

R E M A R K S

O N A T R E A T I S E,

E N T I T L E D,

The Gospel of Christ worthy of all Acceptation

O R,

The Obligations of Men fully to credit, and cordially  
to approve whatever God makes known.

By ANDREW FULLER.

W H E R E I N

The Nature of special Faith in Christ is  
considered,

And several of Mr. F.'s Mistakes pointed out;

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

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By WILLIAM BUTTON.

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*Eph. 2. 8. By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of your-  
selves: it is the gift of God.*

*Gal. 3. 12. The law is not of faith.*

*Tit. 1. 1. According to the faith of God's elect.*

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## P R E F A C E.

**M**R. Thomas Goodwin, in his address to the reader, annexed to his discourse on the true nature of the gospel, observes, “ It concerns every minister of the gospel to put a stop to any opinion which hath the least tendency to Arminianism. We are not as idle spectators, to stand by with patience to see the truths of the gospel either openly invaded, or secretly suppressed, but as long as we are able to frame a thought, or hold a pen, it is our duty to make a vigorous opposition.” This consideration, together with the pressing solicitations of some intimate friends, have been the occasion of these letters being presented to the publick.

That Mr. Fuller’s sentiments, which lead to *general* calls, invitations, and exhortations, have led some aside from the truth, is what he himself seems tacitly to acknowledge, when he says, “ 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. In such addresses perhaps it has been too common likewise to go aside from the scriptural intent of them, and to dabble in Arminianism\*.” Now I wish ever to hold, vindicate and propagate, that which has not the least tendency to lead persons astray from the spi-

rit and glory of the gospel, and which has the greatest tendency to carry entirely off from Arminianism, yea, even from so much as dabbling in it.

I am sorry to find what is advanced in Mr. F.'s treatise seems to gain so much ground, as it appears to me to be opposite to scripture and experience, and tends to overthrow the distinguishing and glorious doctrines of the gospel, which he himself expresses a regard for. Yet I wonder not at its prevailing, as it is exceedingly pleasing to human nature to be informed of its dignity, and very gratifying to proud man to be told he *can* believe if he *will*, for "the cannot consists in a will not," says Mr. F. \*. It is too humbling, too degrading, to tell a sinner he has neither *will* nor *power* to believe. Those who maintain his *natural ability* will be sure to please the ear of men in general, and so gain what is much sought after in the present day, *Popularity*.

I understand it has been said by some strenuous advocates for Mr. F. and his sentiments, that his book is unanswerable. To such I expect to appear contemptible, but that I must bear as well as I can. Whether I have answered it or not, I cannot be of their opinion. I think Mr. F.'s doctrine has been confuted long ago, by Brine, Wayman, and others, who have written directly on the subject. And I think there are persons even in this day of error, who, did they think it worth their while, could easily set aside Mr. F.'s reasoning, specious as it may appear to many. If I have not *answered*, I still am satisfied that I have *attempted* to answer. If I am not able (and I freely confess I am not) to defend the truth as it deserves to be defended, and as many others are able to defend it, yet I think it my duty to do it as well as

I can, and am encouraged from this consideration that, "if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

There are those who, warmly espousing Mr. F.'s cause, have been pleased to say, they hope his book will cure some of their *Gillism* and *Brinism*. To such I beg leave to say, I am ashamed of their contemptuous manner of speaking of those great and good men, *Gill* and *Brine*, whose characters and works ought ever to be revered and esteemed by all who call themselves Christians. Great and mighty men in Israel fell when they fell; and few, very few, of their piety, eminency and usefulness are left behind. They were set for the defence of the gospel, and they defended it well. Yes, God made each of them "a fenced city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall," against the adversaries of truth; and they stood firm to the last. O that thousands more were raised up like them. I trust there are some yet remaining, who are too bad of the disease of *Gillism* and *Brinism* (if it be a disease) to be cured; and I wish the persons alluded to may live and die as worthy as those men whose gospel principles they seem to despise.

The Critic's censure I expect not to escape, and indeed I am sensible my performance will not bear the Critic's eye. All I can say on this head is, I wrote not even with an attempt to please him. My view is, I hope, the glory of God, the exalting the riches of free grace in the sinner's salvation, and the establishing plain Christians in the truth. I have therefore only given a plain scriptural account of things, and have contented self with appealing to common sense, without much reasoning on the subjects treated of. And have, in order to confirm my ideas, made use of

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variety of quotations from different authors well known by Christians in common. It may perhaps be thought there are too many of these: but in this I have only trodden in the footsteps of Mr. F. himself, who takes up several pages in citations from the works of others. I meant therefore, lest any should think I stood alone, to shew that I have as great and good human authorities on my side as he has on his. Though after all, the Bible alone I wish to make the rule of my faith and practice. I would call no man—Master on earth, but acknowledge one master even Christ.

I hope the reader will not have reason to find fault with the spirit and temper in which these letters are written. I have endeavoured to write calmly and coolly, without warmth and heat, though I confess I found myself considerably hurt at some insinuations thrown out by Mr. F. against those who differ from him, and at his representing to the world, those consequences as following their doctrine which do not follow; what I refer to, the reader will find noticed hereafter.

The whole I desire to leave in the hands of God, intreating (if it be his pleasure) a blessing may accompany it, that it may answer the purposes designed. And should the candid reader on the perusal receive any profit, let him give the glory to God, to whom it will be alone due.

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E R R A T A.

- Page 4. l. 11. *for* are his words, *read* are nearly his words.  
 22. l. 20. dele purposely. Line 25. *for* does, *read* do.  
 24. l. 10. from the bottom *for* truth, *read* trust.  
 25. penult. *for* dictates, *read* dictate.  
 64. l. 8. *for* love, *read* loved.

And other mistakes are left to the reader's candor.

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L E T T E R I.

DEAR SIR,

**T**HE Treatise you mentioned in a late conversation, I have since seen. It is intitled "The Gospel of Christ worthy of all Acceptation, or the Obligations of Men fully to credit, and cordially to approve whatever God makes known; wherein is considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of those where the Gospel comes in that Matter. By Andrew Fuller."

I have read it deliberately, and paid particular attention to the several remarks therein, concerning Faith, as a duty incumbent on all wherever the Gospel comes. What I have to say upon it is this: In my opinion his reasoning is not just, his arguments are by no means conclusive, and I am sorry such a publication as this is sent forth into the world. I am concerned for *truth*, and for the *peace* of Jerusalem; and cannot help thinking this Treatise an attack on the former, and as having a great tendency to interrupt the latter.

I am surpris'd at Mr. F.'s assertion in the preface, p. 8. "It might be safely affirmed, that if the doctrines of grace are in danger, it is not from the principles here maintained, but from their opposites." I doubt not, but this safe affirmation, may be clearly proved a false position.

B

Mr.

Mr. F. "verily believes the cause in which he here engages is in the main, the cause of God and Truth \*." I differ very much in opinion, for, I view it as the cause of man and error. I verily believe it is subversive of the faith, and opposite to reason and scripture. To say that special faith, the faith of God's elect, which is a new covenant blessing, the peculiar gift of God to his chosen, is a requirement of the law, and the duty of the non-elect, appears to me strange, inconsistent, and untrue.

The author of this Treatise, it seems, expected some one would call his assertions mistakes, and therefore he thus speaks, "Let him however, not barely call them mistakes, but prove them so, by solid, scriptural evidence †." This is what I shall attempt to do.

But before I proceed to the body of his book, I have a further remark or two to make on the preface: And first, Mr. F. sets out with telling the world "he had formerly entertained different sentiments ‡." How far different he does not say, I hope the stages and revolutions of Mr. F.'s faith will not be so various and different as Dr. Priestly's, who frankly acknowledges in the early period of his life, he was a Calvinist of the strictest sect, at the age of twenty he commenced an Arian, and continued in that persuasion till he was about five or six-and-thirty, when he again changed his opinion, and became a Socinian §. I perceive he is of different sentiments from that gentleman at present, and I trust the Lord will preserve him for ever from Socinian delusion. It is good that the heart be established with grace.

The reason of Mr. F.'s publishing his alteration of sentiments, was, it seems, because "he wrote

\* P. 6. † P. 12. ‡ P. 1. § Letters to Dr. Horsley.

his thoughts out, lent the MS. to several ministers and other persons, the greater part of whom requested him to print ¶." 'Tis pity he did not keep his thoughts to himself; he knew this point had been discussed years ago; and it has been to the joy of thousands of God's children that the controversy has been laid aside, as it only tended to create animosity, ruffle the spirits of good men, and cause divisions in the church of Christ. Mr. F. himself acknowledges he "has been sometimes ready to weep, from an expectation of hard thoughts, and perhaps hard words from several of those with whom he could rejoice to spend his days in cordial friendship \*." If this was his expectation, why did he write? why did he publish? why should he trouble Israel, why make the hearts of the righteous sad? why take such a method as tends to excite hard thoughts, and to draw out hard words from his friends? In answer to this, it is said "the cause in which I engage is the cause of truth and righteousness †." But that with me remains to be proved. What is here written in defence of this cause, so far from convincing me of the justness of this declaration, it has been the means of more fully establishing me in the belief of the erroneoufness and unrighteousness of it. It has led me to think of the subject more than ever, and the more I think of it, the less I am inclined to embrace the sentiment; my reasons I shall hereafter give.

Mr. F. affects to write with candour, and indeed in the general there is an appearance of it. I wish this had appeared throughout. But I am sorry to say I now and then perceive him assume an air of importance, not altogether becoming; here and there a reflection is scattered on those who differ from him, which is not very decent; and I

¶ Pref. p. 6.

\* Pref. p. 6.

† P. 6.

with I was not obliged to contradict an assertion in pref. p. 11. "I hope I need not add there is nothing personal in what is written." I think there is in p. 11. of the book, where, after he has given his definition of faith, he adds, "'tis possible some may pronounce upon it with an air of positivity; this is no more than a man may have, and go to hell notwithstanding." This I consider as a personal attack on that excellent and judicious man, Mr. Brine, whose works praise him in the gates, for these are his words †, though Mr. F. has artfully concealed from whence he quoted them.

In answer to some who might suggest, it was hardly liberal to animadvert on the writings of those who are incapable of answering, Mr. F. replies, "had there been any other writers on the subject, but those of that description, that part had been omitted; besides, though authors are mortal, their publications are in a sense immortal §." True, but then surely such animadversions ought to be particularly candid, and free from personal reflection. But the attack just mentioned is far from being so.

Besides this, there is a most unworthy reflection (at least it appears so to me) cast on those who differ from Mr. F.'s sentiments concerning faith. After attacking the Arminians, he adds, "others, that err as much on the opposite side, seem willing that God should have all the praise for the good; but then they are determined as well, he shall have all the blame for the bad, for they will have none of it ¶." The persons here alluded to, I conceive to be those who with me think the reason why many believe not, is, because they are not predestinated to eternal life, for as many as are so do believe, Acts 10. 48. and our Lord gives

‡ Mot. to L. and U. p. 28.

§ Pref. p. 11.

¶ P. 7.

this as a reason of unbelief, in John 10. 26. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, and because this is our sentiment we are here charged with *blaming* God. This is illiberal; we believe the Lord dispenses the blessings of his grace, and faith amongst the rest, according to his sovereign good will and pleasure, that he is the absolute proprietor of his own grace; that he gives it when, and where, and to whom he pleases; but are we to be considered as *blaming* God for not bestowing these blessings on all? we disdain the thought. There were, it seems, in the Apostle's days, some who drew such an unjust conclusion from his doctrine, which made him with earnestness reply to the adversary, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." No, instead of blaming God for not bestowing special faith on all, we adore his sovereignty, and admire his grace in bestowing it on any. Were I disposed to return the attack, I might ask, who casts the most blame on God, Mr. F. who asserts, it is the duty of all men to believe with a special faith, with that faith which is peculiar to the elect, which is out of their power to obtain, and the want of it is the cause of damnation; or we who believe that because this faith is a new covenant blessing, peculiar to the elect, none will be condemned by God for the want of it? But I forbear, as I am persuaded Mr. F. does not by any means intend to cast any blame on the Divine Being, however his sentiment may appear to carry that in it. I should have been glad if he had spared this invective.

After what I asserted at the beginning, I cannot be ranked in that class of people referred to in the last page of the preface. "As to others, who think they know enough already, and that every opposition to their sentiments must of course be subversive of the faith, these will probably be

"forward to pass sentence without condescending to give it a reading:" and adds, "concerning these I only say, as such kind of sentences are no honour to a cause when given in its favour, so neither are they any dishonour when given on the contrary." A home stroke to those who will not condescend to read Mr. F.'s book. But suppose there are some persons, who choose to keep close to their bibles, and will have nothing to do with controversial writings, and therefore do not see meet to lay out eighteen pence for Mr. F.'s book; they are fully satisfied with the scriptural account of special faith; they see it is the gift of God, and not a duty; they have a humble and good hope this blessing is bestowed on them; they give evidence of it in their lives and conversation, and adore the grace which has thus distinguished them from others. They perhaps have equal penetration into the scriptures with Mr. F. and think, after serious enquiry, close examination, and mature deliberation, that this doctrine of faith is of man, and subversive of the true faith. May not they say so, although they have not read, and do not think proper to read what Mr. F. has said on the subject? I think they may, without justly incurring the character of thinking they know enough already, and of being such whose words are not worth attending to.

I am glad Mr. F. has explained what he means by the term "saving faith," which so often occurs in his Treatise. I know it is a common phrase, but I own, I am not fond of it, because, as Dr. Gill observes, "it seems to derogate and detract from the glory of Christ, who is the only Saviour, and to carry off the mind from the object of faith to the act of it \*." But as Mr.

\* Gill's Serm. and Tracts, v. F. p. 74.

[ 7 ]

F. says, "whenever I use the term saving, as applied to faith, I do not mean that faith is the *cause* of salvation, but barely what accompanies it." I shall say no more on that head.

Thus, Sir, in the general you have my ideas of this late publication. In my next letter I intend to inform you *wherein* I differ, and *why* I differ from the author of it. Shall now only add, I know what is there advanced is too much the doctrine of the day, and he who opposes, must not expect the popular cry of Hear him, hear him. Be that as it may, the Lord grant you and I may be rooted and built up in Christ, and stablished in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving, and beware lest any man spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, and not after Christ.

I remain

Yours,