot act without a motive worthy of himself; we know he does all things, “after the counsel of his own will,” and therefore it does not become us to conclude, that when the reason of any divine precept or prohibition is concealed, it is a *mere* arbitrary injunction or interdict, in which wisdom had no concern.

“The church is subject to Christ.” He is her saviour, and her king. It was foretold, “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Is that mount less holy than Horeb; or that city, as explained by Paul, \*{Galatians 4: 26}, less free than Sinai? Doctrine may be as divine when it drops as the rain, and distills as the dew, as when accompanied with the sound of the trumpet, and with peals of thunder. The message which the child Samuel brought to Eli, made the ears of that aged priest to tingle. Why should the terror which prevailed at the giving of the law, make us think there was something more sublime in those precepts than in what was previously promised to Abraham, or in what was afterwards fulfilled, and taught, by Jesus Christ? Had Elijah preferred the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, to the still small voice, which afterwards he heard, what must we have thought of his understanding?

“We are not come,” nor will we be brought by our fellow men, “unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words:—But we *are* come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God,— and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Here, by the grace of God, we *are*; and here, by the same grace, will we *abide*; struggling to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, refusing to be entangled again with any yoke of bondage.

“Is the law then against the promises? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe. — And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” Such is the instructing language of our apostle, who has elsewhere said, “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.” But what can be expected from those expositors, who too frequently forget the *connection* in which the law is placed, the *end* it was designed to answer, and who generally leave out the *important preface* to the ten commandments e?

We are told, “Moses went up unto God; and the Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which *thou* shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” \*{Exodus 19}.

Can we suppose, when the law was given, that either the order, or the grace, of this evangelical message was revoked? God forbid. The first words which the children of Israel heard, at Horeb, were these: “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” This is the law of law. “This is the law of the house upon the top of the mountain.” Where the *preface*, and *first* commandment, are not understood and approved, the following *nine* precepts will never be properly regarded. Abstract the law from the gospel, or make the former take the lead, and what must be the issue? *Transgression* indeed, will still be *transgression*, but what is called *duty*, will no longer deserve the name of *obedience*.

At Sinai, the people said to Moses, “Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us, all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it.” Moses replied: “The Lord heard the voice of your words when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!” (Deuteronomy Chapter 5)

Had the request of the house of Jacob to Moses, been of that legal cast which some have supposed, would the God of Israel have manifested his approbation of it, and have granted them, without the least reluctance, their unanimous petition? Can we believe it? Certainly not. The lesson then, which we are here taught, is, that when the commandment comes with power, no man can hear the voice of God, or have courage to speak to him, without a *Mediator*. This fact is confirmed by the following words to Moses: “Go,” said the Almighty, “Go, say unto them, Get *you* into your tents again: but as for *thee*, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee *all* the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which *thou* shall teach *them* ; that they may do them in the land which I *give* them to possess it.”

The same lesson was taught, (for it is very important,) when these very people “turned aside out of the way which God commanded them, and made them a molten image.” For then, “Moses took the two tables, and cast them out of his two hands, and brake them before their eyes.” The fractured pieces were not replaced. But the Lord said to Moses, “Hew thee two tables of stone, like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an *ark* of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that there were in the *first* tables, which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them *in the ark*.” He did so: and then were seen various emblems of the priesthood, and of the saving power of the *real* MEDIATOR, in close conjunction with the *law* of Moses. When we are brought to reach, and relish, the meaning of those transactions, “Of law

no less can be acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempt from her power.” But if the law of God, be separated from Christ, its voice is consternation; it cannot be endured; even Moses is compelled to say, I exceedingly fear and quake.

In an excellent Essay, lately published, on the Transfiguration of Christ, the learned author observes, “There were two principal and important purposes, which were meant to be answered by that illustrious scene.” We are told, “The first was to set before the eyes of the disciples a visible and figurative representation of a future resurrection, and of Christ’s coming in glory to judge the world, and to reward with everlasting felicity all his faithful servants.” We are likewise informed, “The other great purpose of the action on the mount was, to signify, in a figurative manner, the cessation of the Jewish, and the commencement of the Christian, dispensation.” This Essay has confirmed me in several opinions advanced in the present section; opinions which I had cordially embraced, before I had the pleasure of reading this useful production. The same distinguished author, though I am unable to think with him on every subject, has elsewhere justly observed, “A religion that contained nothing more than a perfect system of *morality*, might perhaps suit an angel: but it is only *one* part, it is only a *subordinate* part, of the religion of a man and a sinner.”

Hitherto little or no notice has been taken of Mr. Fuller: and could my promise be dispensed with, he should no longer be disquieted by me. But as it cannot be recalled, it only remains to make this part of the controversy as concise as I can. To that end, I shall confine myself to his *treatise*, and throw the quotations and answers into the form of conversation. This will compel me to alter and to add a *few* words, but they shall be printed in the *Italic* character, and the page from which they are taken subjoined.

Mr. F. If the foregoing principles *of my treatise* are true, then the law of God is what the scriptures affirm it to be, exceeding broad—broader than upon the other supposition. {P. xvi. 153}.

Mr. M. But, Sir, if any of your principles are *not true*, this, and the following inferences, on your present supposition, must be affected by that change of the argument. —To say, that the law of God is broader upon *your* principles than on *mine*, or on any other principles than your own, is, in effect saying, that they are better worth the reader's notice. This is speaking like an honest man: for every upright man thinks that what he defends, is *better* (both for society and for himself) than what he attempts to refute. This I can understand: but how the idea of *advantage*, and the profession of being *disinterested* accord, I cannot conceive.

Mr. F. The law of God, or the rule of man's obligation, is what the scriptures affirm it to be, exceeding broad. But if men are under no obligation to do anything spiritually good; if they ought not to love God for his own infinite excellency, to fear offending him from a tender concern for his glorious character, to mourn ingenuously for having disobeyed and dishonoured him, to worship him in spirit and in truth, to receive his truth in love, and heartily approve of whatever he reveals; I say, if they ought not to do any of these things, then, for aught appears, the law of God is exceeding narrow. P. 153. 154.

Mr. M. Your subject is *the law of God*; but your language extends to that which the *law* has not revealed. Your objects are mankind at large, as depraved; but you require of them, without the grant of the least assistance, all that the special grace of God can bestow. You suggest, and elsewhere say, that *all* men ought to do *all* things which are *spiritually* good; yet you will not allow they should affect *anything* that is *truly* good, either in whole, or in part. How are these things to be explained? If we venture to contradict you, then you infer, the law of God is *exceeding narrow*. To this I answer, that *broad* and *narrow*, are epithets which only merit our notice when they are properly applied. Should you affirm the sea, in any given situation, is *broader* or *narrower* than it really is, it could not be to your credit, nor for our instruction.

*Broad* the law may seem in some of your assertions, in others, it appears to be as much *contracted*. As when you say, “the measure of *our* strength is set down as the *rule* of our obligation.” \*{P. 188, 1891}. All law, in your opinion, is contained in the *moral* law, or *ten* commandments; the ten commandments in *two*; those two in *one*; and that one, in *one word*. But, suppose I should say, that Blackstone’s *Commentaries* are contained in his *Analysis*, what could I mean, but that the latter is a very concise abridgment of the former? But *abridgments* are by no means sufficient rules of civil action. Such rules are not fought for in *compendiums* and epitomes: if well drawn up, they are useful, but they contain nothing more than *general* principles.

A respectable author of your acquaintance, hath said, “The style of laws should be plain and simple; that a law designedly obscure, is fitted for nothing so much as to multiply crimes and punishments; that such a law is unjust and cruel; and consequently, could not proceed from the Sovereign.” This consequence, I cannot perceive: because God is no man's debtor; and, because he never proposes to *preserve*, much less to *save* any man, by the merit of his personal obedience. But we may say, consequently, abridgments cannot be adequate rules of religious action.

I wish, Sir, you would recollect, that you yourself have said, “Fixing bounds to the duty of men toward God in any case, cannot be of trifling account,” You have likewise said, “To enjoin that on them which God hath not enjoined, is to act without warrant, and would be cruelty to our own species, as it subjects them to an abundance of guilt, of which,” you add, “God knows they have enough in the breach of what he has enjoined! \*{ P. 2}.”

From the appearance of this cruelty, may you, in future, be exempt! May you also consider, that he who acts *without warrant* is the *guilty* person, and not he who disregards *illegal* injunctions!

Much remains on the subject of this section. But I fear you are impatient. I had some thoughts of asking your opinion of *conflicting* laws, and how

matters should be adjusted when one divine precept *seems* to bear hard upon another. But I wave it; and shall only add, law, as *law*, is published *disjunctively*. Every precept has its penal sanction. In case of disobedience, we are therefore under the penalty of the law, and must, for anything law can do to relieve us, take the consequence of our own crimes. This supposes, that the law of God was originally given to man in a state of *innocency*. But this is not *our* condition; nor was it *theirs* who were assembled at Mount Sinai. The law therefore was given at Horeb, with a revelation of the Mediator. “Death *hath* passed upon all men, for that all *have* sinned.” But the law cannot say, that those men *ought* to be *alive*, who, by its just sentence, are in a state of *condemnation*. Nor does it say, though they are *dead*, they *ought* to quicken themselves. The law is the ministration of death to transgressors; but no legal power was ever intended to give a *sinner* life. Happy then, is that *believer* who can say, “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”

## S E C T I O N 2.

### *On human depravity.*

THIS is a mournful, and mysterious subject. But as few people comparatively speaking, are willing to admit of mysteries in *religion*, the consequence here is, that while the *branches* of human depravity are described, the *root* remains unnoticed.

There is no accounting for the corruption of human nature, but by adhering to the word of God. Even this refuses to gratify our *curiosity*; but it properly alarms the believer's conscience. It informs us, that sin is hereditary, universal, without remedy by ourselves, and, in all men, inexcusable; that by nature, we are the children of wrath, even as others; that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, and that sin has dominion over us till we are not any longer under the *law*, but under *grace*. It assures us, that our corruption is *total*, the mind and conscience being defiled; so that, “whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh.” It will

not allow us to suppose, that the *head* of a carnal man will renew his *heart*, or that his *heart* will renovate his *mind*.

The experience of the most sagacious believers, coincides with their faith. What they have felt, and yet feel of the corruption of their own minds compels them to say, "The word of the Lord is right." They who know, and are properly affected with "the plague of their own heart," are not offended with the strong, but exact accounts, which the scriptures give of that polluted fountain. They find, that "when, they would do good, evil is present with them;" they believe, it is of mercy they are not consumed, and are confident it is by grace they stand.

If to belief and experience we add those observations which may increase our knowledge of human nature and those reflections which separate fact from falsehood, and appearance from reality, we shall be more and more convinced, that so abominable and filthy is man, that he drinks in iniquity like water. In *general*, "as in water face answereth to face; so the heart of man to man." But it is not so in *detail*. "All we like sheep have gone astray;" but "we have turned every one to his *own* way from which none return in their own name, nor in their own strength. But, Mr. Fuller Fuller must be heard on this mournful subject.

Mr. F. If the foregoing principles *of my treatise* be just, then the depravity of man is very great. {P. 154}.

Mr. M. You mean, I presume, in the obstinacy of his *will*, for you seem to have slender, and unsettled notions of the corruption and darkness of his *understanding*.

Mr. F. The contrary supposition, as well as *mine*, represents man as utterly unable to do anything spiritually good; but then it makes that inability to be no part of his depravity, but altogether innocent in its nature. {P. 154}.

Mr. M. Though you admit men are *utterly* unable to do anything spiritually good, you think it almost entirely owing to the perversity of

their will. I am of a different opinion; and think, with Moulin, that our “ruin began at the understanding, over which satan had spread the cloud of false opinion, and had cast into it the imagination of false good: to whose persuasion, when man had shown himself ready, then perverseness of the will, and inclination of the appetites to sin, followed this darkening of the mind.” Ability for spiritual good, belongs to the Spirit of God, and not unto us. Only that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. To say that any man ought to *do* what the Spirit doth { P. 43}, is saying, in effect, he ought to be what the Spirit is. Yet such is one of your principles.

Mr. F. Some have said, that Adam, in innocence, was only a natural man; alluding, I suppose to, (1st Corinthians 2: 14). {P. 154}.

Mr. M. Why should you suppose this, when what is said in another part, (1st Corinthians 15: 45-47). of that Epistle, affords a fairer ground for such a sentiment?

Mr. F. But if what has been said in the foregoing pages *of my treatise* be true, then, that inability which men in general have to things spiritually good, lies in a voluntary ignorance of them, and a criminal disinclination, yea, a positive aversion to them. {P. 155}.

*Mr.* M. I really, thought, Sir, you were going to infer something concerning Adam. But I must take your inference as you are pleased to turn it. You say, then, in *general* our inability lies in *voluntary* ignorance, criminal disinclination, and positive aversion to things spiritually good. Perhaps, Sir, by the words in *general*, you admit, of some *exceptions*. It is fit, you. should. For you would not choose to have your own errors, want of temper, and inability to defend what you have written, ascribed to such sources as you have mentioned.

Mr. F. This extends the idea, even to amazement, of the hideous lengths of human depravity! {P. 155}.

Mr. M. Most people Are more amazed at *effects* than at *causes*. This weakness you too often indulge. Our condition by *birth*, necessarily resulting from the fall of him in whom all died, you slightly touch; but some of the *effects* of original sin fill you with *amazement*. You have an end to answer by throwing so much upon *voluntary* actions, and allowing so little to the *original* taint; but, in truth, it is not worth your notice. This may make you popular; but it is being popular to a very *poor* purpose.

Mr. F. The infidelity of the world, according to *my* representation of things, is very great, and very criminal. {P. 155}.

Mr. M. For *infidelity* there is no *excuse*: because it cannot be defended on any sound principle. But as the world by *wisdom* knew not God, there is no remedy against infidelity in the will of the *flesh*; nor is there any hope of believing to the saving of the soul, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Mr. F. Now, since he who knows what is in man, constantly draws his picture in such black ugly colours, this seems at least, a presumptive argument in favour of *my* foregoing principles. {P. 155}.

Mr. M. You do not intend it, but such language is too *presumptuous*. Those who think your treatise is the best book next to the bible, maybe of opinion, that your account of human depravity, and that which is given us in the scriptures, is the *same*; but you know, Sir, I *cannot* admit the comparison.

Mr. F. Since both sides who have engaged in these debates, profess to rejoice in laying low the fallen creature, man, and unite in acknowledging his depravity truly inconceivable, it is hoped, that when the tendency of *my* principles is duly considered, this will facilitate their being embraced. {P. 155}.

Mr. M. If we may judge of the *tendency* of *some* of your principles, by what has already transpired, I trust, Sir, many will wish, before they are

*embraced*, they may be thoroughly inspected; but if they are, this is not likely to *facilitate* your sanguine expectation.

### SECTION. 3.

#### *On the Grace of God,*

TO this, everything in salvation is perpetually subservient; to this, every sentiment from a preacher's lips should pay a willing homage. In salvation, grace will not appear, unless it reigns. Laws of every kind, events of all descriptions, arguments, and addresses of every name, must minister to the supremacy of grace. Even those men who inadvertently, attempt to obscure the grace of God, wish to be considered, not as enemies, enemies, but as advocates, for that favor which is better than life. An instance of this behaviour is now before us. The reader perhaps, as well as the writer, will soon be of this opinion.

Mr. F. If the foregoing principles *in my treatise* be just, then the grace of God in our salvation, must be free, must be great indeed! {P. 155}.

Mr. M. Whether your principles be worth so much notice as you repeatedly claim for them, or not, the grace of God, in our salvation, is unspeakably glorious. I must, however, venture to say, over that glory you have attempted to raise those fogs, which I wish it may be my lot to disperse.

Mr. F. The contrary hypothesis, *to mine*, represents God in regeneration, as producing principles, or dispositions, in a person which he never in any state had, or ought to have had before. {P. 155}.

Mr. M. *As ye were* seems to be your favorite maxim. But I cannot think creation and redemption, to be the same thing; or that the first, and second Adam, or that the first, and second covenant, are *exactly alike*.

Mr. F. This, *which I have mentioned*, it is granted, may, in some sense, be said to be an act of grace, as being a free gift; but, is it any part of salvation grace? Is there any mercy in it? {P. 155}.

Mr. M. These are indecent questions. What we never had till born again, may be, and really is necessary to enjoy the kingdom of God.

Mr. F. As to the thing itself, there appears to be no more mercy in it, than in giving a sum of money to a person to enable him to pay what he never before owed, nor would have owed at all, had he not been possessed of that gift. {P. 156}.

Mr. M. What is not due, a *just* creditor never demands. What is demanded *unjustly*, a man of courage never *pays*; though it may be *taken* from him by an insulting, powerful claimant. How any man should owe that which he possesses as a *gift* belongs to you to explain. — Redemption and regeneration are not barely means to escape from deferred ruin; by them, the elect obtain a title to eternal life, and are made meet to enjoy the promised inheritance. Is such favor *no* mercy, because it was not enjoyed in *paradise*?

Mr. F. Which of these two representations most tends to magnify the great grace of God, is left to the judgment of the impartial reader. {P. 156}.

Mr. M. Can you then, suppose that *such* readers will give their verdict in your favor?

Mr. F. It would have been grace, supposing Lot, when Sodom was destroyed, had been a cripple, and as such, naturally incapable of fleeing for his life, for the angel of God to have borne him away; but it was much more grace, when he was sinfully lingering after Sodom, to take him by the hand, and set him without the city. {P. 156}.

Mr. M. But if Lot had been not only *sinfully* lingering, but had been likewise a *cripple*, when he obtained mercy, would this circumstance have diminished the *grace* of his deliverance?

Mr. F. God, when he created man, blessed him with all that his heart could desire, and much more than ever he could have asked or thought for himself. {P. 156}.

Mr. M. If so, you allow *blessing* to take the lead under a covenant of *works*; should it not keep its *station* under the covenant of *grace*?

Mr. F. The only return he asked was, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength. {P. 156}.

Mr. M. The words you have abridged refer to the covenant of *redemption*. We know nothing of the Lord, as *our God*, but by that covenant. We may be confident God required of Adam *all* that could be required of an innocent creature. More would have been too *much*; less would have been too *little*. According to your own account, whatever it was, it was some *return* for being and blessing: and, I suppose, for preservation: for God never intended any creature should be his own preserver own preserver, But we are not in the condition that Adam was; we have been rebellious in consequence of *his* disobedience, and, by our *own* transgression; what Sir, may we expect?

Mr. F. Justice calls for the destruction of the rebel, but mercy interposes and reveals a Mediator, and declares in effect, that whosoever among the rebellious race of men, shall but sincerely and penitently say, I have sinned, acknowledge his guilt, and cordially approve and embrace him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. {P. 157}.

Mr. M. But does not the same mercy assure us, that *none* can come unto him, but whom his father draws? Conversion, however you may diminish the idea of it, is of God, and of special grace. It neither *can*, nor *should* stand on any other foundation.

Mr. F. The declaration is indefinite. No one is excluded from applying; and whoever does rightly apply, has the promise of eternal salvation. {P. 157}.

Mr. M. But who *rightly* applies, but those who are *effectually* called? They apply as *supplicants*: not asking for what they imagine they ought to do for themselves, but for those mercies which the Lord alone has a right to bestow, and to feel those operations, which can only be ascribed to his power.

Mr. F. The Mediator himself admonishes the sons of men to receive him. His servants also cry on his behalf. —Jehovah, the eternal father, girds himself with patience, and condescends to reason also with these rebels, concerning his son the Mediator. —But men still reply, —Who is the Lord that we should obey him? We know not the Lord, neither will we obey his voice! Ah, now what must be done? —Now will I arise saith God! I will not ask their leave! —They shall be willing saith he to his son, in the day of thy power! Yes, saith Christ, All that the father hath given to me, shall come to me! This, O this, is grace indeed! {P. 157, 158, 159}.

Mr. M. This may, in some congregations, be very rhetorical. But what doth it? They who relish such intemperance may be *cheaply* indulged.

Mr. F. Now since that representation of things which most magnifies the grace of God, bids fair, in the opinion of both sides who have engaged in this debate, for being the truth, this also seems a presumptive argument in favor of *my* foregoing principles. {P. 160}.

Mr. M. You are sufficiently anxious to have *your* principles brought into *favor*, and *embraced*; but till you can *find proper* arguments, those you are pleased to call *presumptive*, will not succeed; at least they will not with me.

Mr. F. Should it be objected that the former part of this representation, describes God as tantalizing, or mocking his fallen creatures, holding out a Mediator to them, when he knows beforehand, what will be the issue, nay, that they cannot embrace him, unless he give them an heart to do so. {P. 160}

Mr. M. Should this be the case, what would you reply?

Mr. F. It is replied, if this cannot be nothing else but a will not, or such inability as lies in the depravity of the heart, then ,

Mr. M. Suffer me, Sir, to stop you for a moment, and to say, you still mean to put me off with *presumptive* arguments. You know that *cannot*, in my creed, is not equivalent with mere want of will. How can you expect me to consider them us *equipollent*?

Mr. F. If God knows they [*sinner*s] cannot return to him, they do not seem sensibly to know it themselves. Men in general think they are much better than they are. {P. 160}.

Mr. M. You might not mean it, but I fear you have contributed not a little to increase such deception. But go through with your argument.

Mr. F. 'Tis common for them to blame Adam for their misery, and to think they are hardly dealt with, that God takes advantage of his being stronger than they, and so in a manner imposes silence upon them. But that if they were but fairly dealt with, they should return, and be well enough off in the end. {P. 160}.

Mr. M. Have you not said, “Great numbers of people in the religious world, seem willing to own their inability, and that it is the effect of the fall; and so, by laying all the blame on Adam, sit down very *comfortably*?” { P. 188}. But how does this agree with thinking they are *hardly* dealt with, that God takes *advantage* of his being stronger than they, and in a manner *imposes* silence upon them?—You seem to have something more to add to your argument.

Mr. F. It might, with equal propriety, be objected to the conduct of Moses to Sihon, king of the Amorites, that he only tantalized and mocked him, when he sent a message of peace to him, proposing to pass through his land in quietness; seeing it was predetermined, of God, that the Amorites at this time should be destroyed, their sin being now ripe. {P. 162}.

Mr. M. From the message of Moses to Sihon and Pharaoh the perverse temper of those profane princes blazed out: but we cannot conclude they would have been less perverse had they believed (which probably they did) that they would repent, and reform themselves at some convenient season. Had Moses told them that such a conclusion was adding sin to sin, and that it was, in common, the root of what is most wretched in the life of man, they would have been inflamed; but those who are better taught, admit the fact, confess they have destroyed themselves, and believe, that in the Lord alone is their help.

#### SECTION. 4.

##### *On encouragement to confide in Christ for Salvation.*

The law is not of faith.” But in the *gospel*, our *external* encouragement to confide in Christ, is as great as the nature of the case will admit. It extends to the chiefest of sinners; to the meanest of the mean, the basest of the base, and to the vainest of the vain. Nevertheless, no man is able to confide in Christ for salvation, who does not discern the nature, and approve of the end, of that redemption which the Redeemer hath obtained: but whoever did this that was not taught of God?

They are *sons*, all of them sons, which the captain of our salvation has engaged to bring to glory. Sons which are born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” But the word of the Lord must accomplish *all* that was intended to be accomplished by it, and prosper in the thing, be what it may, whereunto he sends it. Further it cannot go, and in *all* this it cannot fail.

What ends are to be answered by revelation, by a mere rational assent to its glad tidings, how those ends are to be answered, and in what manner the same word is made effectual, to the *elect*, are serious subjects; but of difficult discussion. Were they more deliberately considered, unhappy mistakes might be avoided, and what is beneficial to society promoted.

Whether Mr. Fuller has distinguished what should be distinguished, and connected what should be connected, upon those articles, let us consider.

Mr. F. If the foregoing principles, *in my treatise*, be just, then there is free and full encouragement for any poor sinner to come off from all self-confidence, and venture his soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. {P. 162}.

Mr. M. Were you not so repeatedly to remind us of the supposed advantages of your principles, who would have thought them so important? Surely some of your notions are not inimical to *self-confidence*. You suggest, if a man cannot do the things he would, it is not owing to the *nature* of his resolution, but to his volition being *relaxed*. {P. 196}. Was ever any man divorced from confidence in himself by such an argument?

Mr. F. If faith in Christ is to be considered, not as a duty incumbent upon all, but merely as a privilege, to which none have any right but those who are regenerate, then no one can lawfully and warrantably venture his soul upon Christ, until he can first prove himself to be regenerated. {P. 162}.

Mr. M. I am as averse to the making inherent qualifications the *ground* of our confiding in Christ as yourself: I am even more averse to this than you. But suppose our warrant to venture upon such reliance be as open, and as indefinite, as you imagine, yet right without *power*; enables no man to rely on him. The truth is no person confides in Christ, for the salvation of his soul, but he who is compelled, inclined, and assisted.

If a man was not *compelled* to do this, by motives so urgent as to be to him invincible, we cannot be certain he would ever do it. But the believer, in his first real approach to the Redeemer, says, “Lord save, or I perish” and; while abiding with him, he adopts the language of Peter, saying “Lord to whom shall I go; thou hast the words of eternal life.” This sort of compulsion, is infallibly connected with the believer’s *inclination*. It operates by conviction and hope; without which, believing with all the heart, would be to every man impossible.

But when a man is thus compelled, and inclined to confide in Christ, he meets with so many obstructions and temptations, that if his best endeavors to trust in him, were not *assisted* by the Spirit of God, he would still be unable to believe to the saving of his soul.

From these facts I infer, there is *something* both in the existence, and preservation of the faith of God's elect, which cannot be considered as our *duty*, but must be viewed as a special *blessing*.

Mr. F. Never a true christian yet made his first application to Christ, viewing himself as a regenerate saint, but as a vile wicked sinner. {P. 163}.

Mr. M. No *vile wicked sinner* is a true christian; nor should be so described. Our first application to Christ, does not precede the *illuminating* influence of grace: but that grace, except in enjoyment, is not our own.

Mr. F. But if, on the other hand, it be the duty of every man to believe in Christ, then every man hath a warrant, I do not say to hope for salvation without a renunciation of sin and self; but renouncing these, so trust in him for the salvation of his soul. {P. 163}.

Mr. M. *You* seem to suppose, that if a warrant is granted, and the wicked are willing, the work is done. These are not *my* notions. You *now* argue, that renouncing sin and self, must *precede* our hope of salvation. Will you inform us in what *degree*, and what is to be allowed as the *evidence* of this transaction? I fear, Sir, many christians might be so puzzled with this renunciation of sin and self, as stated by you, as to call in question their Christianity: and, I am not sure, if some able hand was to touch you to the quick, upon your own principle, whether you yourself would not be in an awkward situation.

## SECTION. 5.

### *On address to unregenerate Sinners.*

VERBAL application is a kind of courtship which few have skill to conduct with propriety. It is a rock on which many preachers have rushed to the loss of their credit, and finally to the distress of their own minds. One would think it is an enchanted rock. How else can we account for the ventures which some have made, and the high expectations which others have formed, upon their own dexterity? Mr. Fuller is aware of the danger of address, but fancies he has attained sufficient skill in this business to preserve his reputation. Others have been excessive, but he is exact; they have missed their way, but he has found out the most intricate paths of duty. Whether his reasoning's, or his rules, merit that a applause which his partial readers have supposed, I shall venture to suspect.

Mr. F. If the foregoing principles *in my treatise*, be just, then calls, warnings, invitations, expostulations, threatenings, and exhortations, even to the unregenerate, are perfectly consistent. {P. 163, 164}.

Mr. M. You are either speaking of your own addresses to the unregenerate, or you are not. If you are *not*, where is your argument? If you *are*, where is the modesty of this assertion?

Mr. F. It is not intended here to vindicate all the language that has been addressed to unconverted sinners, nor all the principles of those whose practice it has been to address them. {P. 164}.

Mr. M. This makes it probable you only mean to commend your *own*, and those which *you approve*. I applaud your *honesty* in this business; what I may think of your *wisdom*, you will not be at a loss to discern.

Mr. F. When we address sinners in the general, perhaps some regard ought to be paid to the order of things. Though it be the duty of every man to be perfectly holy, yet it would be very strange for any one of us thus to address another: 'Be perfectly holy, now, this moment.' {P. 164}.

Mr. M. You speak of the *order* of things, and mention four: holiness, time, the duty of the unregenerate unregenerate, and the address of a minister. But can the *three last*, in any *order*, produce the *first*? You say, it is the duty of every man to be *perfectly* holy. Have you considered what must be *undone*, and what must be *done* to reach *legal* perfection? Perfection is impossible to a fallen creature, but in, and by Jesus Christ. But he never intended the militant state of his kingdom to be the triumphant. You probably intended to soften your assertion, by giving each individual some time to reach perfection. By what authority do *you* allow any man a *moment*? The *law* will not; and if it would allow an *age*, he would then be as far from being perfectly holy, as from being perfectly immortal.

Mr. F. In many special addresses, regard should be had to times and circumstances, which often determine their propriety, and add thereto a peculiar energy. {P. 165}.

Mr. M. Though it is always proper to regard times and circumstances, we often err in our judgment of what is reasonable; and when we do not, *peculiar energy* has no certain connection with a well-timed, and prudent address. "Power belongs unto God." A bow drawn at a venture, is sometimes crowned with success, while the best directed arrows, not infrequently miss their mark, erring fly, and useless fall to the ground.

Mr. F. The ministers of the gospel, upon *my* principles *my* principles, may be said to have their work plain before them. {P. 166}.

Mr. M. I wish Sir, that preachers thought more of the work of *God* in all their endeavors to discharge their duty. If, however, your principles are *plain* to any ministers of your acquaintance, their penetration is very acute.

Mr. F. Many a worthy minister, whose principals have been unfriendly to addressing sinners, has felt himself sadly perplexed with his shackles in the presence of a numerous auditory. {P. 167}.

Mr. M. Every *worthy* minister has a sacred regard for his *own* religious tenets. He holds them by conviction, and believes them to be sound. Why do you suppose him to be *shackled, or perplexed?* You have a system which, in some of its parts, *I* should be ashamed to defend: but may I conclude that any part of it is to *you* a grievous yoke? —Probably, Sir, the *worthy* man of whom you speak, was not an *Ambassador*; so that what you call *perplexity*, he considered a sober regard to his *inferior* station.

Mr. F. Sometimes the generous feelings of his soul have been cruelly suppressed through fear of falling into inconsistencies; at other times, however, the goodness of his heart has prevailed against the badness of his system; he has forgot his creed, burst his bonds, and (O, unpardonable crime!) addressed himself to the consciences of his carnal auditors. For this, some of his critical hearers have censured him, as legal and inconsiderate; but God has blessed it to the salvation of souls ! {P. 167}.

Mr. M. The generous feelings, the goodness of heart, which you state as prevalent over a *bad* system, have, I fear, too frequently furnished weapons against the *best*. At least, what you are pleased to call by those fine names, have made sad work in many sermons. A man who is never afraid of being inconsistent, may forget his creed, and burst those bonds which his betters believe to be sacred. But what such a man would call an address to the *consciences* of his carnal hearers, I should consider as an address to their *imagination*s. The hearts of such preachers play strange tricks with their understandings. If they could bear with the judicious remarks of some of their hearers, they would find them more serviceable than those encomiums which men of unripe judgment cheaply bestow. The preacher who artfully magnifies himself will ever be admired. By *whom?* You have heard, Sir, *who* have been suffered gladly: and you probably know, who are ready to exclaim upon their hearing warm and tender addresses, ‘Now the man does *something!* This is more than preaching! Who can resist such language, or withstand such exhortations?’ But your plea is, ‘God hath blessed it to the salvation of souls.’ To this I answer, It is the gospel which is the power of God unto

salvation; but I fear, whatever there may be in other parts of the sermon, there is not much gospel in many of those addresses which you admire.

Mr. F. Perhaps a great number of prejudices have arisen against this practice, from a becoming jealousy, shall I call it, for the doctrines of free and all sufficient grace. {P. 167}.

Mr. M. You are right. At least, a becoming jealousy for the doctrines of grace, has produced, is producing, and will ever produce, that *caution* which is commendable, in those ministers who desire to be found faithful unto death. You do not mean to depreciate such a temper?

Mr. F. Great and precious, no doubt, are these doctrines, and whatever tends to eclipse, or obscure their glory, ought to be suspected, if not abandoned. {P. 167}.

Mr. M. So think I: and have therefore ventured to recall your attention to those doctrines which you *still* admit to be *great and precious*.

Mr. F. It ought to be confessed too, that too many of those who have dealt in addresses to unregenerate sinners, have sadly neglected the very spirit and glory of the gospel. {P. 167}.

Mr. M. And shall Mr. Fuller's name be added to the number?

Mr. F. In such addresses, perhaps it has been too common likewise to go aside from the scriptural intent of *of* them, and to dabble in Arminianism. {P. 167}.

Mr. M. And will you suffer the *Arminians* to plead the force of *your example*?

Mr. F. If, instead of telling sinners their duty, in order to convince them of sin, and so bring them to Christ, we give them a diminutive idea of their own depravity, and bloat them up with a notion of self-sufficiency; then do we deceive the souls of men! {P. 167, 168}.

Mr. M. This does not appear to be your *intention*: but whether it be through any defect in your understanding, whether it be owing to forgetfulness, intemperate zeal, or to your passion for being more consequential that truth will admit; whether it be owing to these, or to any other cause, you really have written and said those things which are, by no means, consistent with your concessions.

Mr. F. So also, if, instead of using exhortations to sinners, merely that we may use the means which God hath appointed, we give them to suppose that any work that is truly good, is, in whole, or in part, to be effected by, or ascribed to, themselves, than do we dishonour the Spirit of God! {P. 168}.

Mr. M. This is the most extraordinary concession you have yet made. I am pleased with it; because while you adhere to what you have now yielded, they who zealously affect you, but not well, must be disappointed. But it gives me pain that you should so frequently forget, and seem to disregard this acknowledgment. You say, It is the duty of every man to be perfectly holy; that whatever a person is, or does, in respect to spiritual dispositions, and exercises, when he is regenerated, it is no more than what *he* ought to have been and done, *prior* to that period, as well as at the time. Compare this language with what you have now conceded, and *if* your work is *plain* before you; *if* what you call duty, is *plain* to your hearers, you make together the most singular congregation in Great Britain.

Mr. F. Whatever has a tendency to build up a sinner upon a covenant of works, ought to be at all events avoided. {P. 168}.

Mr. M. If men ought to be perfectly holy prior to regeneration, should they not endeavor after such perfection? If they should, to what; covenant *must* the endeavors of unregenerate men be confined? *Legal* perfection cannot belong to any other covenant; and the personal, perfect holiness which you contend to be the duty of all men, is not *evangelical*.

Mr. F. Our main concern with men, as ministers of the gospel, does not appear to be to regulate their outward conduct. {P. 169}.

Mr. M. More is done by a mere rational assent to the gospel of Christ than you are willing to admit. This assent, and the advantages attending it, should be distinguished from that belief which issues in salvation. The gospel, where it has not been owned for the conversion of sinners, has been a greater mean of reformation, and done more to heal the nations of absurd tenets, and injurious practices, than all that law could devise, philosophers invent, or politicians effect. It is indeed, painful to behold the sincerity of some people divorced from judgment, and destitute of spiritual affection; nevertheless, it is more eligible for any man to be rational, than by perverse disputing to be immersed in infidelity.

Mr. F. As the main idea of coming to Christ, seems to be an act of submission, this ought to be enforced, whether they are sensible, or insensible; whether they will hear, or forbear. {P. 172}.

Mr. M. What you intend by *insensible* submission to Christ, I cannot guess. He that does not know in *whom* he believes, and *why* he submits, cannot be his disciple.

Mr. F. If the question were, May we hope for a pardon? there the answer ought to be, Yes, if you submit: but if the question is, Ought we to submit? there the answer will admit of no ifs in the case. {P. 172}.

Mr. M. Yet our Lord said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” What is submission without love; or love to him we never saw, without faith, or faith, without that grace which is the gift God?

Mr. F. It appears very evident, that a great number of mistakes on this subject of addressing sinners, have been owing to people’s thinking and speaking of moral inability under those terms and representations which relate to natural ability. {P. 172, 173}.

Mr. M. This subject, with your leave, shall be discussed at our next conversation.

Mr. F. It is allowed that God, in his word, does represent men's ignorance by blindness, their stubbornness by deafness, and their total inactivity for God, by being dead. But these modes of speaking, it must be remembered, are figurative. {P. 173}.

Mr. M. Some of my thoughts on *figurative* forms of expression have already {Part L; P. 125}, been submitted to your censure, which I found to be as rash as severe. I shall only add, you wish to prove that these figures denote nothing more than *voluntary* transgression. The words blind, deaf, and dead, stand, in your opinion, as so many marks, to signify ignorance, stubbornness, and total inactivity to God. But is all *ignorance* willful? Was David *stubborn* when he said, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me? or Paul, when he confessed, That which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I? Total *inactivity* for God, unless you limit the assertion to evangelical actions, is by no means true of the unconverted: many of them have a *zeal* of God, but not according to *knowledge*.

Mr. F. But by these *figurative* terms being constantly and inattentively made use of, people, yea, some preachers, are gradually and insensibly led to think that men, deaf to God's calls, and dead in sin, are therein no more blamable than those who are naturally deaf and dead. P. 173.

Mr. M. He that is naturally *deaf* cannot naturally be *dead*. But pray, Sir, who are the preachers that are *led to think* as you have supposed.? Are you not too apt to draw inferences you are utterly unable to support?

Mr. F. But those who thus declaim, ought to consider that we suppose there is a real and important difference between natural and moral inability.

Mr. M. Who those *declaimers* are, I really cannot say. Unless they are great men indeed, they ought, no doubt, to consider what *you*, and those

who are with you, have said of the real and important difference between natural and moral inability. For my part, I intend to give it due attention. Mr. F. The former *natural inability* we maintain, absolutely excuses its subject from obligation or blame, in proportion as it prevails, and renders all admonitions absurd. {P. 173}.

Mr. M. A friend of yours, {Mr. R. Robinson, late of Chesterton, near Cambridge}, in a letter which I received from him, made some free remarks on your notions of *moral blame*. In one part of his letter he says, “What a crude saying is this. In all cases of natural inability, the party is inexcusable, even though he may, by his own fault, have brought this inability on himself?” He adds, “This is, but not in John Bunyan’s sense, Good news for the vilest of men. God forbid a christian minister should forge weapons for bad men! Mr. Fuller does not intend to do so; but this is one of the evils of controversy, men over shoot themselves.”

Mr. F. But thus it is not in respect to the latter, *moral inability*; that is voluntary and criminal. So far is it from excusing from blame it is the thing itself wherein blame consists; and the therefore so far from setting aside reasonings and expostulations, it is the very thing which renders them necessary. {P. 173,174}.

Mr. M. That which is *voluntary* cannot be the *cause* of volition. They are constituted sinners, who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression. Death reigned over them from Adam to Moses: and, in the same manner it reigneth to this day. If our very nature was not polluted by the fall, the Lord would not have promised, to cleanse their blood which he had not cleansed in Judah. (Joel 3: 21). If our depravity lies so deep, and is spread so wide, how does it appear that what is *voluntary*, is the very thing, in which *blame* consists?

Mr. F. The blindness of carnal men to spiritual things is constantly represented as a voluntary, criminal blindness. {P. 174}.

Mr. M. Neither *judicial* blindness, nor that blindness which happened to *Israel*, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, can be considered as altogether *voluntary*,

Mr. F. In these controversies, that passage of the Apostle Paul, in (1st Corinthians 2: 14), has been frequently brought, it should seem, not merely to prove, that the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God, but as well, that he ought not. {P. 174}.

Mr. M. Perhaps you meant to have said, *to prove* that he ought not. You will excuse my giving you immediate credit for this assertion. Things that differ should not be stated as if they were the same. Though he who believes *not* is condemned, he who *believes* hath obtained mercy. The unbeliever is *condemned* for his breach of law, and for his irrational rejection of the gospel: but *non-condemnation* is not founded upon any act of ours; it rests on better ground? If a man ought to do what he cannot do, and by cannot, you include all his possible efforts, and modes of acting, it follows, a man ought to do what is every way to him impossible: if your repeated assertions convey any meaning, such is your notion of our *duty*.

Mr. F. Surely, a plan devised by infinite wisdom, could never appear foolishness to any intelligent being who is what he ought to be. {P. 174}.

Mr. M. What any fallen creature ought to be, in the strength of his own ability, I cannot say. All I know is, that sinners ought to suffer death, and must, unless it pleases God to redeem them from all iniquity, and give them life in his Son.

Mr. F. Spiritual deafness is constantly set forth as a thing not only sinful, but very wicked {P.175}.

Mr. M. What makes any man deaf to spiritual instruction? You urge it is *voluntary*. But what makes any man willingly deaf to the gospel? His *will* is not an independent, unconnected power. The truth is we come into this world with *seeds* of enmity both to the law of God and reign of

grace: nor is our wickedness less abundant, or the more to be excused, because “the first young pulse began to beat, iniquity and death.”

Mr. F. What is it to be dead in sin, but to be sinfully dead? {P. 175}.

Mr. M. In Adam all died; by his disobedience many were made sinners. I believe the imputation of original sin to be *just*, and the propagation of corruption from Adam to his natural decedents, to be *certain*. As a dead *body* puts on different appearances from the moment it is without the spirit, to its being reduced to its original dust; so they who are dead in sin, sensual, not having the Spirit of God, are subject to assessing alterations in their common state of moral depravity. To what stage in that sad state of things you refer, I do not presume to judge.

Mr. F. Carnal mindedness constitutes the essence of spiritual death; which, instead of excusing mankind, is the very sin of their nature, and that for which they all stand guilty before God. {P. 176}.

Mr. M. Paul says, “To be carnally minded is death:” but if this be the very sin of their *nature*, and you declare it is, then, it is not that which is *voluntary* that makes them carnal, but something carnal, and corrupt in their confutation, that produces the *carnality* of which the Apostle speaks. If this be the sin of our *nature*, to be spiritually minded, cannot be of the same *original*. As to the *essence* of spiritual death, that, in my opinion, you might as well let alone.

Mr. F. Few people, I hope, have the effrontery to say concerning that degree of deadness which remains in good people, that there is no harm in that; or in other words, that we have no reason to reflect upon ourselves for being slothful, and careless about God, and void of an heart to act for him: and if such a spirit is criminal where it only partially prevails, 'tis strange if its entire prevalence should make it innocent ! {P. 176}.

Mr. M, Here, as in other places of this kind, you have no adversary in me. Carnality is criminal in all its stages. But what is, what *ought* to be the remedy? Here lies the contest.

Mr. F. Motion without life will be found to be only obligation without inclination, {P. 176},

Mr. M. *Inclination* is the effect of opinion, belief, or understanding. Obligation does not immediately operate on it, but upon our highest faculties. As any obligation is there considered to be good, or not good, we endeavor to regard it, or to avoid it. Many things are *moved* which have not life; but *voluntary motion* always supposes the subject of it to be *alive*: and *life*, in every view, is of GOD.

Mr. F. If men's inability be a criminal one, and consist in nothing else but a voluntary ignorance of, and total aversion to, the nature of God and spiritual things; calls, commands, threatenings, invitations, &c. are so far from being absurdities, that it would be a great absurdity to refute the use of them; as great as, to lay aside the means in order to affect the end! {P. 176, 177}.

Mr. M. Ignorance and aversion must have an adequate *cause*: therefore, we cannot admit there is *nothing else* but what is voluntary in this bad business. Calls, commands, &c. are as the author of them is, and as they are Hated by his servants. What hinders our making a proper use of these things, though we should not always submit to your direction? Some have laid aside the means in hope of reaching the end *without* them; but if any have been so silly as to lay aside the means *in order to affect the end*, I cannot see why such silly people Should be dragged into this controversy. —In a letter, lately mentioned, you are suspected to be confuted, where you imagine you are perspicuous. “The good man” (says my correspondent,) “hath confounded, as it seems to me, means and end. It is my duty to *eat* and *drink*, but Shall I say, it is my duty to be *nourished* By doing so? When wearied with the labor of the day, I retire to rest, I think I perform a duty due to myself: but when I awake next morning, and feel myself re-invigorated, I don't Bets myself

for having done my *duty*, but I adore my God for having bestowed a *mercy*.”

Mr. F. It has been said, ‘tis true, that ‘precepts, prohibitions and promises, agree not with the covenant of grace.’ {P. 177}.

Mr. M. He who said this was an old, wise man. If his book be patiently consulted, by a lover of the covenant *of grace*, it will appear, that his reputation is out of your reach. {See the Further Enquiry after Truth, published by Mr. Lewis Wayman of Kimbolton in the year 1738}.

Mr. F. It has been said— ‘What good men say sometimes in expostulating with sinners upon this subject, contradicts their own experience.’ {P. 180}.

Mr. M. You now refer to the late Mr. Brine. A more *judicious* man we have not left among us: a more able advocate for the doctrines of grace; I know not where to find. This is no reason why he should not be read with caution, or why his mistakes should not be censured with becoming courage. But the saying you have quoted, is a true saying: and, I will add, that what good men say sometimes in expostulating with sinners, not only contradicts their own *experience*, but equally contradicts their most solemn confessions, and ardent petitions in their public prayers.

Mr. F. If not praying for grace and holiness be men’s dreadful sin, then sure it is their duty to pray for them, and it is our duty—to exhort them so to do. {P. 181}.

*Mr. M.* Not praying for grace and holiness, where the word of God is read, must be a dreadful sin: because their excellence is *to* frequently averted, and because it gives no man **the** least hope of either but as the gift *of* God. But it can be no man's duty to express more in prayer than he *believes*. If he does not believe what God has reported of grace and holiness, his unbelief has its own cause, and must have its own consequence. If he owns, he is an unbeliever, this should be urged upon him. Besides, you are not content to exhort men to *pray* for grace and

holiness, without the least discrimination of character, but you urge them, as a matter of duty, to *be* perfectly holy, which is a very different consideration.

Mr. F. It is allowed that flesh will never be prevailed upon to choose, adhere unto, and delight in God; nor do we ever expect it will. Nay it might have been added omnipotence itself cannot make it. {P. 181}.

Mr. M. How! All men “ought to be and do,” on pain of eternal condemnation, what OMNIPOTENCE ITSELF, *cannot* make them do! Surely, Sir, your rhetoric outruns your reason. You will not wish me to take any carnality: but then we suppose that while we do our work of addressing the consciences of men, and pointing out to them what they ought to be and do, God may, by that, do his work of convincing them of sin, and so in the end bring them to a compliance.

Mr. M. If the unregenerate have anything of their own, which is not carnal, say what it is. If the unsanctified will *never* pray for grace and holiness, who *is* and *ought* to be their sanctifier? As to your *supposition* concerning *your* work, and the work of God, it seems to be this: *you begin*, by telling A. what he ought to be and do himself; and while you require this of him, as his *duty*, GOD, by your unwarranted address, does his work of convincing A. of sin, and A. is brought to a compliance. May I ask to *what*? If you are disposed to wave the question, go on with your own arguments.

Mr. F. If the principle cannot be persuaded, the person may, if God let in with it, and be brought to be of another principle, or disposition of mind. {P. 182}.

Mr. M. *If God set in with it*—what can you mean? Not with the *principle* of A. for that, it; seems, cannot be persuaded. Not with his *disposition*, for you make that synonymous with his principle. Not with his *person*, destitute of principles, for he is supposed to have a *bad* one; and where is the man without *any* disposition?

It must then be, setting in with your address. But I fear, Sir, this is taking *for granted* what you cannot prove.

Mr. F. Seeing Christ and his apostles appear to have tried these means in their addresses to their carnal auditors, who we cannot suppose made use of such means as were not adapted to answer the end designed; it becomes us finely, instead of railing objections from meta-physical subtilties, to follow their example, lest we be reprov'd for aiming to be wise above what is written. {P. 182}.

Mr. M. *Christ and his Apostles!* why, Sir, did they ever argue as you frequently do? Did they ever say, "If the principle cannot be persuaded, the person may?" *Meta-physical subtilties!* why, what do you call your own *quiddities*? Permit me to ask, what could be your aim, when you attempted to shew the difference between a *privation* and *negation*, and when you assured us that death is a *privative*, and not a mere *negative IDEA*? {P. 182}.

Mr. F. Surely it is not so dreadful a sin to be destitute of that [*disposition*] which *we* are under no obligation to have! {P. 183}.

Mr. M. Sin is *dreadful* in proportion to the shame and misery it actually, and deservedly produces. The *disposition* which draws down such evils, and the *first* fault which, in its consequences, brought upon all men a sinful disposition, must be considered as *terrible*: nor can it be the less alarming, because the *remedy* is not in our hands. It is neither possible, nor proper, that we should heal ourselves. When Saul was converted, he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ." Was it *proper* that those things which he *counted loss*, and but *dung*, that he might *win Christ*; can you think it *right* that those *very* things should be considered as the *cause* of his conversion?

Mr. F. If a total inability makes it necessary to lay expostulations totally aside, then a partial inability will prove that they ought to be laid in part

aside. And so in proportion as we see coldness and formality prevail in a christian, we are to cease exhorting and expostulating with him 1 P. 183.

Mr. M. Your attempt to make the argument of Mr. Brine ridiculous, (to which your words are a reply) affects your own reputation. For let me ask, how you behave among your own people. Do you pay no more regard to your humble and spiritual members, than to those unhappy persons whom, by the churches consent, are separated from you, and seldom disposed to hear you preach? Who was it that said, Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone?"

Mr. F. "The misrepresentation" says a judicious writer of the present age, "principally arises from there being no distinction made betwixt a natural and a moral inability to do the will of God." P. 183.

Mr. M. After such freedom with men so rational as Mr. Wayman, Mr. Brine, and Dr. Gill, to call Dr. Evans a judicious writer of the present age, and to give such a proof of his judgment as you have produced in your treatise, must be unwelcome to the delicacy of that Gentleman. It is the lot of sensible men to be teased with injudicious praise, and to be hurt by imprudent companions; but they are to be pitied who are thus caressed.

I have now, Sir, followed you through your very long chapter of exhortation. For those exhortations which are evangelical, rational, rightly placed, and happily introduced, I am an advocate. It would be ungenerous to suppose you never thus exhort. But what you have *now* advanced on this subject has but little which I can admire, Suffer me to say, if your brethren in the ministry, dare not venture to expostulate and exhort just as you do, or as you are pleased to direct, they may be allowed to do it in the best manner they can. There is reason to think that this subject is not so reducible to rule, but that much must be left to the preacher's penetration in the immediate discharge of his duty. Besides, sinners, in my opinion, are more frequently converted, and believers more commonly edified, by a narrative of facts concerning Jesus Christ, and by a clear, and connected statement of the doctrines of

grace, and blessings of the gospel, than by all the exhortations and expostulations that ever were invented.

When some ministers begin to exhort, I begin to be alarmed. It is true, hearers love to be courted, and I have no sort of objection to perceive they are treated with due attention; but courtship, even from a pulpit, is seldom managed wisely. Ministers, like other men, are too fond of being consequential: and seldom do they betray their vanity more than in their fond addresses to their fellow men. How often, and how much they offend the sober minded, by their extravagant exclamations, I with, Sir, we may dispassionately consider.

In defense of these improper liberties, it has been said, Men must be addressed as being what they really are: and it has been inferred, that since all men must be saints or sinners, they should be addressed as such. But what men really are, and our knowledge of their state, is a very different thing. Most of our hearers are to us *unknown*; our select friends, are not *perfectly* known to us; nor are we *completely* acquainted even with ourselves. Sinners and sinners, saints and saints, differ widely from each other. Could we forbear to judge when we have *no* light; could we be modest and cautious when we have but *little*; could we speak impartially and with becoming courage, when we have *more*, we should be heard with as much attention as we have any right to expect, we should review such conduct with settled satisfaction, and cheerfully leave the event with God.

## SECTION. 6.

### *On natural and moral Ability.*

To form just ideas of human ability is not an easy task. We are *passive* in many things in which we are supposed to be *active*; and what is deemed *power*, even by some of the learned, is in reality, *weakness*. {3 See Seach's Light of Nature, Vol. I. Part I. Faculties of the Mind}. If we wish to be undeceived, we must patiently consider what powers men possess, what they are pleased to say of their own ability, and what is said of our capacity in the word of God.

After all that has been urged concerning our active, passive, and elective powers, it is incontestable we have not *one* power that is *independent*, nor *one* that is absolutely *unconnected*. It is the *mm* that has power, be it what it may; but his power is not *allodial*; much less are any of his faculties.

What men are pleased to say of themselves, must not be always trusted. They may be *giants* in their own eyes, who are but *grasshoppers* in the eyes of better judges. Those things which men *fem* to do, and suffer, will not settle the dispute. *How* they perform what they transact, and sustain what they suffer, must be accurately reviewed, if we wish to avoid imposition.

But we cannot thus review the subject, unless we carefully consult the word of God. What is there reported of our ability is essential to our receiving solid satisfaction. If this section, or if any of the former sections, deserve the reader's notice, it is owing to my unfeigned regard for revelation; my incessant Applications to understand what God hath revealed, and to an undaunted resolution to publish, however unpopular it may seem, what I conceive to be the sense of the sacred scriptures.

Joshua conquered Canaan. True. But we cannot say that Joshua, and the host which he commanded, had a *natural* ability to conquer the Canaanites. For we are told, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread .to the wife, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to- men of skill; but that time and chance happeneth to them all." Of the conquest of Canaan, by Joshua and his host, it is expressly said," They got not the land in possession by their *own* sword, neither did their own arm save them."

How little the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews ascribed to the *natural* ability of his countrymen, appears in his catalogue of those worthies who obtained a *good report*, Their actions are attributed to a different principle. *By faith* they did what they performed, and endured nobly what they were compelled to suffer, *Through faith* they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, flopped the

mouths of lions, quenched the Violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were *made* strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

In actions of a *moral* nature, we are not permitted to say, they are performed by any independent power in man. When Abimelech protested he had ailed towards Sarah in the integrity of his heart, and in the innocency of his hands, the Almighty replied, “Yea I know thou didst this in the integrity of thine heart; for I also withheld thee from finning against me ; therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.” We never abstain from evil, nor do that which is truly good, without divine assistance. God is always our preserver, whether we know it or not; and Whether we believe it, or disbelieve. It is God who worketh in us, to will and to do, of his good pleasure.”

In actions *immoral* and base, we are told of a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, that “his power shall be mighty, but not by his *own* power.” When Pilate said to Jesus Christ, (with that ignorance and arrogance, which in Pilate was too common,) “Speaketh thou nothing to *me*? Knowest thou not that *I* have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee? Jesus answered, *Thou* couldst have no power *at all* against me, except it were *given* thee from *above*.

In *spiritual* actions, whether in believing, mortification of sin, or growth in grace, we ad against the lusts of the flesh, by what is called the *new* man which, though after God, is renewed day by day. The real principle of these actions is the Spirit of God; who dwells in believers\* and by whom they are sanctified and sealed; by whom also they mortify fin, and grow in grace. Their fruit is the *fruit of fruit*. Their graces are “precious things brought forth by the fun.” They are fruitless till “the sun of righteousness arise unto them with healing in his wings.” Cheered with the fruit of their Redeemer’s passion, and relishing it by the agency of the Holy Ghost, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. It is *their* fruit in enjoyment, and in animation; it is *his* fruit, as being the efficient cause of their conversion, and Christian conversation.

Such is the tenor of that testimony from which, upon this subject, there is no appeal. As that evidence is received, our sentiment, and our speech will be found. Instead of magnifying our *natural, or moral* ability, we shall admire the *common* and *facial* gifts of God to sinners like ourselves. His gifts are various, numerous, precious. The very word, *gift*, as it occurs in the bible, is replete with instruction. It leads the mind of the careful and well informed reader, to think of the giver, and of the nature, source, and end of those gifts which are freely bestowed upon us; it leads him to consider how they are varied, limited, and connected; it leads him to enquire by what means the purpose of God, in the sovereign distribution of his favor, may be answered; it leads him to examine how far he has communion with God in the final design of his favor towards him; to lament his ignorance, negligence, and other infirmities; and to be thankful if, upon the whole, it still appears he has not received the grace of God in vain. —Has anything which has yet been advanced on *natural* and *moral ability* led us to *better* notions, or to *better* dispositions? Is there anything which Mr. Fuller has produced upon his *favorite* subject, which promises to be *equally* beneficial to mankind?

Mr. F. As this distinction of natural and moral ability, and inability, is of great importance in this as well as other controversies, a few additional observations on this subject shall conclude the whole. {P. 185}.

Mr. M. You command my attention.

Mr. F. By natural ability is meant, the enjoyment of rational faculties, bodily powers, and external advantages. {P. 185}.

Mr. M. It seems odd to say that *ability* is *enjoyment*. But *what* enjoyment of these things do you intend? If that which is *moral*, why do you call it *natural* ability? or why should we admit that *carnal* men have *such* enjoyment? If you speak of that which is *vicious*, how is such enjoyment a *favor*; or, in any respect, conducive to conversion? —Here then, is *no* ability, or, as some have called it, an ability to do *nothing*.

Mr. F. By a moral ability to do good, is meant, a disposition to use our natural ability to right purposes. {P. 186}.

Mr. M. Now it appears, that the *enjoyment* you mentioned *before*, is not *moral* enjoyment, but bliss independent of a *disposition* to use our natural abilities to a *right* purpose. The objection therefore, which I have- made to your description of natural ability, appears to be just and fair. Our abilities, according to your own account, are combined, and subordinate powers; so that if a man had ever so much *natural* ability to do good, yet he cannot possibly do the least good with it, because, without *moral* ability, he has no *disposition* to use it to a *right*, purpose. But if there should be a league between these two kinds of ability, what could he not perform? Were they not, however, united in *Paul*? Yet he said, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of *ourselves*: but our sufficiency is of God” Were they not united in *you* when you entered upon this controversy? but what have they produced? I do not press you for an immediate answer.

Mr. F. *Moral ability* consists in a heart to know God, a heart to love him, and a heart to devote all the powers of our souls, and members of our bodies to be instruments of righteousness to serve him, and a heart to improve every opportunity that offers to glorify his name. {P. 186}.

Mr. M. If this be a fair description of *moral* ability, it is no wonder so many have been charmed with it. But before I am too much enamored, tell me where it may be found. Shew me the man that has such a heart, and I will publish his praise. If you should say, he *ought* to have it, though he has it *not*, I shall reply, You do not, after all, talk of *things that are*, but of *fictions* that amuse your imagination.

Mr. F. Natural ability, may, in the style of scripture, be called, the power of the hand, and moral ability, the power of the heart. The former is not of itself, sufficient for the performance of good. If a man had ever so much power of this fort to do good, yet if he have no disposition that way, it is to no purpose. {P. 186.}

Mr. M. *Ever so* much power answering *no* purpose, is a strange *sort* of power. Every degree of power which we possess is *blind* without it is under the direction of the *understanding*; but our understandings are in

darkness to that which is evangelically good, till illuminated by the word and spirit of God. — “All our power is without doubt *derived* from the Author of our being, and, as he gave it freely, he may take it away when he will. No man can be certain of the continuance of any of his powers of body or mind for a moment; and, therefore, in every promise, there is a condition understood, to wit, if we live, if we retain that health of body and soundness of mind which is necessary to the performance, and if nothing happen in the providence of God, which puts it out of our power.” {Dr. Reid on the Active Powers of Man. Essay I. c. II. p. 20}.

Mr. F. Natural inability, so far as it prevails, excuses from all obligation and blame. {P. 187.}

Mr. M. We have heard enough of this already. I shall only add, you do not always act upon that opinion. You insinuate, I am incompetent incompetent to interpose in this controversy; yet my supposed want of *natural* ability, has not made you forbear the severity of censure. {See Mr. Fuller’s Five Letters}.

Mr. F. But moral inability is so far from excusing men from blame, that it is the thing itself wherein blame consists. {P. 187}.

Mr. M. Why then, are *infants* subject to *death*? and what is it that you call “the *very* sin of our *nature*?” When a preacher in France said, “That is not sin, which is not *voluntary*.” Moulin replied: I confess it, if you speak of *actual* sin; but if you speak of our *natural* stain and blot, it is not necessary that this should be procured by every one’s *own* will: it is enough if it be contrary to *law*. For this is the best definition of sin, which St. John layeth down, that sin is the breach of the law; and it cannot be doubted, but that *that* is contrary to law, which *stirs up* a man to rebel against the law.”

Mr. F. It is of great importance that we consider our inability to do good as being *fin* itself, and not barely a consequence of sin. {P. 187,188}.

Mr. M. You should have said, our *moral* inability; because your doctrine is, that our *natural* inability, so far as it prevails, excuses from *all* obligation and blame. Sin, in us, is not only *sin itself*, but is also the inevitable *consequence* of the first transgression.

Mr. F. Great numbers of people in the religious world, seem willing to own their inability, and that it is the effect of the fall; and so, by laying all the blame on Adam, sit down very comfortably. {P.188}.

Mr. M. Perhaps, Sir, there are a *plurality* of religious worlds, and in that in which you live, it may be so; but they must be a very strange sort of people, who can fit down very *comfortably*, under an idea of being blamed without just cause, and who suffer under a sentence which they supposed to be severe.

Mr. F. If the foregoing observations, *which I have made*, be true, then it is not a natural, but a moral ability that mankind are under to do the will of God. {P. 188}.

Mr. M. What I think of your *foregoing* observations need not be repeated. To me it appears certain, that men are under a *natural* as well as a *moral* inability to be *perfectly* holy, which you say, is their *duty*. True holiness, in every degree, is of God, and by his grace. What is more *natural* to us than corruption? It came into the world with us, and never leaves us till we quit this mortal stage. What is more *natural* to us, than that blindness of our understanding which no one entirely escapes, and which no one is able wholly to remove? Can that be called *voluntary* which we are ever endeavoring to surmount, but never able totally to subdue? A *willing* captive, like a man in love, is charmed with his captivity; but an *unwilling* captive sighs for deliverance from, his irksome bondage.

Mr. F. The measure of our strength is let down as the rule of our obligation. {P. 188, 189}.

Mr. M. If the law of God must be brought down to this scanty measure, why was Christ made a *curse* for us? To procure this *croaked* rule? Christ died for us when we were *without* strength. What, upon your principle, was the rule of moral action while we were in that *condition*?

Mr. F. When the pious psalmist called upon his soul, and all that was within him, to bless and praise God's holy name, he discovered this law to be written upon his heart. {P. 190}.

Mr. M. What law was written in the heart of David, we may perceive from his psalms; especially from the *first, nineteenth, and the hundred and nineteenth* psalms. But the *Torah* of David, and your *lesbian* rule { \*a lesbian rule was a device made of lead that ancient masons used to bend and mold curves., are very different things}. If the law of the Lord, both doctrine and precepts, was written *in* his heart, who was *the writer*? Was he not JEHOVAH? You call David the *pious* psalmist. Who made him so, and by whose grace did his piety continue?

Mr. F. It does, not at all tend to cry up human nature to say men have natural power, or are possessed of all the faculties necessary to love God and keep his whole law, if their hearts were but rightly disposed. P. 190.

Mr. M. A man far gone in a consumption, may have *all* the members of his body, but in what state are they for service? So, a sinner may have *all* the faculties pertaining to human nature, when each is so disordered, as to be unfit for the master's use. Why should those faculties be called *powers*, where they have no ability; and in a business where you acknowledge they are not *disposed* to give the least affiance? It seems strange to assert that persons possessed of these dependent, and depraved powers, might keep the *whole law*, if their hearts were but *rightly* disposed; since every man has already offended in more points than *one*. But I forgot that the measure of *our strength* is set down *in your treatise*, as the rule of our obligation.

Mr. F. Some have treated this distinction, *natural and moral ability*, as a new invention; but that only'- proves their own want: of reading. {P. 191}.

Mr. M. Will you permit me to say, that want of reading is *comparative*? You: may believe me, I have no ambition to compare *my* reading with *yours*. I. have already shewn {Second Part, P.84}, that Peter de Moulin considered this distinction as *new* and *perverse*. Since His time it: cannot, be very antient, nor is it less vexatious. Perhaps you would be of his opinion, were you to read what he has said on this subject, in his *Esclaircissement des Controverses Salmuriennes: Ou Defense de la doctrine des Eglises Reformers: and in his Examen de la doctrine de Messieurs Amyrault & Testard; i 'un pasteur & professeur en Theologie a Saumur, l'autre Pasteur a Blois.*

Mr. F. Others affect to treat it as a distinction without a difference—alleging—that if their prejudices and propensities to evil are invincible, they are excusable. {P. 191}.

Mr. M. To be sure, that which is by us invincible, we cannot overcome; but to infer we are always *excusable* when we cannot *conquer*, is more like some inferences of your own, than any I am disposed to draw.

Mr. F. But if *they are excusable*, then it should seem, God's government resembles what is sometimes said of some other governments, its burden is all thrown upon the middle fort of people. {P. 191}.

Mr. M. As you are not *serious*, you will not expect my answer.

Mr. F. But seriously, was the inability of Joseph's brethren, who could not speak peaceably to him, no more blame-worthy than if they had. been literally dumb? {P. 191}.

Mr. M. If you can ask such a question when you are *serious*, one cannot wonder you should trifle when you are *jocose*.

Mr. F. Our Lord said to the Jews, “How can ye, being evil, speak good things?” and Paul to the Romans, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God:” and Peter speaks of those who have eyes full of adultery, and cannot cease from sin. Query: were these speeches delivered with a view to excuse these people; or to blame them? {P. 191, 192}.

Mr. M. Our Lord, in the passage you have quoted, spake to instruct and reprove the Jews, and Paul, and Peter, wrote what you have recited, to instruct and blame both Jews and Gentiles. But it does not appear that either our Lord, or his Apostles, taught that sinners ought to convert *themselves*, or that their iniquities were altogether *voluntary*. These words, *being evil, in the flesh*, and *cannot cease sin*, are unhappily employed, if nothing more than *voluntary* action be described by such terms.

Mr. F. For want of knowing better, some people have suspected this distinction to be friendly to Arminianism; a sort of fragment, as they suppose, of the old idol free will. {P. 192}.

Mr. M. Your illiberal censure of your betters, has too frequently had an unpleasant effect upon my mind, and it upon my pen. If I am at length, more guarded in my reply, I am not unaffected with such freedom. As to the present charge, can *Mr. Taylor* be considered as ignorant of Arminianism? His thoughts of your treatise have been published, and prove you are more friendly to his side of the question than you are willing to acknowledge. Mr. de Moulin, whose theological acumen has never been disputed, forms the same objection which you attribute to the *ignorant*. For my own part, I will run the risk of reaping additional invectives, by saying, that I firmly believe, *the old idol of free will*, is not likely to be destroyed so long as *some* of your sentiments are admired.

Mr. F. Whereas nothing is better calculated to destroy that system. {P. 192}.

Mr. M. Then it must be *immortal*.

Mr. F. It has been said by way of objection\* that we place the inability of man wholly in the Will. P. 193,

Mr. M. I am afraid, Sir, you have done but little in your treatise to remove that objection. Your concessions lose their force by opposite assertions, and arguments in favor of your leading propositions.

Mr. F. We do not suppose men's inability to lie in their will, in distinction from their understanding and affections; but in distinction from the want of natural powers. {P. 193}.

Mr. M. Are not our understanding and affections as natural to us as any other power, or faculty? If these were wanting, we should be *brutes*, and not men. Such a *brute*, in human form, was the King of Babylon, when "he was driven from men and did eat grass as oxen." When his *understanding* returned, he rose up a *man*. But with that *alone*, unless it had been brighter than his former intellectual power, he might have been as vicious as in any period of his life. But it pleased God to grant this arrogant man, reason, honor, brightness, and excellent majesty. Then he extolled and honored the King of heaven, laying, w All whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abate."

Mr. F. If we have used the term will, and inability of will, oftener than other terms, it is partly because the will is the leading power of the foul, and so we put a part for the whole; —and partly because whatever other powers are affected by sin, all is voluntary, {P. 193}.

Mr. M. Your *ambiloquy* leaves me in doubt what you may mean by the *leading* power of the foul. The will is not that power which takes the *lead*. We can neither will, nor act, without some *motive*; but motives operate by the medium of the *understanding*. Nor is the will the *chief* power by which *we study, or strive*. ENDEAVOR is something more than will, and without it, we cannot, in any case, perform a single action.

To say, *all sin voluntary*, is equally *ambiguous*. ALL WHAT? If you mean to say, *all sin is voluntary*, why do you complain of being charged with placing the inability of man *wholly in his will*?

Mr. F. The point then, in question is, Whether any man be the subject of any other inability to do the will of God, than what lies in the depraved state of his foul, and whether if he were so willing as he ought to be, and all his whole foul rightly disposed, he would feel any remaining inability to anything spiritually good? {P. 194}.

Mr. M. The law originally required the perfect obedience of a perfect man, both in body and foul. Since our fall, we have neither body nor foul in that condition which the law, as the law, can possibly approve.

The different parts of man are more intimately connected than you seem to apprehend. If indeed, we are not under the law, but under grace, we may glorify God, both in our body and spirit We were redeemed to that end; but redemption and regeneration are essential to such service in our fallen state.

What can you mean by any man's being as willing as he *ought* to be” Unable to make it out, let me remark, you seem to suppose, that in proportion as men are *willing* to act, their, actions must be *excellent*. Is this the fault in laudable actions? You have sometimes, before a “numerous auditory” willed to do your very belt; but did you always succeed? Your will was bent on conquest when you wrote your treatise, and you were eager to defend your hypothesis, when you wrote your five Letters; but have you obtained it? It is possible you may feel yourself sufficiently willing to continue this controversy; nor do I wish you to decline it. If, however, you wish to avoid additional disappointment, cease from undue confidence in your own *volitions*. If you would be more guarded upon this subject, permit me to say, that Poole, in his *Synopsis Criticorum*, and Calvin, in his *Commeniatres fur toutes les Epistres de l’ Apostre, S. Paul*, on (Philippians 2: 12, 13}, are each of them worth your serious attention.

Mr. F. Once more; The Apostle Paul's declaration has been thought to afford a strong argument against our manner of speaking, where he says, "When I would do good, evil is present with me,"—and again, "To will is present; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." By this it should seem as though his inability to that which is good, did not lie in the want of a will, but in the want of power; not in the depravity of his heart, but in something distinct from it. {P. 194}.

Mr. M. To this objection, stated in your own way, what is your answer?

Mr. F. To this it is replied; The best of men are sanctified but in part. Their understanding, will, and affections, are not wholly on the Lord's side: so far from it, that perhaps there is a great deal more ignorance than discernment in the most enlightened mind, more sloth and contrariety than fervor and conformity in the most holy will, and more carnality than spirituality in the most sanctified affections. Now if all our powers be sanctified but in part, then it cannot be said of us at any time that we are perfectly willing to be what we ought to be; Perfection is the object willed; or rather desired, by every real christian; but we never desire that object in a perfect degree.—There is **no** necessity for supposing Paul felt any other inability than what confuted., in remaining blindness of mind, slothfulness and rebellion of will, and carnality of heart. These afforded opposition enough to render it impossible for him to be what, as sanctified, he longed to be, though that impossibility was wholly of a moral; and: therefore of a sinful nature {P. 194,195}.

Mr. M. I agree with you; that the best of men are sanctified but in *part*: and you will agree with me, they are sanctified in *every* part. But their present measure of sanctification, be it what it may, is of grace, not of nature; by the gospel, not by the law; by the power of God, not by the will of man. This, is not only the fact, but, in my apprehension, it cannot, should not be otherwise. *Here* we disagree. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians thus: 44 The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." *He* did not

intimate that there ought to be any other *sanctifier*, or *preserver*, than the Goo of PEACE; or that any but *believers* should be sanctified.

Your distinction between will and desire, I approve: but I cannot think any believer defies *legal* perfection, OF actually to be in the triumphant state, while it pleases God the present conflict should continue, You say, the impossibility of our Apostle to be what he longed to be was *wholly* of a *moral*, that is, in your interpretation, of a voluntary, and therefore, of a sinful nature. This I cannot admit; because his *remaining blindness of mind* was not; of this nature; nor was his *thorn in the flesh*. Perils pursued him through all his course: perils of water, of robbers; by his own countrymen, by the heathen; in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren. Were all these obstructions *voluntary*? Were none of them, in any respect, *hurtful* to his mind?

But still your argument is, “It cannot be said of us, at any time, that we are perfectly willing to be what we ought to be.”

Before I close the present debate, permit me to suggest, that if you should republish your treatise, it would be to your credit to cashier that misapplied monosyllable *ought*, in more than half those places where it is now differed to (land. At present, if you may be trusted, *every* man ought, and ought not to be under a covenant of works ; ought to be saved by the law, and by the gospel; ought to sanctify himself, and to confess he cannot; ought to do everything, in the renovation of his mind, and to fay, he really can do nothing ; ought to be perfectly holy, and to live in daily acknowledgment that the best of men are sanctified but in part; ought to make the measure of his own strength the rule of his obligation, and to walk in perfect conformity to the ten commandments; ought fully to credit whatever God makes known, and to assert he knows but in part; ought to be as holy as if he was in heaven, and yet ought to run with patience the race that is set before him in the present evil world. Pardon me, Sir, in saying that. if these principles be *plain*, to such people nothing can be *mysterious*. I read many of the *paradoxes* of Erskine with pleasure, but yours are more than seeming contradictions, I am less afraid of a thousand *paradoxes* than of one criminal prejudice; but in

such contradictions as these I have no sort of satisfaction, But I suspect you have not yet done with the answer to your own objection on the case of St. Paul.

Mr. F. We often find a willingness, and even resolution to do many things, but before these things can be put in execution, our resolutions fail, and so come to nothing.—Hence we need God's Spirit to work in us, not only to will, but to do of his good pleasure : that is, we need him not only to enable us to form holy resolutions, but to keep up those resolutions till they are put in execution. It is impossible to suppose one of Paul's character destitute of such resolutions. —It is natural to suppose when in his closet, pressed with the importance of things, his soul often felt determined to be more diligent and earnest in his work than ever he had been before, and to press towards the mark of personal and perfect purity with redoubled ardor. Thus, to will was present; but when he went forth to put these resolutions into execution, alas, how to perform he found not! {P. 195,196}.

Mr. M. The distinction between volition and action, or so much as *endeavoring* to act, I admit and am confident, that by my strongest volitions, without actual endeavor, I am not able to move a joint of my *own* body; so far am I, and indeed so is any other man, from having the least dominion over the hands or arms of *other* people. But so fond are some people of fame that they wish the actions of others to be considered as their own. —The relaxing of our resolutions, even our strongest, is no uncommon thing; and, if the *shortness* of human action was better understood, we should be convinced, that what passes in general discourse, one action, is often more than twenty. Our volitions cannot be so well counted as our pulses; but, if we include our *vellities* in the term, they are perhaps, as numerous. Paul, no doubt, was subject to changing resolutions as well as we; at least, in the *degree* of their vigor; but in the case you have selected, he says, “To will *is present* with me yet adds, while it *is present*, “but how to perform that which is good, *I find not*” ,If you have found out *this* secret, be so generous as to divulge it.

Mr. F. If it had been any other than a moral and! a sinful inability, Paul would not have exclaimed against it in such bitter lamentation as he did at the close of the same chapter. {P. 196},

Mr. M. What a hoped man *exclaims against* cannot meet with his approbation, nor be his predominant choice. Paul was an *honest* man, He had the comfort of it when he said, "Now then, it is no more *I* that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Had he spoken of an evil surmountable by himself, would he have said, "Who (hall deliver me from the body of this death?" Would he have added, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord?" Would he have inferred, "So then with my mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin?" In a word, had this been the fact, would he have subjoined what immediately follows, and have reasoned from those evangelical principles which he laid down in the beginning of the following chapter! (Romans Chapter 8).

Mr. F. May the Holy Spirit of God lead both *you and me* into all truth; and hasten the happy period when truth and righteousness shall reign in the earth! P. 196.

Mr. M. **AMEN!**

## CONCLUSION.

THE table of Contents, given in the first part of this work, informs the reader all he is to expect in it; excepting an Appendix and three Letters. The Appendix is chiefly on the nature and excellence of spiritual life; and, the best thoughts on it, are translated from the *Traite de la vie spirituelle*, originally written by VITRINGA. The three Letters contain an answer to five Letters, written by Mr. Fuller, against the first part of my thoughts on the duty of man.

As that part was published in 1788, and the second in 1789, it may be thought since this part has been delayed to 1791, it is owing to some

uncommon difficulty which has occurred in the close of this debate. It is not so. Other things and subjects have sufficiently occupied my mind, and left me but little leisure to resume this unpleasing altercation. It has not however, been forgotten, though it is evident it has not been hurried on.

Some may imagine too much notice is taken of Mr. Fuller; and indeed, had not those sentiments of his which are here opposed been so common, and, in my opinion, so hurtful, both as they are defended by him, and by other ministers, there would be great propriety in this objection. It is also confessed, that I now wish I had written my thoughts on the duty of man without interfering with any particular controversy upon this unsettled subject.

Others may conceive that some of Mr. Fuller's best arguments are overlooked. To this it is replied, if they are, it is not of design; and it is presumed those who are best acquainted with his treatise will hardly exhibit such a charge. It is not likely that these objectors will agree between themselves; but it is hoped they will consider that where better light is wanting, a man is obliged to be governed by his own understanding.

If there be any thing entirely *new* in this work, it is more than I have apprehended. What is worth knowing on religious subjects is not of *yesterday*. He who embraces this sentiment may invent new arguments, and find out new modes of illustration, but he is content with those verities which are the time yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

Every novelty appears more wonderful as it is more remote from anything with which experience or testimony have hitherto acquainted us; and if it passes further beyond the notions we have been accustomed to form, it becomes at last incredible.” {Dr. Johnson}, Custom is an ambiguous word, but if nothing which can be called custom in the church of God, gives a sanction to my sentiments, the reader will do well to reject them.

Quotations, not from obscure men alone, but from writers of credit, both at home and abroad, might be multiplied to a large amount: but who would thank me *for* the laborious collection? Besides, from what writer could I produce testimonies in my favor, who might not, in some other part of his works, be cited against me?

But what, it will be said, are the best writers so inconsistent? The truth is, they do not contradict themselves so frequently as some suppose. *Seeming* contradictions may be found in every performance, which are too commonly taken for *real* inconsistencies. Readers do not always distinguish between popular and strict expressions, between what is asserted and what they are pleased to infer from those assertions, between what is conceded in an unguarded moment, and what is argued with caution, between occasional flips of the pen, and those leading principles which the author never meant to revoke; yet without these distinctions, the correctest writer, may be set at variance with himself, and even the sacred writings quoted for and against the most important sentiments. He therefore that reflects on the want of caution in many readers, and the want of circumspection in the best of uninspired writers, will soon see that the toilsome business of quotation will do but little in some branches of polemical contest, and that few disputes relative to moral duty, will be brought to a happy issue by loading the page with other men's opinions.

Mr. Fuller seems to have been authored into his present change of sentiment. The influence of others over his own judgment must strike the attentive reader. Among the rest, the late Mr. Maurice of Rowell, seems to have dominion over his understanding. Maurice was a worthy man; but Mr. Fuller is too fond of his imperfections. Mr. Maurice was answered by Mr. Lewis Wayman of Kimbolton; a man not formed to please the multitude; but, in this controversy, a man superior, far superior, to all his opposers.

It may amuse the reader to be informed what the late ingenious Mr. Robinson has said of this sagacious-writer. "When I Was a boy, I had a slight acquaintance with old Mr. Wayman. I looked at, his silver locks

with awe, listened to his grave sentences with respect, and heard him with attention and deference. Perhaps, my veneration for the man might prejudice me in favor of his sentiments. However, it were, I read the dispute between him and Maurice, and after I had deliberated on all that was written *pro* and *con*, I took the side of Wayman, I thought without prejudice, and I think so still.”

Before I conclude, let it be observed, however I may have failed in my attempt, it is Mr. Fuller’s *leading* propositions which I have considered, as inconsistent and erroneous. Had the nature of this work required a selection of his better sayings, such sentiments might have been thrown together as would have done him no discredit. But they are so shaded by his *leading* design, and by the manner in which he has pursued it, that his treatise must be perplexing, if it be not injurious to common leaders. In this belief, I have ventured to give my opinion. I knew by that venture, I must engage in a controversy in which the nature of the subject was not, in common estimation, inviting, and where the honor of succeeding would not be allowed to be great. I lament, out of season, that a different mode of defending the truth was not adopted. It would have been shorter, and it would have been better, to have written on the duty of man in the direct line of assertion and proof, unembarrassed with remote, or recent contradiction. But having drawn up too hastily, a table of contents, and published it, I have been pinioned by my own imprudence, and bound in fetters which, however displeasing, I could not think I was allowed to break. There are cafes where he who has promised to his loss, should endeavor to make his promise good. This maxim was taught me while I was a child, and at the age of fifty I feel its force.

It must be owned what I have met with in this debate has not always had a good effect. I have watched over my own spirit and temper; yet upon reflection, I fear both have been more deranged than I was willing to imagine. If they are better guarded at the close of this controversy than at the beginning, it will give the pious reader satisfaction: and he is the man, so far as truth will permit, whose good opinion I covet, and whose friendship I esteem. But the minds of men are so various, their manner

of reading books fo different, and their motives to praise and blame so diversified, that I cannot prophesy how these pages will be received.

My grand consolation is, “There is forgiveness with God that he may be feared without the hope of that forgiveness no man from the fall of Adam to this hour, ever worshiped God in spirit and in truth; and, where such forgiveness is utterly un-enjoyed, there is no man living that properly attempts to keep his commandments.

“It is found by experience, that those men who set up for morality without regard to religion, are generally but virtuous in part; they will be just in their dealings between man and man, but if they find themselves disposed to pride, lust, intemperance, or avarice, they do not think their morality concerned to check them in any of these vices, because it is the great rule of such men, that they may lawfully follow the dictates of nature, whenever their safety, health, and fortune are not injured. So that upon the whole, there is hardly one vice which a mere moral man may not upon some occasions allow himself to practice.”

Neither morality, nor honour, nor anything else but the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation. “The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” As this is regarded, we are safe and useful; as we swerve from this unity, and this order, we are “turned aside unto vain jangling.”

**FINIS.**

## **ERRATUM.**

P. 83,1.20, *for* of this nature, *read* voluntary.  
*the* typographical errors are thought to be of that kin.  
*as not to require a distinct errata.*

