

**A BLOW STRUCK AT THE
ROOT
OF
FULLERISM
IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND**

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*“Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons,
whilst ye searched out what to say.” {Job 32:11}*

*“I said, I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine
opinion.”*

{Job 32:17}

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR

And sold by L. J. HIGHAM, No. 6, Chiswell-Street

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Price 3d

PREFACE

The following letter originated in a conversation upon Mr. Fuller's sentiment, viz. "faith the duty of the unconverted," between the writer and the gentleman to whom it is addressed, in which this question was put, by the former, to the latter. Is the peculiar faith of God's elect, or the faith of the operation of God, a duty of the moral law?

It has long appeared to me, that this question is the grand hinge upon which the controversy between Mr. Fuller, and others, about faith, turns; and that, upon this ground, the Fullerian system must stand or fall; must be fully established, or eternally demolished.

Some argue against Mr. Fuller's notion, from man's inability, concluding, that the faith in dispute cannot be the natural man's duty, because it is not in his power to believe. At this he laughs; for the question agitated between him and his opponents, is not whether the unregenerate are able to believe, independent of divine influence, but whether it is their duty to do it. Mr. Fuller can easily make it appear to be the duty of man to perform that which lies far, very far, beyond the reach of his power. It is the duty of all the posterity of Adam to con-

tinue in all things written in the book of the law to do them, notwithstanding their want of ability to do it. This, I think, admits of no doubt; for, if they were obligated to obey it in every point, before the fall, the obligation must still continue; as their fall, and loss of ability through the fall, could make no alteration in the constitution of the law; or in their duty to perform its commands. Now, if it is the duty of fallen man to keep all the law, though he is not able, it might be his duty to believe, notwithstanding his want of power; therefore, all arguments against Mr. Fuller, drawn from man's weakness, prove ineffectual, and he stands his ground in triumph.

Others say, that it cannot be the duty of fallen man to do, that which the scriptures declare to be the work of God; but the faith of God's elect is wrought in their hearts by divine power; therefore it cannot be the duty of the creature. This argument cannot have the desired effect; for it may be the duty of man to do, what God alone can enable him to do. It is the duty of every man to love God, with all his heart, it, to love Him perfectly, without intermission; but he can not do this of himself. He is entirely destitute of both power and will to do it: if ever, therefore, any of' the apostate children of Adam love God at all, he must work in them both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure; but then it does not follow, that because he must circumcise their hearts to love him, or else they will always hate him, that it is not their duty to love him. It is most certainly a duty of the law, a duty of moral obligation, and of course must exist, though man has lost both power and inclination to do it; and although it is the prerogative of the Almighty alone to work love in the apostate soul. Therefore, Fullerism defies this argument, and smiles at this mode of attack.

Some of Mr. Fuller's friends and admirers have said, that his book on faith has never been answered; and that his

arguments should be attacked singly, and confuted in order, as they are advanced. But where is the necessity of that? Need we, in order to fell the tallest cedar, or the stoutest oak, climb it, and take it down, by cutting off its branches, in the order in which the Creator has placed them? No. Let the axe be applied to the root. Let that whereon it stands be cut, and let that by which it lives be destroyed, and it will fall, and die without any further trouble. Let Mr. Fuller prove, if he can, that there is a natural man to be found upon earth, who is not under the moral law, as a covenant of works; and, if he cannot prove that, let him evince from the word of God, that the whole of the natural man's duty is not included in the covenant under which he stands; and, if he can demonstrate neither of these points, he must either prove, that the faith of God's elect is a duty of the law, or covenant of works, or give up his favorite sentiment. For, if all the unconverted are under the law, and all their duty is contained in the law, either the faith of the gospel must be a duty of the law, or it cannot be the duty of those who are under it.

To prove that the faith of God's elect, with which their salvation stands connected, is not a duty of the law, is the end aimed at in the subsequent pages. How far I have succeeded in the attempt, must be determined by wiser heads than my own.

Whatever inaccuracies the candid reader meets with, he will pass over without severe censure, especially when I inform him, that I am not a man of letters.

Perhaps, Mr. Fuller may think it beneath him, to notice such a performance as this, by way of reply, if he condescends to give it a fair reading, especially as it is another sample of Norfolk divinity, to which he is far from being partial, as appears from what he says in his remarks upon Horne's sermons; in which he has taken unwarrantable liberties with

the characters of some Ministers, whose morals, talents, and usefulness, defy both his scurrilous pen and his defamatory tongue.

But should he think it worth his while to let me hear from him, I hope to meet with better treatment than Mr. Horne did; not because I think I deserve better, but because I hope, by this time, he is ashamed of the language used in his remarks.

From the fame the Churches in Norfolk have heard of his humility, modesty, and candor, they thought him incapable or putting on the buffoon, and, with contemptuous sneer, treating both Ministers and Churches, who cannot swallow his sophisms, or subscribe to his creed, as if they were not worthy to black his shoes. Who could help wondering that the man, who rebuked Horne with so much severity, for assuming too much consequence, should himself instantly put on an air of greatness, resembling that which appeared in the proud Philistine, when he looked upon David with disdain?

Without regard to the frowns or smiles of mortals, I now commit what I have written to that God, whose, through sovereign grace I am, and whom I serve with my spirit, in the gospel of his Son. May He own, and bless it, and take the glory. Amen

Dear Sir:

I received your epistle by Miss S. and, upon reading it, find, that you have quite mistaken my question. It was not, (as you have stated it): Does the moral law command faith? But does the moral law require faith in the Mediator? Or, does the moral law require the faith of God's elect?

That the above law requires faith, I never yet denied, or thought of suggesting to any one. I well know, that there is a faith, which is one of the great and weighty matters of the law: but what faith is its? (Inserted Footnote: If I am not mistaken, it is a belief of the being of God, of His holiness and justice His immutability and goodness, all which are revealed in the law and likewise that the law requires obedience absolutely perfect, and dooms the transgressor to eternal death. This is the truth of the law, and this the law requires us to believe.) Is it that which stands inseparably connected with eternal life and salvation? If it is, then we are saved through the law: but the Apostle says, *we are saved through faith*. Now, if the faith, through which we are saved, is a duty of the law, (as it must be if the law requires it), we must be saved through the law, and a work of it.

But the fact is, we are saved through the gospel, called *the gospel of our salvation*, and *the law of faith*, and not through the law: for the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. {Ro 4:13}. The eternal inheritance then, is not through the law and its duty, but through the gospel and its promises. {Ga 3:18}.

The Apostle says, in the {Ga 3:12}th verse of the above chapter, that the law is not of faith. He undoubtedly speaks of the faith of the just, by which they live; *of* which the law is neither the foundation nor the object; both which it must be, if that faith is a duty which it demands; for what foundation has any duty, but the precept which requires it, or what object but the law that enjoins it.

The Apostle evidently distinguishes, between the faith by which the just live, and the duty of the law. *The just shall live by faith*. There you have the faith in question. And *the law is*

not faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them. Here you have the duty of the law, distinct from that faith, and by closely examining Paul's discourses upon justification, you will perceive, that he distinguishes the faith by which we are justified from, and opposes it to, the works of the law. {Ro 3:28}. He concludes, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. But, if the faith by which we are justified, is a duty of the law, how are we justified without the deeds of the law; are we not rather justified by them? And why does the Apostle make this distinction between faith and the deeds of the law? This wise and inspired man certainly knew what he said; and he most undoubtedly had some end in view, in making this declaration: Now, what could he intend, but:

1st. That men are justified by faith.

2nd. That the faith by which they are justified is not a duty of the law; and

3rd. That the faith of God's elect, and the duty of the bond-children, are quite different things.

We meet with the same distinction. {Ga 2:16}. And it is worthy of observation, that he represents faith and works as belonging to, and governed by different laws, {Ro 3:27}, he thus speaks, *Where is boasting, then? It is excluded: By what law? Of works: Nay, but by the law of faith.* By the law of works, he means the moral law; and, by the law of faith, he intends the everlasting gospel. Now, if faith is a duty of the former, why does he call the latter its law; and what propriety is there in this apostolic language, if what you plead for it the truth.

The faith under consideration is a blessing of the covenant of grace. This you must either admit or deny. If you deny it, you renounce the gospel, which says, that faith is the gift of God. *That he chose his people to the belief of the truth; that he gives*

them on the behalf of Christ, to believe on his name; that when he calls them to believe, it is according to his own purpose and grace given them in Christ, before the world began;---and that, his covenant is ordered in all things, and sure; and, therefore, must include faith.

If you admit of it, then you must give up the point in dispute; unless you should be so happy as to prove, that the covenant of grace and covenant of works are only the same thing, called by different names; that the blessings of the former are only the duties of the latter; that, when the scriptures speak of a new covenant-blessing, an old covenant duty is intended; and, when they make mention of an old covenant duty, they most certainly mean, a gift of divine grace. When you, or any of the same opinion with yourself, have given full proof of this, we will give up the point; but, till this is done, we must maintain, that the faith under consideration is not a duty of the covenant of works; for, except the above is proved, it cannot be made to appear, that it is a. legal duty, though many plausible things may be said in favor of it.

While the two covenants are distinct, the things belonging to the one, must be kept separate from those pertaining to the other. The blessings of that of grace cannot, with the least shadow of propriety, be said to be the duties of that of works. I know the common religious cry is, away with your niceties and particularities; persons and things are jumbled altogether. Believers and unbelievers the children of the bondwoman, and those of the free the two covenants old covenant duties, and new covenant privileges, bondage and. liberty, Moses and Christ..

In their houses men are particular enough, and some carry their nicety to a wonderful pitch. Nothing must be out of its place. Every thing must be in order. They are just the same

at their tables. The different meats and sauces are kept distinct, and not thrown altogether promiscuously into one dish, or in one confused heap in the middle of the table; and they are just the same in their dress. They do not put that which is made for one part of the body upon another. Now, if men are so particular in these little things, why should not we be so in things of the utmost importance? Let every thing in the house of God fill the department assigned it. All the things of God are beautiful in the order wherein his infinite wisdom has fixed them, there they answer their respective ends; the glory of his name and the good of his church.

Why should men spread deformed confusion, where the Lord has established the finest and most beautiful order?

Before the fall, the law was the rule of our innocent progenitor's conduct. After his apostasy, it thundered the divine vengeance against him, and poured forth its tremendous curses upon his guilty head. It shewed him no pity gave him no quarter revealed no Saviour to him made no mention of *a way* to escape nor pointed him to the most distant shadow of a remedy. All it could do for him, or any of his ruined posterity, was to convince them of their sins, and drive them to despair and death: and leave them without the smallest degree of hope or help. Far, very far from directing them to believe in him, who saves the guilty. It is the office of God the Father to give Faith; not to demand it as a law-giver, but to give it as a covenant God of grace. It is the office of the Gospel to reveal Christ the object of faith; and it is the office of the Holy Ghost to work faith in the hearts of the elect.

If faith is a duty of the covenant of works, are not believers under that covenant and its curse? I think they are: for, if it requires faith in Christ of them, it obliges them, not only to begin, but to continue to believe. Now, if they are thus

bound by it, they must be under it; for, if a man is bound by any covenant, human or divine, to perform an act, either natural or spiritual, he is under that covenant. Thus, by making the faith of God's elect an old covenant duty, you put the legal yoke upon the necks of the disciples of Jesus, bring the free-born sons of Zion into bondage, and expose them to all the thunders of the ministration of death: for, whatsoever the law saith, it saith to those who are under it; and, as many as are of the works of the law, (of which you say faith is one), are under the curse. Your notion robs both Christ and his people, Christ of the honour of making them free from the yoke of bondage; and them of their right to that liberty with which he has made them free. It is in vain for you to say, that I carry things too far, till you have made it appear, how a man can be bound by a law, to perform a duty, and, at the same, be free from that law, which, I think, you will find a task too difficult for you to perform.

I think your sentiment may be argued against with some degree of success, from the nature of the divine law. It is either immutable, or it is not. If it is not, but was made subject to change, I should be glad to know whether any change has already taken place in it; and, if there has, what it is, and when it took place whether it's demands are more or less, or different in kind, from what they were originally if man's duty is augmented, or diminished if it is diminished, what part of it is done away? If augmented, what is added to it? And what fallen man has more to do, than upright man had to perform? I suppose it will be granted, that the holy law is eternally the same, both in its nature and demands that no change passed upon it through the fall of man and that it required neither more nor less *of* Adam, in his pristine glory, than it does of his apostate sons. If this is acknowledged to be true, it lies upon you, (in order to establish your hypothesis), to prove that it demanded faith in the Saviour of our federal head, while he

stood upright in spotless innocence, before his soul was blackened with transgression, or his conscience burdened with a load of guilt. When this is done, (but not till then), I shall believe, that the faith which overcometh the world is a duty of the law. If you say, that a command to believe in Christ was originally included in the law, though not expressed, it will amount to nothing; for, if we indulge imagination, we may suppose a thousand absurdities and blasphemies included, but not expressed, in the divine law. I well know, that every particular, required by the law, was not clearly and fully expressed by Moses, in the first accounts he has given of it; but I believe that since, all the fullness of the duty required by it, has been revealed in the scriptures of eternal truth. This must not be denied. If it is, the perfection of divine revelation is called in question; for, if it is not a truth, the holy scriptures are incomplete, and God has given to man an imperfect rule of conduct, and left him in the dark as to what is his duty, and what is not. If you deny the perfection of scripture, you justify the Deist, and join his standard. If you maintain the perfection of divine revelation against infidels, you must acknowledge that the whole of the duty, which the law requires of man, is made known in the bible. If this is admitted, we call upon you to shew us, where that law teaches and commands us to believe in Jesus and his salvation, and trust in him for life eternal. Is it in either of the two tables of the law? If it is not there, it must be in the Expositions, which our Lord and his apostles have given of it, or no where. Now, if it is to be found in any of their discourses upon the law, let it be shewn where.

But, after all that has been said, is it still maintained, that the law originally contained a command to believe in the Saviour, but did not reveal the command to Adam, because his circumstances were not suited to such a revelation? To this I reply, if the law originally contained a command to believe in the incarnate God and Saviour of sinners, it must also contain

a revelation of the object to be believed in; for it is impossible to separate the one from the other. It would be a contradiction to both reason and truth to say, that a command to believe in an object, can be, without a revelation of that object: because the command itself is the revelation. Now, if both these were originally contained in the law, but were concealed on account of Adam's circumstances, we may reasonably suppose, that when his state was changed, and he was in a suitable condition, the secret would have been divulged; and what before was hid, proclaimed on the house top. But, was this the case? Did the law proclaim the Saviour, and publish justification, pardon and salvation in his name? If it did, where was the need of the gospel? Does the gospel do more than this? And why did not the Apostle Paul preach the law instead of the gospel, for the obedience of faith among all nations? Either the gospel alone makes this revelation, and time law is silent on the subject, or the law and the gospel are the same. If they are distinct things, and the gospel publishes salvation by Christ, and is preached for the obedience of faith, then the law never did contain a command, to believe in Jesus to the saving of the soul.

All that your letter contains amounts to nothing. You say that, because it said, "That which is not of faith is sin; and whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law, for sin is the transgression of the law; and without faith it is impossible to please God." You conclude that faith is a duty commanded by the law. Your conclusion amounts to this: That because the natural man can do nothing but sin, without the principle of faith, it must be his duty to have that principle. You might just as well say, that because no man can believe in Christ love God know him or, in any one instance please him without the indwelling and operations of the Holy Ghost, without regeneration and the Grace of God in the heart, that these are all duties of the law. Nay, you might as well affirm, that because a man, who is not justified and accepted of God in Christ, cannot

perform one work acceptable to him, it is therefore his duty to be in Christ, and justified from all things. This, Sir, is so much akin to the Arminian language of getting an interest in Christ get grace, get faith, etc., that I think, upon reviewing it, you will be a little ashamed of it. You confidently affirm that it is the duty of all, who are favoured with the bible, to know God. I ask, whether it is the duty of those, from whom God hides the mysteries of his gospel, to know him as he has revealed himself in the face of Christ. You conclude that because the gospel is a savour of death to some, faith is a duty of the law. Strange, indeed! You might as well say, that because God has blinded the minds of some, it is their duty to see; because the gospel is hid from them who are lost, it is therefore their duty to behold its glory; and because the doctrine of the cross is, to them who perish, foolishness it must be a duty of the law for them to know it to be the wisdom of God.

Though I believe that the guilt of man is increased by the opposition they make to the dispensation of' the gospel, and not enquiring whether it be of God or not, yet I cannot see how any man's sin is augmented, and his punishment increased, by his not having what is freely a gift of God.

You may, perhaps, think proper to write a second epistle:—If you should take up your pen again to convince me that I err, I hope you will neither forget, or start from the question.

FINIS

Plummer, Printer. Seething-Lane
Job Hupton