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Andrew Fuller and Fullerism : A Study in Evangelical Calvinism

3. THE GOSPEL WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION

THE best statement of "Fullerism" is that contained in *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*,¹ well described as "an epoch making, life giving book so far as Baptists were concerned, clearing the path for evangelism both at home and abroad."² Its sub-title, "The duty of sinners to believe in Jesus Christ," indicates the scope of the work and its over-riding concern, which was to undo the damage done by hyper-Calvinism, and to remind the Church of its missionary task. When Fuller wrote it in 1781, he had no intention of publishing it, his real purpose being to clear his mind on this crucial matter. Thus it was not published until four years later, and then only after much thought and prayer. Its main theme was "the same controversy for substance as that which in all ages has subsisted between God and an apostate world." God has ever maintained the following two principles: "All that is evil is of the creature, and to him belongs the blame of it; and all that is good is of himself, and to him belongs the praise of it." It is too much, Fuller declared, for the carnal heart to acknowledge both. Thus the advocates of free-will acknowledge the first but not the second, while others professing to be advocates of free-grace recognize the second but not the first.

In the preface the following points are made for a clearer understanding of the subject :

(i) There is no dispute about the doctrine of election. "The question does not turn upon what are the causes of salvation, but rather upon what are the causes of damnation."

(ii) There is no dispute "concerning who ought to be encouraged to consider themselves as entitled to the blessings of the gospel."

(iii) The question is "not whether men are bound to do anything more than the law requires, but whether the law, as the invariable standard of right and wrong does not require every man cordially to embrace whatever God reveals."

(iv) The question is "not whether men are required to believe any more than is reported in the gospel, or anything that is not true; but whether that which is reported ought not to be believed with all the heart, and whether this be not saving faith."

(v) It is not part of the controversy whether unconverted sinners be able to turn to God, and to embrace the gospel, but what kind of inability they lie under with respect to these exercises," whether

“want of natural powers and advantages” or “want of a new heart to make a right use of them.”

(vi) The question is “not whether faith be required of sinners as a virtue, which if it be complied with, shall be the ground of their acceptance with God, or that on account of which they may be justified in his sight; but whether it be not required as the appointed *means* of salvation.”

(vii) The question is “not whether unconverted sinners be the subjects of exhortations, but whether they ought to be exhorted to perform spiritual duties.”

The treatise itself is in three parts, the first of which stresses the importance of a right understanding of the nature of faith. Rejecting Lewis Wayman’s conception of faith as “a persuasion of our interest in Christ,” and that of an American named Anderson that the gospel is a gift or grant of Christ and spiritual blessings to mankind in general, the office of faith being to “claim it as our own,” Fuller maintained that faith is a “belief of the truth which God hath revealed in the Scriptures concerning Christ.”

Part II is concerned with Fuller’s main thesis—that *faith in Christ is the duty of all who hear, or who have the opportunity to hear the gospel*. There are six arguments in support of this position.

1. *Unconverted sinners are commanded, exhorted and invited to believe in Christ for salvation*. Since, therefore, whatever God commands, exhorts or invites us to comply with, is the duty of those to whom such language is addressed, faith is the duty of all who hear the gospel.

2. *Every man is bound cordially to receive and approve, whatever God reveals*. Saving faith, in fact, involves “such a cordial acquiescence in the way of salvation as has the promise of eternal life.” Those who do not receive Christ are censured in Scripture for not choosing and believing in him. Faith must therefore be a universal duty, for “on no other ground could the Scripture censure them as it does; and on no other principle could they be characterized as *disobedient*; for all disobedience consists in a breach of duty.”

3. *Though the gospel, strictly speaking, is not a law, but a message of pure grace, yet it virtually requires obedience, and such an obedience as includes saving faith*. There is a distinction between a formal requisition and that which affords the ground or reason of the requisition. For example, the goodness of God, though not a law or formal precept, deserves and virtually requires a “return of gratitude,” which the law of God formally requires on his behalf. This is so with regard to the gospel, which is “the greatest overflow of divine goodness that was ever witnessed . . . A return suitable to its nature is required *virtually* by the gospel itself, and *formally* by the divine precept on its behalf.”

4. *The want of faith in Christ is ascribed in the Scriptures to men's depravity, and is itself represented as a heinous sin.* "Whatever is not a sinner's duty, the omission of it cannot be charged on him as a sin, nor imputed to any depravity in him. If faith were no more a duty than *election* or *redemption*, which are acts peculiar to God, the want of the one would be no more ascribed to the evil dispositions of the heart than that of the other. Or, if the inability of sinners to believe in Christ were of the same nature as that of a dead body in a grave to rise up and walk, it were absurd to suppose that they would on this account fall under the divine censure." Unbelief is expressly declared to be a sin, which it can only be if faith is a duty.

5. *God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on sinners for their not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.* This proposition is supported by a catena of proof texts, especially Mark 16 : 15-16, Luke 19 : 27, John 3 : 18, and 2 Thessalonians 2 : 10-12. It is here assumed that "Nothing but sin can be the cause of God's inflicting punishment; and nothing can be sin which is not a breach of duty."

6. *Other spiritual exercises which sustain an inseparable connection with faith in Christ, are represented as the duty of men in general.* Whatever has the promise of spiritual blessings is considered as a spiritual exercise. Such is the *love of God* for example, which is either a "holy thankfulness for the innumerable instances of his goodness" material or spiritual, or "a cordial approbation of his glorious character." So too is *love to Christ*, which is required of all who hear the gospel, hence the "awful sentence" pronounced (1 Corinthians 16 : 22) against sinners not positively as *hating Christ*, but as *not loving him*," plainly implying his worthiness of a place in our best affections." Similarly the *fear of God*, *repentance*, and *humility* or *lowliness of mind*, are spiritual exercises having the promise of spiritual blessings, being connected with faith, and are universally required by God.

The third section contains a reply to various arguments which could be and were levelled at Fuller's doctrine. They are seven in number.

(i) *Man in innocence was unable to repent or believe in the Saviour.* This objection was based on Brine's teaching that "the holy principle connatural to Adam and concreated with him, was not suited to live unto God through a mediator." It is quite true, Fuller agreed, that "his circumstances were such as not to need a mediator," but the consequences which Brine and others drew from this were completely without justification. Man in innocence could not repent of sin or believe in the Saviour, for he had no sin to repent of, nor had a Saviour been revealed, or was needed.

(ii) *Universal invitations are inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine decrees.* Fuller's reply was that there was no real inconsistency, as is evident from the writings of Augustine, the Reformers, and the Puritans, amongst others. Indeed, many opponents of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* would consider Calvin an Arminian. In any case the argument proves too much, since it implies that it is not the duty of some to attend the means of grace, or in any way to be concerned about the salvation of their souls. It also implies that the use of means in order to obtain a temporal subsistence, and to preserve life, is altogether vain and inconsistent.

(iii) *Universal invitations are incompatible with the doctrine of particular redemption.* The gist of Fuller's reply is that there is no contradiction between the "peculiarity of design in the death of Christ, and a universal obligation on those who hear the gospel to believe in him, or a universal invitation being addressed to them:"³

(iv) *Sinners are under a covenant of works, and consequently faith cannot be required of them.* Strictly speaking however, they are not under the covenant of works at all, but under the curse for having broken it. God requires nothing of his fallen creatures "as a term of life," though he still requires perfect love and obedience of them, as though they had never apostatized. Man is not in covenant with God, and can only be so, by faith in Christ.

(v) *Sinners are unable to believe in Christ and do things spiritually good.* Fuller here drew attention to the distinction between "natural" and "moral" inability, which had helped him to a clearer understanding of the subject.

(vi) *Repentance and faith are due to the influence of the Holy Spirit.* The whole weight of this objection rests, so Fuller maintained, upon the supposition that we do not stand in need of the Holy Spirit to enable us to comply with our duty. Universal Christian experience however, is against this.

(vii) *A divine principle is necessary in order to believe.* It is, replied Fuller, perfectly consistent to believe in "the necessity of divine influence and even of a change of heart prior to believing," and at the same time to believe that faith is the "immediate duty of the unregenerate." "If that disposition of heart which is produced by the Holy Spirit be no more than every intelligent creature ought at all times to possess, the want of it can afford no excuse for the omission of any duty to which it is necessary." To apply the reasoning of the objectors to the ordinary affairs of life would produce disastrous results.

The treatise concludes⁴ with Fuller's reflections on the "warrant" to believe, on the influence of faith in justification, on the alarming situation of unbelievers, and the duty of ministers dealing with the unconverted. Every sinner, whatever be his character, is "completely warranted to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the

salvation of his soul." Fuller emphatically denied that his doctrine would make salvation a reward which we can earn. So far as the preaching of the gospel is concerned, it is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal auditors to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; but it is at our peril to exhort them to do anything short of it, or which does not involve or imply it."

Such in brief is the argument of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, showing the main emphases of Fuller's doctrine of salvation. That he altered his opinion on minor points of exegesis is not surprising, but his "leading principles" remained unaltered, the only significant change of viewpoint after the publication of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, being concerned with his interpretation of particular redemption and his doctrine of imputation. He spent the rest of his life expounding, defending,⁵ and working out the implications of his "principles." A detailed exposition, or even a summary of "Fullerism" is clearly out of the question in an article of this nature. It is possible merely to provide brief definitions of a few key terms, which together with what has already been said about his understanding of justification, imputation, and particular redemption, will help us to see some of the chief landmarks of his theology.

(i) *The image of God* in which man was created, was "partly natural and partly moral."⁶ The former consisted in man's rational and immortal nature, which was not lost through sin,⁷ so that man cannot be cursed or murdered without his assailant incurring God's "high displeasure," for "to deface the king's image is a sort of treason . . . implying a hatred against him."⁸ Conscience, reason and "natural" freedom, are the principal parts of man's rational nature, distinguishing him from the brute creation, and rendering him a moral agent.⁹ Man's soul is created immortal, and however much we may desire to go back into a state of non-existence, it is impossible since God has "stamped immortality" upon our natures.¹⁰ The "moral" image of God, by which man was "fitted for communion with his Creator," which was "effaced" by sin, consisted in "righteousness and true holiness." "God created man in the image of his own glorious moral character," the very uprightness of man's body by which he was distinguished from all other creatures, being itself "an emblem of his mind."¹¹ What man lost was his moral rectitude or integrity. To suppose him to have forfeited his free agency would imply the loss of his intellectual nature, making him "literally a brute."¹² Thus fallen man was still able to reason and to choose, and still possessed God's witness within him in the form of conscience.¹³ This is not to say that the "natural" image of God was unaffected by the fall. Sin could not "pervert the established laws of nature," but it certainly perverted the "moral order of things," so that "instead of the will being "governed by

judgment and conscience," judgment and conscience were often "governed by prejudice."¹⁴ Man became "unable" to love God, not through a forfeiture of free-will, but because his choice was determined by an "unwilling" or "dishonest" heart.

(ii) *Original sin* or depravity, is not a kind of moral poison injected or infused into human nature; it "arises from a privative cause."¹⁵ Nor is it a case of innocent persons being blamed and held responsible by a legal fiction, for Adam's sin, but of our being left to ourselves without the assistance of divine grace, with a bias therefore towards sin. In this situation heredity, environment and example, each plays its part in strengthening the bias, with the result that the heart of every child of Adam is so inclined away from God and towards sin, that sin becomes "natural" from the earliest days of conscious choice. Strictly speaking depravity is no part of man's nature, yet it has become natural to him, being from his birth "so interwoven through all his powers, so ingrained, as it were, in his very soul, as to grow up with him and become natural to him."¹⁶ Since the sum of the divine law is love, the "essence of depravity" must consist in the "want of love to God and our neighbour; or in setting up some other object, or objects, to the exclusion of them." Perhaps it is even true to say that these other objects can be reduced to oneself, for private self-love is "the root of depravity."¹⁷ Such depravity is *universal*, Jesus Christ alone being without fault, and *total*, not in the sense that men are "so corrupt as to be incapable of adding sin to sin," but in the sense that there is a "total privation of all real good." The human heart is by nature totally destitute of love to God, or love to man as the creature of God, and consequently is destitute of all true virtue.¹⁸ The question arises, is man's sinful state of heart his misfortune or his fault? Is he to be pitied or blamed? Fuller had no doubt as to the answer; man is to be blamed. Dan Taylor, who argued that if man is to be held responsible for his depravity, (a) he must be able to avoid it, (b) it must not be insuperable, and (c) God must provide grace sufficient to deliver him from it, distinguished between an evil propensity and its exercise. This, Fuller retorted, was to use words without ideas, for "what is an evil propensity but an evil bias, or a bias of the soul towards evil? . . . An impure propensity is an impure temper of mind, and a propensity to revenge is the same thing as a revengeful temper," which, of course, is blameworthy, even though a man's father before him possessed a similar temper. What is important is that such a bias towards evil is entirely voluntary. Man's inability to avoid sin, though total, is as we have seen, a moral inability. To talk of an "involuntary propensity" is to talk nonsense. Taylor's second condition, moreover, is misleading, since it assumes an opposition to sin made in vain. As for his idea of the necessity of grace as the

basis of guilt, sin not the want of grace is the only cause of guilt and punishment.¹⁹

(iii) *Human freedom.*²⁰ Man is free in the sense that he is "at liberty to act according to his choice, without compulsion or restraint." He is moreover, just as free as Adam before the fall, and just as free before conversion as after it; he is free to obey the law or accept the invitation of the gospel. The only thing which prevents him from doing either is moral slavery, that is to say, sheer unwillingness. The use of such terms as *necessary*, *cannot*, *impossible*, suggesting as they do "an obstruction arising from something distinct from the state of the will," is therefore misleading. Moral slavery is a want not of *ability*, but of *inclination*, in which state a man is not compelled to act *against his will*, but impelled to act *against his conscience*. At the same time, a "liberty of indifference," involving freedom from the influence of motives and "a supposed power of acting contrary to our prevailing inclination, or at least of changing it," is "an absurdity and contradiction."

(iv) *The light of nature.*²¹ teaches some truth, such as "the being of God, the accountableness of man, the fitness of doing to others as we would they should do to us, (and) our being sinners." That we ought not only to believe in God, but worship him as well, is "a principle which no man will be able to eradicate from his bosom, or even to suppress, but at great labour and expense," while the golden rule is "God's witness in every human breast." To disparage the "light of nature" would be to exalt God's word above his works. At the same time, it needs to be recognised that the "light of nature" was never designed as a complete revelation of God for man in any state, and it is particularly unreliable and of itself insufficient for man in his present state. Even in innocence man was "governed by a revealed law." "There is nothing in true religion repugnant to sound reason," though we need to distinguish carefully between reason as *the fitness of things*, and *our power or capacity of reasoning*. A divine revelation other than that in creation is absolutely necessary if man is to have an adequate knowledge of God and his purposes and will for us.

(v) *The death of Christ.* While Fuller's interpretation of the cross was almost exclusively in terms of substitution, it was not marred by the pernicious emphases which characterised much popular exposition of the substitutionary theory and tended to undermine the morality of the atonement. Though Christ's suffering was *penal* in the sense that it was "the expression of divine displeasure against transgressors, in whose place he stood," yet since sin and guilt in themselves are not transferable, he was not being punished.²² Salvation through the death of Christ is an act of grace rather than justice, certainly not a commercial transaction or the literal payment of a debt.²³ Nor was God's mind changed from hatred to love

by the death of Christ, which was the *effect* not the *cause* of God's love. There is nothing arbitrary about the atonement. Whatever goodwill God may bear to an offender, as "moral governor of the universe" and therefore righteous in all his undertakings, he cannot pass by the offence without "some public expression of his displeasure against it."²⁴ The atonement was "a glorious expedient devised by Infinite Wisdom for the reparation of the injury done by sin to the divine government, and for the consistent exercise of free mercy to the unworthy."²⁵ Moreover, though the cross is the "grand peculiarity" and "principal glory" of the gospel, Christ's earthly ministry, resurrection, ascension and "parousia," are integral parts of his saving work. Indeed, the value of the atonement derives from the dignity of the Saviour's person.

(vi) *Regeneration* is a "re-impression of the divine image." The Holy Spirit "new-models" the whole soul "to form in us new principles and dispositions," that is to give us a new heart and a new spirit. Those who believe the gospel are transformed "into its own likeness. Their hearts are cast into it as into a mould, and all its sacred principles become to them principles of action."²⁶ This means that in conversion there is a "real physical work of the Holy Spirit, whereby he imparts spiritual life" to the soul, *physical* being understood not in the sense of something corporeal or mechanical, but as opposed to *moral* influence which "works upon the mind by motives and considerations which induce it to this or that." In regeneration the Holy Spirit does not simply use the reasons, motives and persuasive arguments afforded by the gospel, to affect and enlighten the mind, but "produces a new principle in the heart."²⁷

(vii) *Faith*²⁸ is a "cordial and practical acquiescence in the way of salvation through the blood of Christ," a "practical persuasion of the truth of Christ's sayings," which is "followed with a course of obedience to his precepts." In essence it is *credence* or *belief*, a credit of some testimony. The nature of the testimony concerned, however, necessarily means that a belief of it involves *trust* or *confidence* in Christ himself, as Saviour. It is faith which works by love (Gal. 5 : 6), an essentially "holy" act involving regeneration, repentance, and love for Christ, and not a mere intellectual exercise, like the "simple" or "bare" belief of the Sandemanians.

(viii) *Election*²⁹ is never arbitrary, is always *in Christ*, and always includes the means of salvation as well as the end. Election "no otherwise secures our salvation than as it secures our coming to Christ for it," and certainly "no sinner while going on in his trespasses, is warranted to consider himself as elected to salvation." So far as the doctrine of a double decree was concerned, Fuller resisted the urge for logical consistency and accepted the alogical approach of Scripture.³⁰ Like Bunyan he distinguished carefully between the act of non-election, praeterition, or the passing by of the reprobate,

and the decree of their condemnation. Salvation is altogether of grace, and eternal life is the gift of God, yet "the destruction of those that are lost will be found to be of themselves," for "eternal death is the proper wages of sin."

(ix) *Holiness*,³¹ spirituality, or true virtue, not to be confused with natural affection or "merely external duties," is nothing less than love to God and man, "the sum of practical religion." It surpasses what is generally called morality or virtue, "as a living man surpasses a painting, or even a rude and imperfect daubing." Repentance, faith and "every species of obedience" are "but different modifications of love," depending on the condition of both its subject and object.

(x) *Eternal punishment*.³² Without attempting a detailed exposition of Fuller's case for eternal punishment, we should note his rule of interpretation, applied in this instance to the use of *αἰώνιος* in the New Testament. He insisted "that every word be taken in its literal and primary sense, unless there be anything in the connexion which requires it to be taken otherwise . . . If it cannot be clearly decided what was its primitive meaning, it is sufficient to ascertain what was its obvious meaning at the time when the author wrote." Rejecting this rule Vidler maintained that "where a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself must determine the meaning of the word." In addition to contending for eternal punishment, Fuller argued that God's punishment of sinners is for the glory of God, and *vindictive*, not in the commonly accepted sense of being "inflicted from a wrathful disposition, or a disposition to punish for the pleasure of punishing," but as "opposed to that punishment which is merely corrective."³³ Viewed negatively hell is separation from God, viewed positively the essence of hell consists in recollection and reflection.³⁴

(To be concluded)

NOTES

¹ The second volume of Fuller's *Works* (five vol. edn., London, 1837) contains the text of the second edition (1801). pp. 1-125.

² E. A. Payne, *Congregational Quarterly*, July 1943, p. 227.

³ The first edition was published before Fuller's change of viewpoint regarding the particularity of redemption. He there justified universal invitations on the ground that the preacher does not know the secret counsels of God, nor does a man need to know his own particular interest in the death of Christ when he first believes, since the first act of faith is to believe, not that Christ died for all, or for any individual in particular, but that he is the Saviour of sinners. See B.U. copy pp. 135-7. He cited Owen, Ridgley, Witsius and Elisha Coles. The second edition (see *Works*, ii. 65-7) reflects his change of opinion.

⁴ The second edition contains an appendix "on the question whether a holy disposition of heart be necessary to believing", containing Fuller's criticism of McLean's doctrine of faith. *Works*, ii. 92-125.

⁵ The teaching of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* met with

criticism from hyper-Calvinists and Arminians alike. In 1786, at the request of George Birley of St. Ives, Dan Taylor (1738-1816), the architect of the New Connexion of General Baptists, published his *Observations on The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, in nine letters to a friend, under the pseudonym "Philanthropos". The following year Fuller replied to his criticisms together with those of the hyper-Calvinist William Button, in *A Defence of a Treatise entitled The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. Thereupon Taylor wrote further *Observations* in thirteen letters to a friend. In 1790 Fuller, under the pseudonym "Agnostos", published his *Reality and Efficacy of Divine Grace*. That same year, Taylor's *The Friendly Conclusion*, in four letters to a friend, brought the controversy to an end. The two men remained good friends, and on several occasions Fuller preached for Taylor at Church Lane. Adam Taylor's *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, London, 1820, pp. 172-182, give an account of the controversy from Taylor's point of view.

Button was not Fuller's only hyper-Calvinist critic. Another formidable opponent was John Martin (1741-1820), pastor of the church at Grafton St., Westminster. He is the John Martin whose *Rock of Offence* had helped Fuller in 1775 when he was working out his doctrine, but who had since then undergone a radical reversal of views. He attacked "Fullerism" in his *Thoughts on the Duty of Man relative to Faith in Jesus Christ*, maintaining that if faith is a gift it cannot be a duty. He was answered in Fuller's *Remarks*, contained in five letters to a friend.

Abraham Booth (1734-1806), pastor of the Prescot St. church, London, and author of *The Reign of Grace* (1768) and *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners* (1796), was a convert from Arminianism, who agreed with Fuller regarding universal invitations, but who in 1802 accused him of erroneous teaching regarding imputation, substitution and particular redemption. The whole affair was particularly painful to Fuller, not only because of the bitterness of Booth's attack, but more especially on account of his great respect and affection for Booth.

Fuller's controversy with Archibald McLean and the Sandemanians has already been referred to. Originally a Presbyterian, McLean (1733-1812) became a disciple of Glas and Sandeman in 1762. Three years later, without abandoning his Sandemanian convictions, he became a Baptist, together with Robert Carmichael. Their conversion to Baptist opinions led to the rise of the so-called "Scotch Baptists". A careful assessment of the Sandemanian system generally is to be found in Fuller's *Strictures on Sandemanianism*.

As early as October 1784, when he was causing consternation in Particular Baptist circles by his advocacy of a *universal offer of salvation*, he expressed his fears concerning the spread of a doctrine of *universal salvation*. He maintained that this doctrine of the final salvation of all, men and devils, does violence to the plain language of Scripture, arises from an inadequate conception of sin, and makes salvation a matter of justice rather than grace. Within ten years he had entered the lists against William Vidler (1758-1816) once a Particular Baptist himself, who succeeded Elhanan Winchester at Bishopsgate St. (1795), and by the end of the century was the recognised head of British Universalists. A lengthy and detailed correspondence took place between them, largely concerned with the meaning of *αἰώνιος* though involving deeper and more vital issues than questions of linguistics, notably the justice and love of God, which both, each in his own way and from his own viewpoint, were trying to uphold. Fuller's case was made out in eight letters written between 1793 and 1800. The first was a private one, published later (Sept. 1795) under the signature of "Gaius" in *The Evangelical Magazine*. The others were published in Vidler's periodical *The Universalist's Miscellany*, the whole series being reprinted in 1802. See Fuller, *Works*, i. 409-458.

Since "the person of Christ is the foundation stone on which the church is built", and his deity is "a sort of key stone", Fuller's controversy with the Socinians deserves mention. He vigorously opposed any theory which undermined the truth of Christ's full and essential deity, including popular speculation according to which the title "Son of God" related only to our Lord's mediatorial office or his miraculous conception, or was bestowed as a reward for his incarnation, death and resurrection. He denounced as sheer Arianism the curious doctrine known as the "indwelling scheme", favoured by Isaac Watts (see e.g. his *Christian Doctrine of the Trinity* (1722), and *The Glory of Christ as God-Man Unveiled* (1746)), who held that prior to the incarnation, Christ's human nature existed in a mysterious union with the Father. The Socinians, though speaking of Christ's "divinity", regarded him merely as the greatest and noblest of men, indwelt by the Spirit of God to a higher degree than any other man. In 1793 Fuller published *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared as to their Moral Tendency*. In 1796 Joshua Toulmin (1740-1815) replied in *The Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine*, and John Kentish (1768-1853) in *The Moral Tendency of the Genuine Christian Doctrine*. They were answered (1797) by Fuller's *Socinianism Indefensible on the Ground of its Moral Tendency*. The following year Fuller wrote his reflections on the criticisms of another Socinian, Thomas Belsham (1750-1829). The second edition of *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Compared* (1802) contains a postscript against Belsham, Kentish and Toulmin. His anti-Socinian writings are to be found in the first volume of his *Works*.

⁶ *Works*, iii. 8, iv. 664.

⁷ *Ibid.* iii. 9, iii. 54, iv. 664.

⁸ *Ibid.* iii. 9, 54, iv. 664.

⁹ *Works*, ii. 207, ii. 488, iii. 9, iv. 223, v. 349, v. 673.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* ii. 82, iv. 413.

¹¹ *Ibid.* iii. 8-9, iv. 664, and Ryland, *op. cit.* p. 64. Fuller argued against Button that the divine image effaced by sin was essentially the same as that restored in Christ. Adam and the believer are both formed after the same likeness—the image of God, since "there cannot be two specifically different images of the same original". See *Works*, ii. 55ff., and ii. 169 ff.

¹² *Ibid.* ii. 301, ii. 469-70.

¹³ *Ibid.* v. 348.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 384.

¹⁵ Letter to Ryland (1783). Ryland, *op. cit.* p. 214.

¹⁶ Fuller, *Works*, ii. 212.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* ii. 476.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* ii. 160n, ii. 476. For Fuller's argument see ii. 475-500. A virtuous action must be the expression of love. There are, however, numerous actions which because they "bear a likeness to those which arise from love", and are beneficial to society, are regarded as virtuous, since only God is competent to judge the motive of an action. Even God in the government of the world sometimes "proceeds upon the supposition that men are what they profess and appear to be".

¹⁹ See the second section of Fuller's *Reply to Philanthropos* (*Works*, ii. 207-223), and the fourth letter of *The Reality and Efficacy of Divine Grace* (*Works*, ii. 277-288). It would seem that by "grace" Taylor understood much the same as Fuller meant by "natural ability".

²⁰ See Fuller, *Works*, ii. 274, ii. 310-12, ii. 469-70, v. 427. cf. Augustine, "The will is indeed free, but not freed" (cited by Calvin, *Institutes*, II. ii. 8). Fuller distinguished between *necessity* and *certainty* (ii. 311). No man's destruction is *necessary* or his salvation *impossible*, though there is a *certainty* in these things. cf. Calvin's distinction between *necessity* and *compulsion* (*Inst.* II. iv. 1) "Though he sins necessarily, nevertheless, he sins voluntarily".

²¹ *Works*, i. 13, iii. 568, iv. 11n, iv. 498, iv. 651 ff.

²² See e.g. *Works*, ii. 508 ff, ii. 539-40.

²³ N.B. esp. *Works*, i. lxi, i. 111 ff, ii. 514, iii. 461, iv. 240, v. 753-4, and the careful way in which he distinguished between *commutative* (*commercial*), *distributive* and *public* justice (*Works*, v. 752-4). Only the last is involved in the atonement.

²⁴ *Works*, i. 214.

²⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 612.

²⁶ *Ibid.* iv. 215, v. 682.

²⁷ *Ibid.* ii. 404-5, v. 684-8. Fuller's view of regeneration was strongly contested. Some like Dr. Priestly objected to the doctrine of an immediate divine agency in conversion, and with it all suggestion of sudden conversion (see Fuller, *Works*, i. 202). Taylor, Booth and McLean denied that regeneration is prior to faith. Taylor though acknowledging that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, felt that Fuller's scheme minimised human freedom of choice in conversion. Consequently he held that faith is anterior to regeneration, the Spirit's work of renovation not commencing until after the response of faith (see Fuller, *Works*, ii. 192-206). Booth and McLean, wishing to safeguard the doctrine of justification by faith, refused to believe that there is anything holy in a sinner at the moment he believes (Fuller, *Works*, ii. 117 ff.). Their jibe that Fuller's doctrine involved the absurdity of a godly unbeliever was without foundation, for he was pleading for a priority in the order of nature rather than of time, "No sooner is the heart turned towards Christ than Christ is embraced". The effect *immediately* follows the cause, without any period of time between them (*Works*, ii. 121-2).

²⁸ *Works*, i. 163, ii. 31, ii. 99-102, iii. 476, iii. 572.

²⁹ *Ibid.* i. 427, ii. 43, ii. 45, iii. 144, iv. 386.

³⁰ *Ibid.* ii. 45, iii. 144. See also ii. 43, ii. 62-4. cf. Bunyan's *Reprobation Asserted* (Offor, vol. ii, pp. 335-358). Calvin, though he denied that any should perish "without deserving it", spoke of God creating some for dishonour during life and destruction at death, that they may be vessels of wrath and examples of severity (*quos ergo in vitae contumeliam et mortis exitium creavit, ut irae suae organa forent, et severitatis exempla*). *Inst.* III. xxiv. 12-17. He was much less clear in his exposition of reprobation than either Bunyan or Fuller. The weight of his opinion seems to have favoured a double decree.

³¹ *Works*, i. 18-21, ii. 33, ii. 496, iv. 262-7, iv. 508.

³² See his correspondence with Vidler (*Works*, i. 409-458). For his rule of interpretation see *On the Proper and Improper Use of Terms* (*Works*, v. 541-554), also i. 432-3. For Vidler's rule see i. 441.

³³ *Works*, i. 215-221.

³⁴ *Ibid.* iv. 83-84, v. 747-8.

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Memoirs of Thomas Burchell

A member of our Society, Mr. David Edmonds, a great-great-grandchild of Thomas Burchell, wishes to obtain a copy of the above. Anyone who can help with this or other books relative to Baptists in Jamaica is asked to write to Mr. Edmonds at The White Cottage, Chapel Lane, Benson, Oxfordshire.