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## A REVIEW ARTICLE

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### *A MODERN EVANGELICAL DIALOGUE WITH MARTIN LUTHER: INTERACTION WITH THE GERMAN REFORMER IN DANIEL P. FULLER'S THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE<sup>1</sup>*

Charles P. Huckaby

Daniel Fuller is perhaps best known for his work *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology*.<sup>2</sup> In many ways *Gospel and Law* takes a negative view to Calvin's exegesis of key "law" passages such as Galatians 3:10-12, 15-24 and Romans 10:5-8. Fuller claims that Calvin's exegesis of key Pauline passages has set the law and gospel at odds. Calvin has positioned law and gospel as a *contrast* when in reality they are a continuum.<sup>3</sup> Paul's use of the concept of *ergon nomou*, or "the works of the law," in the Galatians passage relates not to the law as given by God, but is a technical term for the perverted Judaizing interpretation of God's law which Christ in His earthly ministry constantly attacked.<sup>4</sup> This is a humorously unexpected accusation in some ways because when moderns consider Calvin and Luther, it is Calvin who is normally said to stress the continuity between the Old and New Testaments to the point where he is said to make the Bible a "flat book"!<sup>5</sup> Usually it is Luther who is portrayed as separating law and gospel.

One might expect to see Fuller likewise discount the German Reformer in the development of his theology for the same reasons.<sup>6</sup> Yet as Fuller describes the genesis of *The*

*Unity of the Bible*, he reviews the impact various theologians have had on the development of this thought and declares:

In the process I discovered that only Luther, especially in his "Freedom of the Christian Man" and "Preface to Romans," had any inkling that the law was a "law of faith" (Rom. 9:32), calling for an "obedience that comes from faith" (1:5), and yielding a "work produced by faith" (1 Thess. 1:3).<sup>7</sup>

The balance of this short study will accordingly discuss how Fuller sees Martin Luther's doctrine of the gospel in greater harmony with his own than with Calvin's at some crucial points.

#### THE LAW AS A LAW OF FAITH

As indicated by the title of Fuller's earlier work, *Gospel and Law*, the bogey men of contemporary evangelical theology are dispensationalism and covenant theology. In *Unity of the Bible*, it seems as if dispensationalism no longer merits any barbs, lacking even an entry in the index. Fuller's combatants in *Unity of the Bible* (hereafter *UotB*) are Calvin and covenant theology. Fuller never precisely defines "covenant theology" in *UotB*, though the index hints that a definition exists by pointing to some quotes from Calvin. Calvin's quotes from the *Institutes* are then associated with a discussion of a conditional "covenant of works" made with Adam and Eve and an unconditional "covenant of grace" made with Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

For Fuller, Reformed and Covenant theology teach that man as Adam could potentially have earned eternal life through their meritorious acts under the covenant of works. In Fuller's view, the Bible instead teaches that

sin is essentially unbelief, contrary to Calvin and covenant theology, which declares that Adam and Eve's sin was a fail-

ure to render a full measure of meritorious works God had spelled out in His "job description." . . . Since this thinking is so widespread in Protestantism, I will keep stressing how all obedience to God is an "obedience that comes from faith," and never an obedience of works, for "God is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything" (Acts 17:25).<sup>9</sup>

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*Regarding the "conditionality" of the covenants, I will admit some confusion of terms between how biblical theology and Reformed systematic theology use the terms condition and covenant.*



It remains to be seen whether there is much self-consciously biblical thinking at all going on in Protestantism. But another problem with Fuller's assertion is whether it is correct on a *creedal* level.<sup>10</sup> Chapter seven of the *Westminster Confession* discusses "Of God's Covenant with Man," but nowhere calls obedience by man "meritorious." In Chapter 16, Section 2, regarding "Good Works," the *Confession* explicitly says: "These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith."<sup>11</sup> In Section 5 of the same chapter, the *Confession* further states:

We cannot, by our best works, merit pardon of sin or eternal life, at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion

that is between them and the glory to come, and the infinite distance that is between us and God, who by them we can neither profit nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins; but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants; and because they are good [works] they proceed from the Spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

Regarding the "conditionality" of the covenants, I will admit some confusion of terms between how biblical theology and Reformed systematic theology use the terms condition and covenant. I contend that the *Westminster Confession's* use of the word "covenant" is easily reconciled with its usage in modern biblical theology. "Covenant" in both disciplines is used in slightly different though not mutually exclusive ways, much as the scriptural word "justification" is used in different settings to slightly different ends.<sup>12</sup>

Fuller claims that Reformed Protestants teach that the "covenant of grace is unconditional"<sup>13, 14</sup> when the blessings of God are qualified in Scripture as proceeding to those who repent and believe the gospel.<sup>15</sup> Contra this assertion, the answer 32 in the *Larger Catechism* says, "faith [is] the *condition* to interest [sinners] in him," which is all that Fuller is concerned to emphasize. If Reformed leaders teach an "unconditional covenant of grace," it is likely they are using the word "unconditional" in reference to God's sovereign prerogatives and eternal purpose (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 3:11) rather than referring to the human responsibility of the saints to both exercise faith and persevere in faith. The exception would be those at the far fringes of Reformed thought, the complete hyper-Calvinists, who believe there are some elect who never come to visible outward faith in Christ, yet are saved simply by God's decree.

For all this wrangling against straw men<sup>16</sup> on Fuller's part, his point that gospel is all of grace and nothing of works is well taken. That any good works we perform are "the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith" we heartily affirm with Daniel Fuller *and* the Westminster Divines.

This discussion leads us now to Fuller's assertions about the nature of the law of Moses, which will lead us back to Luther. The contexts in which the words are used and the meanings given them by the writers using those terms potentially cloud the discussion of law and gospel, like the discussion of "covenant" and "conditionally." As categories of systematic theology, the terms law and gospel take on different meanings than they might in their biblical usage.

A simple reading of Psalm 119 indicates that Old Testament believers did not perceive God's Torah, or fatherly instruction, as merely a catalog of grievous "do's and don'ts" or "law" in its most negative sense as unmitigated condemnation. Instead the Psalm evidences the spirit of Romans 8 wherein the believer is no longer at enmity with God and is—by God's grace—subject to His law.<sup>17</sup> For the believer then as now, the Scriptures were full of promise to those who embraced the message with ultimate faith in Abba. In the sense of Psalm 119, law, or Torah, is definitely not what systematic theologians mean when discussing "law and gospel." For the psalmist the law given by God certainly *was* the gospel, though obviously not in its fully revealed form. The Torah was the gospel in the sense that nowhere else was God's message of salvation by grace found. That the Torah contained laws, warnings and rituals no more disqualifies it as the gospel than the imperatives and/or warnings of Romans, Ephesians or the Gospel of John disqualify these documents as "gospel truth." It is in this sense which Fuller is prepared to say that the "law and the gospel" are a continuum, one progressive revelation of

God's saving purpose. The Scripture throughout is linked by the common promises given to those who will trust in the Savior of the world as *their* Savior.

But doesn't the view of the law in Psalm 119 contradict what the New Testament teaches? Fuller answers "no" for several reasons. First, the law is not the "letter" of 2 Corinthians 3 from which we are released. Thomas Provenca states it this way:

Since it is impossible to give the law any higher commendation [than Paul does in Rom. 7:12, 14], the [spiritual] law cannot be the same as the "letter" of [2 Cor. 3:6]. The law, or "letter" from which we are released (Rom. 7:6) is the one without the Spirit. . . . and thus [is] the very opposite of the "spiritual" law of verse 14.

Cranfield amplifies the statement:

[Here Paul] does not use "letter" as a simple equivalent of "the law." "Letter" is rather what the legalist is left with as a result of his misunderstanding, and misuse of the law in isolation from the Spirit is not the law in its true character, but the law as it were denatured. It is this which is opposed to the Spirit whose presence is the true establishment of the law.<sup>19</sup>

Fuller concludes:

Thus everything depends on the inward attitude of the heart, with the great contrast lying between the unregenerated flesh and the indwelling, regenerating Spirit. Those indwelt by the Spirit are disposed to comply with the spiritual law of faith, just as they will respond positively to the gospel.<sup>20</sup>

Christ our propitiation saves us objectively, then sends

forth the Spirit who dwells in us and conforms us to God's standards subjectively (Rom. 8:9). Those who attempt to live under the law of Moses after Christ's resurrection can live under a law of sin and death only because they deny Christ and therefore cannot have the Spirit of Christ. For them the law of Moses becomes only a law of sin and death. That is not because they can't live up to its demands as if it were designed to be a program of works-salvation, but because they have not heard Christ the Prophet whom the Lord God has sent (Deut. 18:18-19; Acts 3:22)!

Perhaps that bears repeating. The law of Moses was never a way of salvation by works. It was *saving* only when those receiving it looked to the Lord who gave it in faith and rejoiced that He had provided substitution for their sins. Obedience followed as an "obedience of faith." To put it another way, redemption precedes ethics. We see this as much in the Ten Commandments as in Romans. Exodus 20:2 shows us redemption preceding the commandments: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God . . ." (Rom. 12:1-2) precedes the ethical section of the epistle. Legalism is an attempt to boast before God and glory in obedience above Jesus Christ's propitiation (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

Here, we do well to remember Fuller's statement that the common thread throughout the Scriptures is "that the law [is] a 'law of faith' (Rom. 9:32), calling for an 'obedience that comes from faith' (1:5), and yielding a 'work produced by faith' (1 Thess. 1:3)."<sup>21</sup>

Therefore the New Testament as well as the Old calls all people to embrace the wonderful promises of God. Indeed, from the perspective of the inspired author of Hebrews, it is we in the church who have also heard the gospel (Heb. 4:2). It was Israel who had first heard God's saving promises.<sup>22</sup> It is this emphasis on promise and faith where Martin

Luther's presentation of the gospel strikes Fuller as joyously consistent with the Scriptures.<sup>23</sup>

### FREEDOM OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN

When discussing "justification" or "righteousness" from the Greek terms *dikaioma* and the verb form *dikaioo*, Luther uses the term in a number of ways. Civil and political righteousness in the social sphere, ceremonial righteousness prescribed by the traditions and philosophies of men, and "the righteousness of the law" which Luther related to the Ten Commandments are all categories where the word "righteousness" might be used. It is another righteousness that concerns Luther when discussing Jesus Christ, however, and he reserves the term "Christian righteousness" for what we are more likely to call justification by faith. The former and the latter to some degree are both gifts of God. Yet the latter is unique because it is (1) Christ's righteousness, and (2) imputed to us. Because the works of the natural man alone, or the natural man as influenced to perform lawful acts through the grace given by God, are involved in the former types of righteousness, they are called "active" righteousness. Because Christian righteousness is Christ's imputed righteousness totally divorced from all our works, Luther gives it the term "passive" righteousness.<sup>24</sup> These categories are important because while Fuller does not use them himself, they will affect our understanding of Luther and Fuller's gospel because there is the constant tension between the simplicity of faith in Christ bringing justifying grace and the fact that justifying grace perseveres to the end.

In chapter ten of *UotB*, "The First Step in Responding to God," Fuller defines saving faith. Jesus' statement in John 6:35 is pivotal: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."<sup>25</sup>

This last statement is basic for understanding what it means to believe in Jesus so as to be saved. Not only must we trust that His death on the cross enables God to forgive our sins, but to believe properly we must also, when distressed, regain contentment and peace by "[fighting] the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), claiming the "very great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4) in Scripture. "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through Him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God" (2 Cor. 1:20). This believing in God's promises, so essential for filling Pascal's God-shaped vacuum, is an indispensable component of genuine faith in Christ. Unless we have confidence that the joy we are experiencing can always be ours, the fear of its loss would haunt us and greatly diminish that joy. Moreover, God will not allow the shed blood of His Son to atone for the sins of people who heap the greatest possible insult upon His glory by scorning His promises. . . . Unfortunately emphasis on believing the promises is rarely heard in Protestantism.<sup>26</sup>

In dialoging with the Reformer, Fuller makes much of Luther's meditation on Romans 8:28 as it relates to the essence of saving faith.<sup>27</sup> There the German Reformer agrees with Fuller that belief is more than mere assent to a historical fact. Assenting to the historical fact that Jesus Christ was made a propitiation for sin and sinners is not the same as "believing the gospel." True belief means fully embracing the promise of Romans 8:28 that it is possible for the gospel to be powerfully *applied* to individuals, actually weaving "all things" that confront us into a divine masterpiece of providence whereby we are ushered into final glorification! Because saving faith is more than assent, believing in Romans 8:28 is as much required by the gospel as believing in any other element of the atonement! Demanding more than assent when describing faith does not make belief a work or an attempt to heap on addition-

al, unscriptural requirements upon sinners though, because "Everyone can claim and enjoy this promise, for it is conditioned simply upon one's believing that God will forgive sins and completely meet our need-love."<sup>28, 29</sup> In other words, if we cannot believe in God's ability to fulfill His gospel promises for us, have we truly believed the gospel?<sup>30</sup>

Faith, or trust, in God and God's promises is transforming. That is why it is such a pernicious error to equate free grace with promoting a supposed "freedom to sin" or antinomianism. As Paul argued in Romans 6-8, the gospel of justification by faith, which brings objective salvation wherein Christ's righteousness is credited to us while we are yet ungodly, ushers in subjective transformation and newfound submission to God's law. Luther, whom Fuller quotes, puts it this way:

Faith honors him whom it trusts with the most reverent and highest regard since it considers [God] truthful and trustworthy. There is no other honor equal to the estimate of truthfulness and righteousness with which we honor him whom we trust. Could we ascribe to a man anything greater than truthfulness, and righteousness, and perfect goodness? On the other hand, there is no way in which we can show greater contempt for a man than to regard him as false and wicked and to be suspicious of him, as we do when we do not trust him. So when the soul firmly trusts God's promises, it regards him as truthful and righteous. Nothing more excellent than this can be ascribed to God. The very highest worship of God is this that we ascribe to Him truthfulness, righteousness, and whatever else should be ascribed to the one who is trusted. When this is done, the soul consents to His will. Then it hallows His name and allows itself to be treated according to God's good pleasure for, clinging to God's promises, it does not doubt that He who is true, just, and wise will do, dispose, and provide all things well. . . . On the

other hand, what greater rebellion against God, what greater wickedness, what greater contempt of God is there than not believing His promise? For what is this but to make God a liar or to doubt that He is truthful?<sup>31</sup>

In other words, "[Faith] is a faith and confidence in the Son of God, or rather a confidence of the heart in God through Jesus Christ."<sup>32</sup>

Again, to hold the view that justifying faith must be a dependence on Christ which is ultimately transforming is not to make a work. Faith could never perform such a noble work! Nor must justifying faith be perfect or flawless or superhuman faith. It is the imputed righteousness of Christ alone that makes the difference, not our faith. Luther states while commenting on Galatians 3:6:

Christian righteousness consists in two things: faith in the heart, and in God's imputation. Faith is indeed a formal righteousness, and yet this righteousness is not enough. After faith, certain remnants of sin in our flesh remain. . . . So the other part of righteousness must be added also: God's imputation. For faith gives not enough to God, because it is imperfect. Rather our faith is but a little spark which only begins to render unto God his true divinity. . . . Even the holiest that live have not yet a full and continual joy in God, but have their various passions. . . . But such faults are not laid to their charge, because of their faith in Christ; otherwise, no flesh would be saved. . . . But because faith is weak, it is not made perfect without imputation.

For these two things work Christian Righteousness: namely, faith in the heart, which is a gift of God, and assured belief in Christ; and also that God accepts this imperfect faith for perfect righteousness for Christ's sake, in whom I have begun to believe. Because of this faith in Christ, God sees not my doubting of His good will toward me, my distrust, heaviness of spirit, and other sins, which are yet in me.



... We teach and comfort the afflicted sinner in this manner: Brother, it is not possible for you to become so righteous in this life that you should feel no sin at all, that your body should be clean like the sun, without spot or blemish. You will have wrinkles and spots, yet you are holy. But you say: How can I be holy when I have and feel sin in me? I answer: In that you feel and acknowledge your sin it is a good token; give thanks to God, and do not despair. . . . Run to Christ, the physician, who heals them that are broken in heart and saves sinners. If you believe, you are righteous because you give glory to God, that He is almighty, merciful and true.<sup>33</sup>

Fuller concurs heartily by stating that God would be unrighteous by refusing to forgive and save those who trust in Christ instead of themselves. Because Jesus' death on the cross was a work of love on behalf of the Father's glory, it shall be accepted.

We have seen before how God's righteousness consists of His wholehearted love for His glory, so that if He did not honor Jesus' purpose to uphold this glory, He would be sinful. . . . God must forgive us when we believe on Jesus, because otherwise, He would not be loving His own glory.<sup>34</sup>

Lapses in faith are not irreconcilable with the concept of faith as *persevering* faith. Abraham, the paradigm of faith, is also a glaring example of sin and unbelief after regeneration as the incidents with Sarah and Ishmael reveal. Yet, Abraham was not rejected when Scripture warns, "If we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:12). Why? Abraham's faith is not in the category of an outright denial of Christ as alluded to in the pastoral epistle. Instead,

Abraham's lapses into sin show that such faith is not perfect and unwavering but grows progressively in strength, espe-

cially as God works to overcome apparently hopeless situations brought on by the sin of unbelief. So we are led to understand Abraham's persevering obedience of faith as a divine work in which God's glory became manifest precisely against the backdrop of Abraham's imperfection.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, believers in Christ *can* have the assurance of going to heaven when death might suddenly overtake them during a lapse of faith. The reason for this hope is not found in the strength of anyone's faith, but rather in the compassion of God. "Since God is slow to anger, He maintains forgiveness for the person who lapses from faith for a period of time. . . . God maintains forgiveness during such times, since He has permitted these lapses in believers in order to strengthen their faith."<sup>36</sup> In addition, the God towards whom faith reaches out has promised to enable those who come in faith to persevere to the end in faith. Fuller and the Scriptures agree: People are justified entirely at the point of their first trusting in Christ, so an irreparable lapse cannot occur to God's elect. Perseverance in faith is a sign that the faith was genuine. Perseverance was not required in order to obtain justification. Lest he seem to stress the obedience of faith too much, Fuller adds that a single act of faith at the point of death is sufficient to save.<sup>37</sup>

The key to understanding Luther and Fuller on this point is that for both, trust in God's promises and a total reliance on the imputation of Christ's righteousness are the key ingredients to understanding the Christian life. Genuine faith will exude the "Psalm 119 spirit" and produce an obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Spurious faith will rebel before God's law and go AWOL<sup>38</sup> during the long march of discipleship. While perseverance attends genuine faith and flows from it, the focus must always be on this: are we daily clinging to the promises of God instead of trusting in our own perseverance?

As we must recall, Luther says:

When I see a man oppressed with the law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for comfort, it is time that I remove out of his sight the law and active righteousness, and set before him, by the gospel, the Christian or passive righteousness, which offers the promise made in Christ, who came for the afflicted and sinners.<sup>39</sup>

As Fuller points out, until Luther had received scriptural insight into "Christian righteousness" or "passive righteousness," the concept of God's righteousness perpetually terrified the scrupulous German.

While meditating on Psalm 71:2, "In Thy righteousness deliver me, and rescue me," Luther stumbled over the concept of God's righteousness. He had been taught that the righteous God could bring only judgment to sinners. How could this awesome righteousness save instead of condemn? Likewise, Romans 1:16-17, where the gospel reveals the righteousness of God unto salvation (not wrath), perplexed him for the same reasons. Such a concept of divine righteousness could not but overcome any attempts of a doctrine of grace to mitigate human fear. Though we might hear that such a thing as grace existed, the doctrine of God's righteousness perpetually stands as a witness to our own rebellion, no matter how great the mercy of God is. Therefore no talk of "grace" or "mercy" was sufficient to allay Luther's qualms; his knowledge of his own sin was too profound. Finally, the solution to the riddle was found in Romans 3:25-26 wherein the Scriptures declare God to be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." In the gospel of Christ, the righteousness of God is no longer an obstacle because it is no longer arrayed against us as a weapon. That same righteousness is now credited to our account and stands and wipes out the debt we owe.<sup>40</sup>

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There is a deep and abiding trust in Christ that fully embraces God's promise and remains rested upon that promise. Such trust loathes self-reliance and boasting before God. This trust belongs to those who are immediately justified by looking to the Savior. And this trust abides and deepens until the end. It is a trust that is completely passive in its attempts to pacify a just God because it realizes those efforts are worthless; Christ's righteousness appropriated by faith is all that is required. Nevertheless this "passivity" produces vigorous worship and praise because it apprehends the greatness of the transaction Christ has performed on its behalf. May God give us all such faith!

#### FULLER AND REFORMERS

Though Luther and Calvin's exegesis of key passages in Romans and Galatians can be seen as positioning the law of Moses as a "law of works" not based on faith at all, in *Unity of the Bible* it is Calvin who seems most likely to

evoke Fuller's ire. The Genevan is portrayed on the one hand as driving a wedge between the Old and New Testaments, portraying one as "law" and the other as "gospel." On the other hand he is criticized for so strictly systematizing his findings that he has stripped the element of faith as faith in God's promises from this teaching. It is Luther who retains the evangelical warmth of the gospel and focuses faith on receiving the promises of God. Likewise, it is Luther who retains predestinarian theology in its evangelical context by using the doctrine of Romans 8:28 to encourage faith to persevere by focusing it more precisely upon God the Father's gracious purposes. Luther's wedding of predestination and faith creates a doctrine of persevering faith but not a doctrine of works thereby. It is never the faith by itself that is important in the transaction called "justification by faith"; it is the imputation of Christ's righteousness that makes all the difference.<sup>41</sup>

In modern evangelical theology, nobody is fearful that theology is too systematized as Fuller seems to imply about Calvin. Indeed there seems to be little that is written theologically today that will have any abiding impact. What is dangerous, however, is our present day theology's emotionalism and egocentricity.

Instead of responding to our culture, yea, even to God theologically, which I take to mean "in light of God's Word," we respond emotionally, instinctively, and in ways that gratify only ourselves. To this impulse Fuller brings a solid example of studying the whole of the Scriptures and studying them in an obviously reverential way, seeking only their true meaning. Likewise, we evangelicals are egocentric, or perhaps we should say, ahistorical. We have little concept of what brought us to where we are today. To that degree we are slaves to the traditions of modern men instead of "elders." Forsaking that form of slavery, Fuller interacts with theologians from many contexts whenever

they will attempt to honestly handle God's Word. In that, too, he serves as a model for this generation. In his devotion to the Word and to the evangelical church catholic, it is no wonder that Fuller instinctively sees in Luther a kindred spirit.

#### Author

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#### Notes

1. Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible: Unfolding God's Plan For Humanity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992). This work has been popularized mainly by John Piper's favorable comments regarding it. While I do not agree with certain theological conclusions Fuller draws, I cannot fault his inductive methodology and continue to profit much from this work. While the term "evangelical" is rapidly falling into disrepute as implying an ethos of religious sentimentality instead of sound doctrine, I use the term to identify Fuller as one whose work reflects a fundamental dependence on Scripture for shaping theological conclusions, *sola scriptura*. I also use the term to identify Fuller as one who ascribes salvation to faith in Christ alone, *sola fide*. While some may not like Fuller's positions, he must be commended for tackling difficult issues fearlessly. How many other evangelical seminary professors in the last decade have dared to go into print with biblical arguments in favor of "The Justness of an Eternal Hell," the title of a chapter in Fuller's *Unity of the Bible*?
2. I believe Eerdmans published this work. I unfortunately do not have a copy at hand. The key exegetical points of this earlier book are repeated in an appendix to *Unity of the Bible* called "The Nature of the Mosaic Law." While *Gospel and Law* critiques dispensational hermeneutics, I will here focus on Fuller and the Reformers.
3. *UotB*, 459.
4. For example, Mark 7:6-13 as well as the formula in Matthew 5-7, "You have heard it said . . . But I say unto you."
5. It is Calvin, remember, whose sermons on Deuteronomy 28 and their relevance for contemporary society were reprinted by modern theologians under the title *The Covenant Enforced* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990). Fuller is basically calling Calvin's exegesis of Paul "dispensational"!
6. Luther's exegesis of key passages noted above in Galatians is similar to Calvin's; see *Luther's Commentary on Galatians*, reprinted (Grand Rapids,

Michigan: Revell, 1988). Fuller's kind words for the German is due to a perceived difference in emphasis on believing God's promises as the essence of saving faith, not his interpretation of *ergon nomou* and other tests shown above.

7. *UotB*, xv.
8. *UotB*, 181, 185.
9. *UotB*, 185, 182, italics mine.
10. Creedal statements are to be preferred when attacking a system for honesty's sake, since any individual can say anything at any given time. The exception would be when public doctrinal standards seemingly have no bearing on the actual teaching and practice of a group. One example would be the former USSR's Constitution which may nominally have provided for freedom of religion while the regime vigorously suppressed religion. Furthermore, Fuller fails to notice that there are some in the Reformed camp in recent years whose understanding of covenant theology in general is much more "nuanced" in light of Meredith Kline's work on the covenantal structure of the Pentateuch.
11. *Westminster Standards* (Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1990). Italics added.
12. In Luke 7:29, God is "justified"; in Luke 7:35, wisdom is "justified"; in Luke 18:14, the tax-gatherer is "justified." All are the word *dikaioo*. God, wisdom, and the tax-gatherer are all "justified" in some way so the common word is appropriate in each context. Wisdom is justified but not in regard to sin; God is not justified in regard to sin either, but His honor is at stake; the tax-gatherer is justified in regard to sin through the propitiation of God though he is indeed guilty. Yet all of these are "justified."
13. *UotB*, 181.
14. This can become all the more confusing when Fuller on pages 333-34 acknowledges the truth of "unconditional election," yet assiduously hammers on the "conditionality" of God's promises elsewhere. This is a reminder that we must constantly strive to do exegesis, not eisegesis, when reading the Scriptures or any document.
15. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21 et. al.
16. I am contending that Fuller fights a straw man, at least on the creedal level of what the most widely held Reformed confession teaches and how I believe its terminology has been misunderstood by Fuller. Since Fuller has written *UotB* as only a semi-technical work, his assertions regarding covenant theology in the phrases quoted are not footnoted to indicate their source. I doubt they can be directly traced to a creedal document instead of individuals, though I would be interested in seeing his sources. Furthermore, Fuller should not be averse to frequently using technical terms to summarize general scriptural principles. His work contains many, such as "need-love," "patron lord," etc.
17. There is no doubt that under the new covenant, the church should possess the "Psalm 119 spirit" in a way never experienced under the old

- covenant. Too, this spirit should pervade the nations in a new way never seen before the resurrection of Christ. To say these things should not deny that such a spirit of filial obedience to God existed under the old covenant; otherwise Psalm 119 could never have been written.
18. Thomas E. Provence, "Who Is Sufficient for These Things? An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians ii 5—iii 18," *Novum Testamentum* 24, 1 (1982), 64-65 in *UotB*, 347.
  19. C. E. B. Cranfield, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1975-79), 1:339-40, quoted in *UotB*, 348.
  20. *UotB*, 348.
  21. *UotB*, xv.
  22. Fuller notes this as well in *UotB*, 350.
  23. Fuller in *UotB* states, "Calvin said virtually nothing about this essential futuristic component of saving faith (i. e., in the promises of God)" *UotB*, 144. The implication may be that neither have most of Calvin's followers except Jonathan Edwards who is highly esteemed in Fuller's *UotB*. This unhappiness with Calvin and Reformed thought is odd in that John Piper in his book *Future Grace* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 1995) p. 27, quotes Calvin's sermon on Ephesians 3:14-19 to prove that such faith in future promises was part of Calvin's legacy! In the second introductory chapter, "For Theologians," Piper also quotes the *Augsburg Confession*, *First Helvetic Confession*, *Thirty-Nine Articles*, *Westminster Confession*, Robert L. Dabney and James Buchanan to show how a broad Reformation era generated consensus on this issue.
  24. These categories and definitions are found in Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*, 17-18.
  25. *UotB*, 143.
  26. *Ibid.*, 143-44.
  27. All Luther quotes are derived from *UotB*. Fuller quotes from *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York: Doubleday, 1961). This is from the work "Freedom of a Christian."
  28. *UotB*, 149.
  29. "Need-love" in *UotB* and defined in chapter 9, "God's Free Work of Creation," when used in relation to God as Holy Trinity means the perfect love the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have for one another. It is "necessary" love or "need[ed]" because to not love one another perfectly in the context of the Trinity would be to rob one another of the perfect glory and adoration due God. "Need-love" differs from "benevolent" love, which God demonstrates towards creation. Creation, of course, deserves no such love, where God deserves all our love. Benevolent love is a free act of God and therefore gracious on His part. The term "need-love" used in this context refers to the believer's entering into the true love of God experienced by the Trinity. It is the "love poured out by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). It is the perfect love of 1 John 4:18. Spirit-imparted

- "need-love" issues forth in benevolent love towards God's creations. Because such love is perfect toward God as well as man, it retains the quality of holiness to God as exemplified in 1 Samuel 15:32-33 where human pleas for pity are ignored when they rob God of His glory and due obedience.
30. Here, Fuller and Luther are fighting *nominalism*, not trying to shatter the overscrupulous conscience as we shall yet see.
  31. "Freedom of a Christian," *Martin Luther Selections* quoted in *UotB*, 153-54.
  32. *Commentary on Galatians*, 147.
  33. *Ibid.*, 146-48.
  34. *UotB*, 216. Statements like this reveal Fuller's deep dependence on the doctrine of the Trinity for doing theology, another valuable aspect of this work.
  35. *Ibid.*, 309.
  36. *Ibid.*, 317.
  37. *Ibid.*, 318-19, 323.
  38. AWOL = "Absent Without Leave," desertion, or in this context, apostasy.
  39. *Commentary on Galatians*, 19.
  40. *UotB*, 216-17.
  41. These comments should be taken as Fuller's opinion as gleaned from *UotB*, not the author's evaluation. I hold a more charitable view of Calvin.