

Responsibilities And Duties

Radical views expressed by Sam Waldron and Curt Daniel

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False synonyms

Our duty-faith friends tell us that their idea of responsibility is synonymous with their idea of duty. For Curt Daniel for instance, recently interviewed by Sam Waldron, the synonyms of responsibility have remained constant since before the Fall. These are: accountability, obedience, duty, liability, obligation, morality and what he calls 'oughtness'. These terms according to Daniel depict the natural obligations or responsibilities of man towards God which man has always had. In these matters man as a natural agent has always had the freedom to say 'yes' or 'no' to God. This is because, Daniel says, no man is neutral in his response to God. If man were neutral in his relationship to God, he would have ceased to be man. Thus, even though he is now fallen and lost, man has kept his awareness of who God is and what his obligations to Him are. This alleged never-lost guide in fallen man, making him continually aware of God, is the basis of duty-faith. When the gospel comes, man is thus duty-bound to accept it.

This is Daniel's position as a preacher of a free offer gospel based on duty-faith, but in taking this stance, he defines such words as 'responsibility' and 'duty' quite incorrectly and errs in his list of his other supposed synonyms. For instance, he confuses 'morality' with 'obedience' and 'liability'. They may have in certain cases a relationship to one another but they are not the same thing. Daniel, and Waldron who seems to agree with him, is also severely mistaken about man's relationship to God and God's relationship to man as revealed in Scripture. Daniel's gospel is, in fact, no good news for sinners at all because he does not seem to understand the basic condemnation of man after the Fall nor the hopeless condition he is now in until God undertakes to save him. If one does not understand fallen man's problem, one can hardly choose a remedy for it. Certainly, the remedy is not to be found in a 'free offer' based on 'duty-faith'.

For example, scripture shows that a sinner is responsible for his sins but he is not dutifully bound to sin. Sin is not his duty but what he has done wrong ought to have been avoided or put right. This, we call his responsibility, which man is unable to remedy or follow. Daniel believes, however, that man has an innate non-fallen awareness which declares to him that he must follow certain duties to attain faith. If one denies this, one is denounced as a Hyper-Calvinist who does not believe in preaching the gospel to the lost. One may well ask: What has Calvin to do with this new definition of 'faith' and what has it to do with our calling as Christians to go into all the world

and preach the gospel indiscriminately? Those who accuse us of being 'Hypers' because we reject that fallen man has the power within him to search for and grasp faith find that the boot is on the other foot. These accusers refuse to preach the gospel of grace laid out in Scripture and preach a gospel of duties on a works basis. This is not the gospel which saves.

The Man Christ Jesus fulfils all conditions

Yet these accusers of the brethren, and now I must add David Mark Rathel who has just published an ill-worked-out theory to denounce non-duty-faith preachers through various media, tell us that we, and John Gill in particular, minimize the agency of man in salvation as if they would maximize it. Of course, they do not mean the Man Christ Jesus here but fallen, lost man who resides in the valley of bones spiritually speaking. Herein lies their greatest error. Gill, Huntington, Brine, Romaine, Hervey, Toplady, Crisp and the whole congregation of our Reformers, held to a doctrine of man which found its fulfilment, perfection and salvation in Christ who performed as Righteous Man all the conditions regarding salvation that man was blind to since the Fall. Man fulfilled all for man. Sadly, this doctrine does not appear in the theology of our accusers who thus minimize Man as man, Redeemer and redeemed.

Man is truly responsible for not believing. I suppose no Christian would deny that, though man can never be responsible for believing. Herein lies Daniel's false view of man and his false view of God. God has made it His self-given task or duty to save sinners. It is not fallen man's duty to save himself. A duty is a task to be done. This task can only be done by Christ. Responsibility is therefore in the case of man's fall not a synonym for 'duty'. He must carry the consequences of his irresponsibility which cannot be remedied by any duty to a faith which he does not have. In the Son of Man it is quite different as Christ the God-Man always keeps to both his duties and responsibilities. Man has failed in his duties to the Law and failed in his responsibilities. So he can never be like Christ, the True Man, in his fallen self. It is thus ridiculous to speak of 'duty-faith' to a man who does not even understand duty to the law and will always be incapable of knowing what duties to faith are until he finds himself in Christ.

All man's responsibilities point to his fallen nature

Man's fallen responsibilities are thus all on the negative side. He is responsible for everything he has done wrong and still does wrong. Though Daniel's equates duty wrongly with a natural obligation to accept grace and exercise faith, the very Bible passage he gives as proof points in quite a different direction. He builds his duty-faith emphasis on Ecclesiastes 12:13 which says: 'Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man'. We accept this as a divine truth but keeping commandments according to the Bible is the responsibility of all sinners (see below) and is not an entrance to grace as no man can keep God's commandments, not even Adam, and God's commandments merely show up man's inability to keep them. Daniel sees keeping commandments as obeying a moral law

only. But there is a difference in striving to keep the so-called ‘moral law’ and being saved. You can tell a person not to steal or not to lie but you cannot say ‘sinner save yourself’. It cannot thus be said that man has duties to a faith he has never been given, has never earned and which he has never owned. Duty-faith teachers tell us that they can get round this difficulty by giving fallen man a so-called ‘well meant’ offer which brings with it a ‘warranty of salvation’. This well-meant offer, they say, when seen for what it is by the sinner, appeals to his duty-faith. Yet the only warrant for our salvation is Christ who has fulfilled all obligations for the salvation of His Bride and only He can pronounce a warranty on such. While we do not know who is and who is not of His Bride, no matter how ‘well-meaning’ we are, our task is not to warrant, that is guarantee salvation, but to preach it, allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work which is not ours. Thus the ‘well-meant’ gospel of man to man is a gospel of deceit.

Reception of the call does not rely on duty-faith

Thus the pet word of duty-faith preachers that on hearing the gospel all men receive a ‘warranty’ or guarantee to enable them to repent and believe is quite false. All men are not ‘authorized’ to believe and ‘justified’ to believe which is the meanings of being warranted, on hearing the gospel. He who has been given ears to hear and a heart to respond receives this warranty. Man can only have a duty to faith when he has it. To appeal to a non-existent duty-faith is to try to fool man and God.

Man has, nonetheless, duties to the Law but fails to keep them. That is why he needs an act of grace from God or he perishes. Indeed Jesus made it clear in Luke 17 that even if we have done all our duties, we would still be unprofitable servants as it is only by grace and not via natural duties that we are saved. The status ‘good and faithful servants’ (Matthew 25:21) is only given to those to whom God grants faith. Man is fully unaware of any such faith in himself before that faith is given to him. This is because faith does not exist in fallen man. Responsibility for the Anti-Pseudo-Hypers mentioned above is the duty to grasp faith. This is wrong, responsibility is man’s breaking his duty to the law. Belief can never be a reward for performing duties nor ever attained through human responsibilities as it is a free gift of God. With the gift comes the authorization and justification to use it as God’s children and not the children of false shepherds. God, however, has bound Himself dutifully to foster and maintain that belief in His chosen children.

Redeemed man’s duties to that belief for which God alone is responsible are outlined to him and given him solely as a belief-carrier and not as an agent of sin. Such duties are God given and are not inherent or innate in fallen man at all. Nevertheless, the call of mercy goes out to all to repent and believe, coming as a savour of death unto death to some and a savour of life unto life for others as the evangelistic work of harvesting goes on. Though fallen man’s responsibilities, obligations, liabilities etc. are all on the negative side: he being responsible for what he has done against God’s Holy Law, duties are all on the positive side concerning what God has done in rescuing sinners from their plight through an act of grace. Just as there is

no sin in God and He thus never acts as a sinner; there is no belief in natural man so he can never act as a believer. Daniel is merely flogging a dead slave and believes he can raise the corpses in the valley of bones by declaring his well-meant intentions so that those dead will rise. This is the message of the Council of Trent which was rightly condemned by our Reformers, though not by our duty-faith enthusiasts. Their gospel is useless and if morality is the same as responsibility as Daniel says, it is highly immoral. Only God can awaken the dead. He makes former slaves to sin dead to sin and alive in Christ.

Man is never duty-bound to save himself whether he hears the gospel or not. If he failed in his duties to the Law how can he be yet under a duty to faith in his fallen foolish state in which he says 'There is no God'? Christ alone has shouldered the whole duty of saving sinners and the sinner only receives saving faith when it is given him. Only then can one speak of duties to faith. Thus the teaching of duty-faith rationalisers, that not the fall but the gospel is where the disobedient trip over their own misunderstanding of duties, is clearly wrong. All men are condemned for falling in Adam but the gospel brings life to those who are already fallen so that they might be lifted up. Duties have nothing to do with it. Man has failed in both his duties and responsibilities and can be given faith only from God's hand. It is obvious that not all men are given faith, although, according to Daniel, all men stand equal in their duties to faith. Daniel merely gets over this problem by saying it is a 'paradox' or a 'tension' and we must leave it at that. Daniel, however, has not left it 'at that' but given us the rational answer that some men say 'no' to God and some say 'yes'. Some recognize their duties, others do not. He will not accept that all men say 'no' and cannot say 'yes' until God changes them.

Where does this fake-good-news gospel come from?

The idea of natural duty-faith grew out of the rationalism of such as Andrew Fuller who denied that man was totally fallen in his natural capacities and saw his Fall in his will alone to say 'no' to God, though he could equally well have said 'yes'. Modern free-offer and duty-faith organisations Banner Of Truth and Founder's Conference look to Fuller for their gospel. Fuller, true to his Aristotelian view of man in his enlightenment philosophy, isolates what he thinks is the 'will' from the other elements in man, such as the physical and rational, and illogically concludes from his dissected man that he is only fallen in his will, but his will is still there and he could still believe if he only would. Here we see how Daniel's 'oughtness' follows the so-called Enlightenment theories popularised by Immanuel Kant whose categorical imperative 'I ought, therefore I can' was seen by him as the solution to all man's problems. For these people, it is the 'ought' which motivates all actions in the building up of a perfect will. Thus it is for them a sense of duty to their wills which motivates all their actions. Hence, the gospel of duty faith which must be presented well-meaningly to all.

If man were truly dead in trespasses and sins, Fuller tells us: 'it were absurd to suppose that they would on this account fall under the Divine

censure.’ Fuller forgets here that man has already fallen under the divine censure and this has resulted in his damnation because man has disobeyed God and always does when left to himself. Fuller thought that man was not yet under final damnation and was still on probation, like Adam. Indeed, Fuller saw sinners after the Fall as being more privileged than Adam as they only received damnation if they rejected Christ. Otherwise sinners could not be agents of their own salvation which Fuller believes they are. His motto was God’s provisions must harmonise with man’s agency and man is not yet fully condemned as thus God could not exercise what Fuller called ‘the divine censure’ if he were. This seems to be what Rathel calls ‘Minimising’ man’s duties in salvation if we do not follow Fuller. All men, according to Fuller, like Adam once was, are still on probation despite the Fall. For Fuller, it is as if the Fall had not happened. Indeed, Fullerites forget the story of Adam and maintain that man is on probation until he rejects Christ. In this spirit, Fuller continues by writing: ‘No man is reprov’d (by God) for not doing that which is naturally impossible; but sinners are reprov’d for not believing, and given to understand that it is solely owing to their criminal ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion from God.’ He does not understand that belief is impossible with fallen man but nothing is impossible with God. Fuller, however, has an easy remedy for man’s ‘aversion’ which maximizes his agency in salvation. Sinners need only love God, he says, ‘the same as if they had never apostatised’. He appears to believe also that this is what God expects of fallen men, that is, that man should pull his own socks up and is indeed commanded to do so. Hence duty-faith! This is where Fuller gets it wrong again believing that commands from God are proof that fallen man must be still aware of his saving duties. This was true of probationer Adam before he sinned but it is not true of condemned man after he sinned.

The Fall of man is thus to Fuller and his followers merely a neglect in man’s mastering his own ‘oughtness’ or ‘duty’ though he could if he wished. In this capacity of freedom of choice man has not changed since before the Fall. This might suit Kant and Fuller but it certainly does not suit the Christian’s walk with God which is by grace and not by an in-built sense of duty supported by natural capacities to love God and attacks of amnesia regarding the Fall. When God commands ‘repentance’, He refers to needs not duties. When he says ‘believe’, He also refers to needs and not duties. Neither the need is known nor any duty known until the Holy Spirit opens the sinner’s eyes.

Fuller’s son Andrew Gunton Fuller explains in his biographical version of his father’s life prefixed to Fuller’s Complete Works (Sprinkle 1988 edition) that he has a note from his father saying, ‘I maintain that men have the same power, strictly speaking, before they are wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, as after, and before conversion as after; that the work of the Spirit endows us with no new rational powers, nor any powers that are necessary to moral agency.’ We remember that duty-faith is a moral agency or responsibility as far as Fuller is concerned.

If sinful man is the same rationally and morally after conversion as before, one wonders what change that conversion has made in him. This statement corresponds exactly with Fuller’s claim in his *The Gospel Worthy of All*

Acceptation that men are not ‘naturally and absolutely blind’ like a dead body in spiritual matters but ‘have the same powers to believe as disbelieve, to reject as to embrace’. They can thus always follow their ‘ought’ or ‘duty’, according to Fullerites, which has not left fallen man. Fuller, following Enlightenment theology, was adamant that we could move mountains if we only willed it, that is, we could if we would but we will not. However, those who say ‘I ought’ therefore ‘I can’, therefore ‘I will’ are self-deceivers. Fancy telling a pauper in debt that he ought to pay off what he owed and could do so if he only counted it his duty and thus willed it! This is the Fullerite ‘free offer’ of the gospel based on ‘duty-faith’.

Modern rationalist Errol Hulse agrees with Fuller’s boast that all fallen man’s rational and moral powers are intact and only need to be implemented in salvation by man’s willingness and tells us:

There is nothing to hinder him (the fallen sinner) from being spiritual except his indisposition, his rebellion, his sin, his unwillingness. He is absolutely free to do good, to be spiritual, to repent, to believe. That is, he is a free agent.

Hence, these people who find fallen man is ‘absolutely free’ to do good, provide him with what they call ‘the free offer’ based on so-called duty-faith to have him perform that good and accept Christ as being ‘the whole duty of man’. However, if God says that man is ‘carnal and sold under sin’ (Romans 7:14) and can only be free from this bondage by an act of God as outlined in Romans 8, how can he be a free agent in his fallen state? This is, of course, the utopian view of man behind Tolkien’s Mythopeia which ought to be called Myopia. The fantasy writer boasts:

Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
Disgraced he may be, yet is not de-throned,
And keeps the rags of lordship once he owned.

So here we have a tight band of duty-faith rationalists, seeped in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who tell us that man’s filthy-ragged righteousness is sufficient for saving belief activated through the exercise of human duties. Such false-gospel purveyors even boast that they now dominate modern Christian thinking and old orthodoxy is on the decline. Waldron and Daniel tell us that those who oppose their gospel are a small minority. Perhaps they cannot think beyond their own clique but the Scriptures and the entire historical Church of the Lord Jesus Christ speak against their modern gospel which they feel duty-bound to preach to all men everywhere. May they, by God’s grace, find true divine enlightenment.

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