

THE  
GOSPEL  
SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED;  
OCCASIONED BY  
*THE GOSPEL ITS OWN EVIDENCE,*  
By ANDREW FULLER.

IN WHICH SOME EXPRESSIONS IN THAT BOOK ARE PARTICULARLY  
CONSIDERED;

And some Remarks made on the Tendency of those Principles which are  
generally maintained in the other Works of that Author;

IN A  
LETTER TO A FRIEND.

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“What Man knoweth the Things of a Man save the Spirit of Man which is in him?  
even so the Things of God knoweth no Man but the Spirit of God.— The natural Man  
receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him,  
neither can he know them because they are SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED.”

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THE following remarks on some expressions I used by Mr. Fuller in a book entitled; “*The Gospel Its Own Evidence*, ” were written intentionally for a Lady, and are now published by request.

As I have consented to publish these remarks, I shall, at the same time; give the reader some little information of the manner in which I became acquainted with Mr. Fuller’s principles; and how my mind has been affected by them.

I had not been called by grace much above two years, when I came to reside at Birmingham; and was, at my first coming there, invited to dine with Mr. Harwood, who seemed to receive me with great kindness and liberality, and at the same time lent me a book, written by Mr. Fuller, “*The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*. ” He made me promise to read this book throughout, and at that time I can say, I was wholly unacquainted with any of those disputes in which I have since been engaged. At the time when I was first called, I knew nothing of any particular doctrines, nor religious controversies. All I knew, and all I could say, was chiefly, if not wholly, confined to my own experience. Having made a promise to read this book, which had been so strongly recommended by such a man as Mr. Harwood, I expected to find something about JESUS CHRIST — something that would engage my heart, and stir up my affections towards that dear name, which, I can truly say, was so precious to my soul; but alas! not one word, either of light, or life, or love; but when he came to argue upon that point “*That Faith was not believing my own interest in Christ*, ” I never can forget, though it is impossible to describe, what I felt at that time; my heart sunk

within me; it seemed to overturn all that the Lord had taught me, and to contradict what I had been preaching about the SPIRIT's work. I laid the book by, determined never to touch it more; but as I was frequently reminded of my promise to read the book through, I would sometimes take it up, then throw it down, and fall upon my knees, crying out, Lord! Lord! let me not be deceived! Oh let me not be deceived! nor be the means of deceiving others." At last I returned the book to its lawful owner, and with such expressions of decided disapprobation, that I ever found him and his friend Moseley from that time, to be two of my most bitter enemies.

When I found myself branded with the name of an Antinomian, I then began to read different authors, and as my soul became more and more established in grace, I began to see a little through the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. I have not only read Mr. Fuller, but other modern authors on the same subject. I have now by me a variety of remarks on the nature and tendency of their principles, which I would collect and publish, could I be indemnified as to the expense; but can by no means run any risk, for I would not lay any additional burthen on those kind friends among whom I labour, and who have contributed so liberally, and so cheerfully, to the maintenance of myself, a wife, and nine children.

I am persuaded that many Ministers, as well as private Christians, seem to embrace Mr. Fuller's principles without understanding either their nature or their tendency. If the remarks made in the following Letter should be the means of undeceiving such, the end is answered, As to scurrility and abuse, it is what I am so accustomed to receive, that I am prepared to meet it; and

am free to own that I hate their principles as much as they can hate mine; though one of them, Mr. Spencer, late a Baptist Minister, at Aulcester, has given it in his own handwriting, that no devil in hell holds worse sentiments than Mr. Bradford does; but whatever be my sentiments, I see no reason to retract them, and am so far from wishing to disguise them, that I endeavour to express them in the fullest and plainest manner, and that too, without equivocation or mental reservation. And I do now consider Mr. Spencer abundantly more honest, in avowing his Socinian principles, than when he pretended to be a Calvinist. I am well convinced that every principle which has a tendency to set aside the personality, work, and office of the SPIRIT, will lead to Socinianism, and at last end in Deism. However Tom Payne and Mr. Fuller may, at present, look different ways, nevertheless they are as closely tied together, by the cords and bands of carnal reasoning, as ever were Samson's foxes, when tied tail to tail.

THE GOSPEL  
SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED;  
OCCASIONED BY  
THE GOSPEL ITS OWN EVIDENCE.  
IN A LETTER TO A LADY.

MADAM,

I HAVE returned you Mr. Fuller's book; The Gospel Its Own Evidence, with the following remarks, which you are welcome to make use of as you please. As you say the gentleman who put it into your hands dared you to read it, you are therefore

welcome, when you return the book, to accompany it with these remarks. Though they may be considered as too severe, and written in a bad spirit, by my own Master I must stand or fall. I have long been convinced of the evil nature and pernicious tendency of those principles which Mr. Fuller and others have, for some time, been endeavouring to establish. I am sure they will eat as doth a canker, and entirely corrode the vitals of true godliness. I have often been charged by others with being too severe and uncharitable in reflecting upon the principles of such dear good men, but I am convinced that those who pretend to so much external holiness and sanctity, are the greatest enemies to the vital power of religion, and the internal work of GOD'S SPIRIT upon the heart; and whilst they cry out against outward acts of sin, they are establishing the throne of iniquity by a law; and whilst they are preaching up reformation are trying to set aside the work of God in regeneration. Of such I can say, "O my soul come not thou into their secret," but may the Lord ever make me faithful to oppose, and according to the light and knowledge which he has given me, enable me to expose, the cunning craftiness of such as lie in wait to deceive; for they do lie in wait; they set a trap; they catch men; they do catch the poor, when they get him into their net;—and, to this end, they crouch, they humble themselves, and, by their religious grimace, their affected humility, candour and charity, and by feigned words, by soft, smooth and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of such simple babes who are unskillful in the word of righteousness; and, as children not well established; are liable to be deceived by their guile, duplicity, and dissimulation.

As it respects the title of this book, "*The Gospel Its Own*

*Evidence,*” without seeing the author’s name I might have passed it over; supposing nothing more was meant than the beauty, harmony, consistency, and excellency of the truths therein revealed; but, knowing something of the craft so often practiced with success by sophistical jugglers, I could not help suspecting treachery. There is that concealed under this title, which would subvert those very Scriptures whose authenticity this book professes to maintain, and in the end would eventually overturn— *If that was possible*. Blessed be God, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, “*The Lord knoweth them that are his.*” It is the Lord’s controversy, and there is no concord betwixt Christ Belial. The very testimony of grace received, must provoke the formal, hypocritical professor. There can be no more agreement, or union of spirit, between an experimental Christian and a mere professor, than between acids and alkalis; the words of a man, taught of God, and made wise unto salvation, will operate upon the heart of a fool, like vinegar upon nitre. Every man by nature is a fool, as to all divine and spiritual knowledge; however wise he may think himself, or however he may be esteemed by others for his acute reasoning, sound judgment, or fine language. What a fool must that man be who thinks that he can keep the law! What a fool must he be who thinks he can understand the Scriptures in their true meaning, or receive them in their power, grace and influence, who never was possessed of that Spirit which indited them, and without whose teaching they cannot be understood! Whoever openly denies, or goes about, in any way or manner, to set aside the Spirit’s work, must be endeavouring to sap and undermine the very foundation of all true godliness, and to invalidate the authenticity of the Bible; and

that too more effectually than the open attacks of such professed infidels as Tom Payne. False friends are allowed to be more dangerous than open enemies. No man can receive these sayings (says our Lord) save those to whom it is given: but there is a way (says Mr. Fuller, page 262) *“In which God may be said to give even to them who do not receive.”* How a thing may be given to me, though I do not receive it, is what I cannot comprehend. It is one thing to promise me a favour, or to intend me a favour, it is another thing actually to receive that favour; neither can I call it mine till I have received it, either in the whole or part. But, says Mr. Fuller, It is in THIS way, —I would ask in what way? Perhaps he may say, that the Bible is given to them who do not receive it. I answer, it is one thing to have the written word in your HANDS, but is another thing to have the word of God in your HEARTS; and, as St. James says, *to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls*, by making us wise unto salvation.

A person unacquainted with the craftiness of men might pass over such an expression as this, That, *“God gives to them who do not receive,”* without once suspecting the design of thereby evading the force of an objection which may be made to that popular doctrine, *The duty of all men to believe*. If it is the duty of all men to believe, why does not God give all men the power to believe? All for whom the Scriptures were originally intended must receive them; but even these cannot receive them till it is given them; and, after it is given them they see no further than the Lord is pleased to shew them. As many as were ordained unto eternal life believe, and none else. What the Spirit saith, it saith to the churches. And no man can have any clear, full, and decided

proof, evidence, and conviction of the truth and authenticity of the Scriptures; but as the truths therein revealed are opened and powerfully applied by the influence and operation of the Holy Spirit. I would repeat it, from the conviction which I feel, that, whoever goes about to set aside the Spirit's work, does thereby endeavour, as far as in him lies, to invalidate the truth and authenticity of the Scriptures; which can no otherwise be known, received, or understood, but as they are spiritually discerned and applied to the soul by divine energy, from the Spirit's might. If this title, "*The Gospel Its Own Evidence*," be but compared with the author's principles, and other expressions, even in this book, its intention will clearly be proved.

Page 198, Mr. Fuller says, speaking of the Bible, "Read it but *seriously* and your hearts *will* answer its descriptions; it *will* touch the secret springs of sensibility. —To whatever particular vices you have been addicted, here you *will* discover your likeness, in a way that *will* bring conviction to your bosom."

Well (Madam) what think you of this. This is not so well wrapped up, nor so artfully disguised, as to leave us at a loss to know his meaning; and if these words are compared with the title of the book, the one will help to explain the other. Read it but *seriously* — (Is that enough?) it will touch the secret springs of sensibility. Not the least intimation of man's blindness and ignorance by nature; not a word of the Spirit's work: it seems as if reading the Bible seriously was all that was necessary. I remember a puffing advertisement, from a mountebank divine; who offered to give an exposition of the Bible, which should explain all difficulties; but that which crowned the whole was this; he undertook to say, that it should carry conviction to the



heart. If either he, or Mr. Fuller had been ever convinced of their own blindness, or had ever been spiritually convinced of sin, of original sin, of the sin of unbelief or of unrighteousness, they would have known that conviction for sin was the work of God's Spirit; they would have known that neither the hearing nor reading the word (however attentive or serious we may be) will in the least be either pleasant or delightful, profitable or instructive, unless the word is attended with power to the heart. If this be so, as it respects the subjects of divine grace, whose minds have, at any time, been enlightened to see and whose hearts have, at any time, been opened to receive the word of eternal life, who sometimes can hear and read with pleasure, and find the word come home with power, and accompanied with light and knowledge; but, at other times no light, no life, no sweet enjoyment, nothing but mourning and lamenting their deadness, and stupidity, and insensibility, nothing but crying my *leanness*, my *leanness*. I say if this be so, as it respects the subjects of divine Grace, how shocking must it be to hear a man, who assumes the ministerial name and character, in this manner deceive souls, by saying, "Read your Bibles *but seriously*, &c. &c." making no distinction between believers or unbelievers; no, nor once directing them to ask of God that he would give them his Holy Spirit.

So far from shewing us that man can do nothing that is good of himself, we are taught that he can, if he *will*. He can understand the Scriptures if he *will*; there is no want of Power, there is nothing wanting but a Will. And in order to maintain this doctrine they have invented a curious distinction between natural ability, and moral inability. These theological jugglers play with this

distinction as it were with *hocus pocus*. And, by this kind of legerdemain, they can play with every text in Scripture which speaks of man's inability since the fall, to do any thing that is good. For they tell us that man's *cannot* springs only from his *will not*; that he has *natural* ability; and the Scriptures only speak of his *moral* inability. He *could*, say they, if he *would*. I do not wonder that a simple child of God, giving way to a reasoning spirit, and following such wise disputers, in such nice distinctions, should be lost in a maze of error, and be distracted with such intricate enquiries, till the Lord is pleased to restore his soul, and bring him again into the strait but narrow way. For my own part I am well convinced that man's want of will arises from his want of power; that his *will-not* springs from his *cannot*, because as being by nature dead in sin, it is impossible he should *will* till he has received power. And in this I am confirmed by what St. Paul says, Eph. 4. 18. *Alienated through ignorance*.

Alienation respects the estrangement of the will; and, as ignorance implies the want of power, therefore the estrangement of the will arises from want of power. Thus the enmity of the carnal mind arises from the want of spiritual knowledge and spiritual discernment of God's mercy, truth and love, as manifested in man's salvation; and nothing can slay that enmity but a view of my own personal interest in JESUS CHRIST. A man naturally blind cannot distinguish colours; and a man spiritually blind, cannot distinguish the precious truths contained in the word of God. Hold a looking-glass before one who can see, and he will discern the features of his face; but hold the same looking glass before one who is blind, he cannot discern thereby what manner of man he is. So likewise a man spiritually blind, as we

all are by nature, cannot see himself in the glass of God's most holy word. But when the eyes of his understanding are enlightened, then he can discover something of his own likeness, and see something into the true meaning of the word, but even he who sees the clearest, sees but darkly: he who knows most, knows but little; I know but in part, says St. Paul: So then we can see no further than the Lord is pleased to shew us; and we can learn no faster than God is pleased to teach us. Let every man speak as he feels; let them who think they have this power contend earnestly for that which they conceive themselves to be possessed of: But at their peril let them neglect it, or forbear to make use of it. I once contended for free-will, free-agency, and man's merit, as strenuously as they can do; but blessed be God for his discriminating grace, who hath turned my comeliness into corruption, who has given me to feel that the light which was in me was darkness, as to all divine truths; and that it is only in his light that we see light. Though the light shineth in darkness, the darkness comprehendeth it not. A blind man can see no better by day than by night; though the sun may shine ever so bright.

This is one way of setting aside the necessity of the Spirit's work, by insisting on the natural power of man, of himself, to understand the Scriptures, without any supernatural and spiritual illumination or application. But as man is for ever finding some new invention, in order to darken the divine counsels; so there is another way by which the work and office of the Spirit is superseded, and its evidence may be considered as altogether needless; and that is by calling the Word, the Spirit, and this opinion is implied in this title, "The Gospel its Own Evidence." There is likewise another expression in this book which seems to

favour this opinion, that the Word is the Spirit; for, page 24, he says, the “Spirit which the Scriptures inspire, is favourable to divine worship.” We are expressly told, that those holy men who wrote the Scriptures, were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that the Scriptures were given by inspiration: we are likewise told that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned: but where are we told of the Spirit which the Scriptures inspire? In the work of regeneration I consider the word of God to be the seed of eternal life: this is received in the heart by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost; and thereby Christ is formed in the heart, and a new creation actually takes place. The soul is endued with new powers, is presented with new prospects, and is engaged in new pursuits.

In and by the work of regeneration the soul receives a spirit, temper or disposition, not only favourable to divine worship, but a spirit of devotion; for the spirit of grace and supplication is poured into it. The renewed soul, according to the effectually working of the Holy Spirit, must delight itself in God; must be athirst for God, and panting for communion with him. Where, I would ask, is personality, agency, and the power of operation ascribed to the Scriptures, or the written word. It may, perhaps, be said that in St. John’s Gospel, our Lord says, *The words that I speak unto you they are Spirit, and they are Life*;—but suppose the words *Spirit and Life* should imply personality, agency, or the power of operation; nevertheless those words can apply only to the words which Christ himself spoke with divine authority; thereby communicating life to the subjects of grace. By what construction can they apply to the written word? What ground, I

would ask, is there for any such construction; or even for applying them to any other words than those spoken by our Lord himself? The word of God is spoken of in different points of view; such as, The eternal and essential word; and is applied to Christ as God. *The word was with God, and the word was God.* —We read of the incarnate word, which is applied to Christ as God and man. *The word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* There is the in-dwelling word, which is received in the heart, as that, *incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.* There is likewise the word of God, as it is either *spoken*, or *written*; and is therefore to be considered, either as a *report*, or as a *record*. This record or this report, is the medium or means of information by which the spirit works; in this sense it is called a sword, being compared to one.—St. Paul says, “*The Sword of the Spirit the Word of God.*” It is the word which the Spirit of God makes use of; but surely the sword of the Spirit is no more the spirit, than the sword can be the hand that strikes with it. St. John says, this is the record, *i. e.* This is the sum and substance of the written word, “*That God hath given unto us Eternal Life,*” but then he adds, “*This Life is in the Son.*” Though the record informs us of this eternal life, yet the record is not the life. It may be asked, What did our Lord mean when he said, “*The Words which I speak unto you they are Spirit, and they are Life.*” He plainly intended to shew the difference between the words spoken by him, and it may be the very same words spoken by others.

The words spoken by him are not mere names, used as mere expressions, or sounds; not mere signs nor symbols, which are used only as external or carnal representations; but they are the thing itself, they are the *spirit* and not the *letter*. They are not

merely the report of life, but they are life; and do convey life into the soul. It seems as if our Lord should say, others may speak of the blessings, but with the word, as it proceeds with power from me, the blessing itself is communicated and conveyed into the soul. The same words when spoken by others, are only shadows, but spoken by me they are substance. Hence I infer, that in preaching we may speak of blessings as they are set forth in the very words of Scripture: but unless the Spirit attends those words with divine power, nothing is felt; there is no sense of their worth and value, of their grace and influence. Therefore, says our Lord, it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. From hence likewise I infer, that all ordinances when only administered by man are carnal, and, as such, they profit not. *The flesh profiteth nothing* (says our Lord): But when the ordinances of God's appointment are administered and received under the influence of the Holy Spirit, then they are spiritual, as such profitable. Then we see his goings in his sanctuary, and cry out, *How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts.*

If the Word be the Spirit; if personality, life, agency, and the power of operation may be so ascribed to the Scriptures as if they could inspire a spirit favourable to divine worship; I would ask, Why the same cause does not always produce the same effect, upon the same subject, under the same circumstances? Why the same man is not always affected in the same manner, by reading the same Scriptures? It may, perhaps, be answered, that he may not be equally diligent, equally earnest, or equally serious. I appeal to those who know any thing experimentally of the grace of God—who have felt the word brought home with power to their hearts who really know what it is to have *the secret strings*

*of sensibility* touched; in the hearing or reading of the Holy Scriptures; Whether it be so with them? Whether they always enjoy the same light, and life, and love, and liberty when they hear and read? nay, Whether they have not found their minds more insensible when they have been most earnest and most attentive? As far as my testimony is of any weight, I can truly say, that I have taken up my Bible with the most fixed attention, and the most earnest desire to understand its meaning. I have endeavoured, as seriously as ever man did, to compare spiritual things with spiritual, but all to no purpose; I could neither see nor feel spiritually; at other times, when I have been walking in the streets, in company and conversation, or when at my meals, I have had such sweet views of the Scriptures, in their divine harmony, their perfect consistency, and such an insight into the hidden mysteries contained in them, that I have been lost in wonder and amazement. I can say that I never got one grain of spiritual knowledge and experience by hunting; all that ever I have gained has been brought me; and I doubt not by the Lord my God, for I have found it like Jacob's savory meat; it was brought with power; the Spirit gave testimony to the word; I felt that force which brought conviction with it. There is not a truth for which I now contend, but I know the time when, the place where, and the manner how, that truth was first applied to my heart, and received in love. As face answers to face in a glass, so I know there are many others who can say the same thing; and that, in this respect, their experience is the same as mine: but as to those who are yet carnal and unconverted, who have only a literal knowledge of the Scriptures, whose wisdom is earthly, who say they see, but never yet knew that they were blind; and

consequently never could have known what it has been to have had the eyes of their mind enlightened, never could have felt the wondrous effect of the Lord's eye-salve, and that heavenly anointing which teacheth the difference between truth and error; however such as these may intrude into things which they have not seen, vainly puffed with their fleshly mind, with self-conceit, and self-sufficiency, yet it is impossible that they should form any judgment of the conflicts or comforts of those who have been effectually called by grace. He who is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man; he knows what man is in a state of nature, because he was once in that state himself: but a man who is in a state of nature, can know nothing of the experience of him who is in a state of grace; therefore, what such men may think of me, or say of me, gives me but very little concern indeed. For the spirit or disposition which the Spirit of God inspires into the soul, in and by his regenerating influence, is not only a spirit favourable to devotion, but is a spirit of devotion, by which we become devoted to God, and are enabled so to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, as to make him our fear, and him our dread.— It is not only a spirit favourable to divine worship, but is that spirit of grace and supplication, without which all the outward forms of godliness and all those services and ceremonies which are CALLED divine worship, are nothing more than solemn mockery, and the sacrifices of fools, who do not consider that they are doing evil, worshipping they know not what, being altogether carnal and sensual.

It may perhaps be said, that Mr. Fuller sometimes makes mention of the Spirit, and from thence they would conclude, that he neither denies his personality, work and office, nor yet holds



the Spirit to be the Word. That conclusion does by no means follow: we are told to try the spirits, whether they be of God. If what Mr. Fuller says of man's power, or natural ability be true, the Spirit's work is needless. Read over those expressions which I have already noticed—“*The Gospel Its Own Evidence.—It will bring conviction,*”—*The Spirit which the Scriptures inspire*—According to these expressions is not the Word the Spirit? or, do they not ascribe to the written word, the work and office of the Spirit?

Whenever the personality, work and office of the Spirit is denied or questioned by those who set up for religious characters, and write or preach on religious subjects, we may depend upon it, that the Scriptures will be literally fulfilled in them, “*they shall wax worse and worse,*” they shall go from one—ism to another; from Arminianism to Arianism; from Arianism to Socinianism; and the next step is Skepticism, Deism and at last Devilism. If the work of the Spirit be denied in *calling*; the work of the Father will next be denied in *choosing*; till at last the Son's work, both as to his imputed righteousness, and his atoning blood, will be absolutely denied. I have known many instances of this; and am sure that there are many in the high road to infidelity, who are not aware of the nature and tendency of those principles which they so much admire, as being so holy, yet so moderate, and so rational, but which I will venture to pronounce earthly, sensual and devilish,

How can the doctrine of election be maintained, if it is the duty of all men to believe, where the Gospel comes? If so then all must be elect, and Christ must have died for all, wherever the Gospel comes; otherwise it will be the duty of some to believe a lie. Mark

the progress of infidelity; observe that crooked serpent; sometimes he hides his head, sometimes he wriggles, winds and twists, and tries to insinuate himself with all the subtilty of a serpent; but the moment grace appears, his flaming eye balls roll—he shoots his arrows; darts his forky tongue, and hisses with indignant rage. This is an old grudge; it began in the garden, from the time that God said, “*I will put enmity between her seed and thy seed.*” This quarrel shall never be made up as long as there are two seeds in the world; its will be found true. *He that is born after the flesh will persecute him that is born after the spirit.* How can it be otherwise? the Lord’s controversy must go on, and the word of life will ever prove the sword of strife.

There is one expression in this book which confirms my suspicion, that as soon as ever his friends and admirers are sufficiently prepared to receive the finishing stroke, the doctrine of atonement will next be called in question. In this book there is one perversion of Scripture for which I cannot account, unless it be from a fixed design (as occasion offers) to turn the eye from Christ. Speaking of the Jews, he says, IN THEM *shall all nations of the earth be blessed.* How differently is this passage explained by the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians! What stress does the Apostle lay upon the word *seed*, as being in the singular number! He says not of *seeds*, as of many, but of *seed*, as of one, and that seed is Christ. —To them that believe, we know that the very name of Christ is precious; but to them who believe not, he is *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.* It is not therefore to be wondered at, if the one should be looking for Jesus whenever they read their bibles, always rejoicing to see his dear name, whether expressed or implied; but others who see nothing

in him wherefore they should desire him, had rather look to any thing else than to him.

Was I to introduce to you a supposed character, it would be application alone that would make it real; till some one takes it to himself it is all ideal. I would suppose some wise disputer, who had once been at the top of a profession, high in doctrines; but who never had received grace, at last determined to give it all up, and to clear his character from the charge of bigotry and enthusiasm, resolved likewise to bring back with him as many as he could, and deliver them from their old superstition: it certainly would not answer his purpose to throw off the mask at once; he must begin at first with dropping a few hints, sowing a few doubts, introducing some new scheme, and by all means encouraging a reasoning spirit. I would suppose that he has hitherto succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectation; he is looked up to by his followers as a masterpiece for sound reasoning, clear judgment, and deep penetration. Nevertheless he is still doubtful how far his followers may be prepared wholly to give up their former superstition. For though his skeptical pills may have operated so powerfully upon some, that they are entirely gone over to the standard of Sonus; yet there are others on whom they work but slowly. For though that enthusiastic fever, called godly zeal, may in some measure be abated; though they are not so contracted and hidebound, by partiality to certain notions, which, by some are called love to the truth, yet still as a prudent man he acts with caution, he still finds it necessary to mix up his skepticism with a proportion of revealed truth; and not only to mix these well together, but to wrap them up so as to disguise them, and then he takes care that the pills be not too

large, nor administered with too much haste.

Does Mr. Fuller deny the doctrine of atonement? It may be that many, who at present admire his scheme, and seem to receive his principles, would shudder at the thought, and cry out God forbid! If I thought so I would never read his books again. He does not indeed deny, in so many words, the doctrine of election; yet he does say that it is the duty of all men to believe. Let him reconcile that with the doctrine of election if he can. He does not at present, in so many words, deny the doctrine of atonement. He only tells us, page 260, “I never could perceive any clear or determinate idea conveyed by the term purchase in this connection;” again, “If the salvation of sinners had been a commercial transaction he might possibly, &c. &c.”

Who can say that Mr. Fuller denies the doctrine of atonement? He only says, He never could perceive any clear or determinate idea, conveyed by the term purchase, in this connection. For once I verily believe that he speaks truth; and that he never could perceive the meaning of the word purchase, in this connection, as applied to Christ and his Church. But because Mr. Fuller never could perceive the meaning of the word purchase, does it follow that others may not—is it not a Scriptural expression?—is not the church a purchased possession?—Does not Paul charge the elders of the church of Ephesus, to feed the church of God which he had purchased with his own blood? Are not believers said to be bought with a price? If the word purchase be a Scriptural expression, none but an infidel will say, that it conveys no clear and determinate idea. It is true, Mr. Fuller may not perceive it, but if he denies it to have a clear or determinate meaning, he then is going over to Tom Payne, before he himself may be aware.

If the salvation of sinners had been a commercial transaction, then Mr. Fuller seems to admit that it might possibly be so. Is not the salvation of sinners then a commercial transaction? What is a covenant, bargain, or contract, but a commercial transaction? What are bonds and bondsmen? What are debts and debtors? What are payments and receipts, but commercial transactions? In order that we may have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us, salvation is set forth in different points of view; and we rejoice in considering it as a commercial transaction; concluding from thence, that Christ must have his bargain, which has been dearly bought, and honestly paid for, even to the last farthing. We are not our own, but bought with a price; This is the triumphant language of those heaven-born and blood-bought souls, who believe in Jesus, and receive his mark, the impressed image of his grace, cast in the Gospel mould, and sealed with the Holy Spirit; whereby they are conformed to Jesus, and changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

It may perhaps be thought that Mr. Fuller's controversy with the Socinians of the present day, is sufficient to clear him from every suspicion of leaning to their principles, and sufficient likewise to clear his principles from the least tendency to theirs. But of this I am convinced, that there is no end to reasoning about the Truths of God, as revealed in his word, or about the Truth as it is in Jesus. For, till the truths of God, as revealed in his word, or the truth, as it is in Jesus, is received in the heart, with divine power and evidence from the Holy Spirit—there can be no true knowledge, as arising from conviction, as to their true meaning, worth, or influence. The wise disputers of this world may go on

without end to multiply arguments, raise new objections, and invent new distinctions. Plato may reason well: yet after all, the proud reasoner, weary of conjectures, and lost in a maze of reasoning, sinks into despair, and falls upon his sword.

I have reasoned with myself on the authenticity of the Scriptures, and the being of a God, till I have been distracted, and overwhelmed with horror. And since the Lord has been pleased, in any measure, to enlighten my understanding—to seal his truth upon my heart—and has given me to taste and feel his love, I never found myself betrayed into a reasoning spirit, without suffering loss, and experiencing sensible deadness and darkness in my own soul. I bear my testimony to what I have experienced, and this testimony corresponds with the Word of God. Let me have nothing to do with mere conjectures or vain suppositions, with probabilities and plausibilities, with the reason and fitness of things, according to which it may be, or it may not be; far be it from me ever to inquire, How these things can be—The language of faith, as it respects the Gospel of the grace of God, and the blessings contained therein, is this, “These things are so,”—Will any ask me, How do you know that these things are so? I answer, not by the force of argument, but by such a sensible impression, and such a powerful application to my own soul, as scattered for the time every reasoning scruple, silenced all the objections of my unbelieving heart, and carried such conviction with it, as not only proved the truths received to be the truths of God; but likewise, that the Power with which they were attended was nothing less than the great power of God.

The truths of God, thus applied and spiritually discerned, are then, and not till then, known as to the reality, either of their

existence, or their excellence; then, and not till then their glory is unveiled, their meaning is understood, and their influence is felt.

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The church of Christ has no establishment in the world but what it receives immediately from God himself, by the alone agency of the Spirit—so likewise all true religion, and all vital godliness has no establishment in the heart, but what it receives from the same Spirit,

Whoever attempts, in the cause of God and truth, to meet the reasoner upon reasoning ground, does thereby betray the cause, though not intentionally; by making it a subject of doubtful disputation, instead of appealing to facts, and resting the success upon the Lord's presence and sovereign blessing, promised to all who are engaged in his work and service.

Upon this ground I object, not only to the particular expressions I have noticed in this Letter, but to the main of Mr. Fuller's principles, as tending to supersede the work and office of the Spirit; which must be altogether unnecessary if the natural man has any power (natural or moral, let them call it what they please) to believe or repent, or to perform any action really good; nay; the believer in Jesus, who, like Paul, glories in his infirmities, will readily acknowledge that he cannot speak one good word, or think one good thought, but as he is immediately inspired and influenced by the Holy Spirit: for this crowns all. *Finis coronat opus*. This restores the soul—this forms the man anew—this unfolds the secrets of the sacred page—this seals the truth, and sets it home upon the heart, the pledge and proof of dying love—the earnest of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away; but is reserved in heaven for those who are

kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Is Christ the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people? It is by the Spirit's work that he is made so to me. For it is by that alone that I can only know him as such. Whatever Christ may be in himself, whatever he may be to others, whatever he may be to me, in the secret purpose of God, it is impossible that I should feel the blessing, or be made sensible of the benefits, till he is made so to me—till I am enabled to apprehend him as such and to lay hold of him for myself.

There is no medium between right and wrong, between truth and a lie, between true and false religion. There are many religions, so called in the world, various sects and parties, various sentiments and opinions, creeds, or faith, modes and forms of worship. There is but one faith in the sight of God. There is but one faith that will do us any good, and That can only be ascribed to the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ Jesus, when he raised him from the dead.

It may perhaps be thought presumptuous to make objection to a publication so highly extolled and so strongly recommended by the Reviewers in the Evangelical Magazine for February 1800. That sanction no doubt will have its weight with some but not with all. That Magazine may well be called LEGION, for they are many, who are concerned in carrying on and promoting its circulation. In the list of its directors you will find that Mr. Fuller is one of the confederacy. Can it be supposed that he would not recommend his own performances. If a confederacy or a kingdom, (as our Lord says) be divided against itself, it cannot stand. But there is one charge I must bring against those who



conduct that Magazine, that though they contend for the law as a rule for life and conduct, yet they do not make it a rule for themselves to be ruled by it. The law says, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*” In the *Evang. Mag. Supple.* for 1799, page 555, they have in a most bare-faced manner misrepresented a Sermon I had published on the *Difference between true and false Holiness*. They have been charged with this misrepresentation not only by myself in the preface to another Sermon, but by the reviewers in the *Gospel Mag.* Feb. 1799, page 75. Of these charges they have taken no notice either by making concession or by defending what they had said but the misrepresentation still stands as it was, and therefore they belong to that company of Priests, of whom the Prophet Hosea speaks, *They murder by consent*; for what is such Defamation but assassination, for though it may not immediately injure a man’s person or property, yet ultimately it may affect both, in as much as it affects his character. But this device has been practiced in all Ages “*Report, say they, and we’ll report it.*” But what says the Lord “*No Weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper,*” (in the end, it may for a time;) *And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their Righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.*

Dear Madam, I shall now conclude these remarks with saying, have faith for yourself; be satisfied for yourself, about the state of your own soul; what Mr. Fuller’s opinions or principles may be, or what may be the opinion and principles of such a worm as myself, does by no means affect this most interesting and important question —*How does it stand betwixt God and your*

*own Soul?* We must die alone. What will support us in our dying moments? Nothing, but that well-grounded and steadfast faith in Jesus, which alone can maintain the rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end; which hope, like an anchor sure and steadfast, lays hold of that which is within the veil. While one cries “*lo here*” and another cries “*lo there,*” may God direct your heart and mine; more and more into the love of Christ. To this end I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able (as that God shall bless it to your heart) to build you up in your most holy faith, by enabling you to read therein a just claim and a clear title to a joint inheritance among all those who are sanctified, by in Christ Jesus.

Yours to serve in the Gospel,

JOHN BRADFORD,

**FINIS.**