

The SBJT Forum

SBJT: The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies here at Southern Seminary is involved in spearheading the publication of a critical edition of Fuller's works. What are some of the details of this project and why is it needed?

Michael Haykin: The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies is currently committed to the pub-

Michael A. G. Haykin is Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is also Adjunct Professor of Church History and Spirituality at Toronto Baptist Seminary in Ontario, Canada. Dr. Haykin is the author of many books, including *"At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word": Andrew Fuller As an Apologist* (Paternoster Press, 2004), *Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival* (Evangelical Press, 2005), and *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Evangelical Press, 2007), and *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Crossway, 2011).

lication of a complete critical edition of the works of Andrew Fuller through the publishing house of Walter de Gruyter (www.degruyter.com), which has head offices in Berlin and Boston. Walter de Gruyter has been synonymous with high-quality, landmark publications in both the humanities and sciences for more than 260 years. The preparation of a critical edition of Fuller's works was first envisioned in 2004. It is expected that this edition will comprise sixteen volumes and take seven or so years to publish.

The controlling objective of *The Works of Andrew Fuller Project* is to preserve and accurately transmit the text of Fuller's writings. The editors are committed to the finest scholarly standards for textual transcription, editing, and annotation. Transmitting these texts is a vital task since Fuller's writings, not only for their volume, extent, and scope, but for their enduring importance, are major documents in both the Baptist story and the larger history of British Dissent.

From a merely human perspective, if Fuller's theological works had not been written, William Carey would not have gone to India. Fuller's theology was the mainspring behind the formation and early development of the Baptist Missionary Society, the first foreign missionary society created by the Evangelical Revival of the last half of the eighteenth century and the missionary society under whose auspices Carey went to India. Very soon, other missionary societies were established, and a new era in missions had begun as the Christian faith was increasingly spread outside of the West, to the regions of Africa and

Asia. Carey was most visible at the fountainhead of this movement. Fuller, though not so visible, was utterly vital to its genesis.

Fuller's writings exist in three states: those published during his lifetime, those issued posthumously, and those still in manuscript form (these are mostly letters, sermons and a diary). Up until now, scholars and general readers have had to rely generally on a nineteenth-century American edition that has been reprinted by Sprinkle Publications: *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845 ed.; repr. Harrisonburg, Virginia: 1988; 3 vols.). The inadequacies of this edition include its incompleteness, the small font size of the text, and the lack of both critical annotation and adequate indices. A much better text to have reprinted would have been *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: William Ball, 1837), which was published in five volumes and is much easier to read. However, it too suffers from not being the complete works of Fuller and likewise lacks both critical annotation and adequate indices. Finally, there is a very rare eight-volume edition published as *The Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1825), in which his close friend and biographer John Ryland, Jr. played a role.

After Fuller's death, there also appeared two volumes of additional writings, neither of which is readily available today: J. W. Morris, *Miscellaneous Pieces on Various Religious Subjects, being the last remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London, 1826) and Joseph Belcher, ed., *The Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Philadelphia, 1856). The editor of this latter piece also brought out a selection of Fuller's writings entitled *The Atonement of Christ, and the Justification of the Sinner* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.).

What is missing from all of these collections is the most of the massive correspondence of Fuller, which reveals the enormous influence that Fuller had in both Baptist circles and other realms of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism. Without the availability of these works,

a proper appreciation of Fuller's impact and achievement cannot be done.

SBJT: Why should we read Andrew Fuller?

David Bebbington: Andrew Fuller probably ranks as the greatest of Baptist theologians. His achievement was to transmit a body of inherited doctrine to his contemporaries not unchanged but adapted to the needs of the age. He grew up in a Cambridgeshire church where a high form of Calvinism prevailed, discouraging challenges to the unconverted to put their trust in Jesus Christ. Becoming its pastor in 1775, Fuller was drawn into the circle of Baptist ministers of the Northamptonshire Association who were influenced by the writings of Jonathan Edwards, America's eminent theologian of the previous generation. Fuller accepted Edwards's central distinction between natural and moral inability. No human beings, on this view, were compelled by the nature God had given them to refuse the gospel, but those who rejected it did so because of their own moral failings. There was no obstacle to the free offer of the gospel to all. In his first and most influential book, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785), Fuller urged the obligation of all to believe the message of salvation. Here was the principle of "duty faith," the kernel of what was sometimes called "Fullerism."

The shift was part of the adaptation of the Calvinist tradition in the English-speaking world to the new intellectual currents of the Enlightenment. Fuller believed that his own era was a time when the "unchristian bitterness" of the time of the Reformers had passed away, when "rights of conscience" and the "duty of benevolence"

David Bebbington is Professor of History at the University of Stirling, Scotland.

He has also taught at the University of Alabama, at Notre Dame University, at Baylor University, at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, and at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Dr. Bebbington is the author of numerous books, including *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Routledge, 1989; 2nd ed 1993), *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (InterVarsity Press, 2005), *Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Baylor, 2010), and the co-editor of *Interfaces: Baptists and Others: International Baptist Studies* (Paternoster, 2013).

had come to be appreciated, when metaphysics had been dethroned and free enquiry was exalted. The values of the Enlightenment surrounded him and permeated his writings, leading him to aim for simplicity and faithfulness to the bare text of the Bible. So, while remaining a Calvinist, he was willing to modify received Calvinist opinion, accepting the scriptural principle that Christ died for all. The cross of Christ, he believed, was sufficient remedy for the sins of the whole world. The particularity of redemption did not lie in the scope of the atonement, as Calvinists had traditionally supposed, but in its application. Only some, not all, would embrace the gospel. Fuller accepted penal substitution, but insisted that the penalty was imposed for the sins of humanity, not those of the Savior. By contrast with many previous theologians, Fuller contended that Christ himself did not share in the criminality of our wrongdoing. And the primary explanation for the atonement was the upholding of the moral government of the Almighty. The death of Christ, according to Fuller, was a vindication of the righteous laws of the universe established by its Creator. Again, to adopt the governmental theory was to diverge from previous authorities, but it was not to abandon orthodoxy.

Any writers who did repudiate central biblical doctrines met stern opposition from Fuller. He attacked Socinianism, the most powerful threat to sound doctrine among the Dissenters of his day. "Rational Dissenters" associated with Joseph Priestley contended that reason carried an authority as weighty as that of the Bible and so were willing to dismiss its teachings about, for example, the person of Christ if they did not appear to match their standards of rationality. According to the Baptist theologian, however, the explicit guidance of the Bible was to be obeyed at all points by human reason. Fuller opposed universalism, the notion that all would ultimately be saved, on similar grounds. He took on one of the most popular polemicists of the age, Tom Paine, when he expounded a version

of deism. Here Fuller argued for the rightness of following the teachings of revelation and not just the light of nature. In a final debate Fuller criticized the views of a fellow-Baptist. According to the Sandemanian theory held by Archibald Mclean of Edinburgh, the faith that saves is nothing but simple assent, distinct from the affections of the heart, but Fuller maintained that a biblical understanding of saving faith is personal trust. Whenever the ambition of the Enlightenment to simplify went beyond the bounds laid down by the Bible, Fuller mounted a powerful critique.

As a result of presenting the Christian message in a form adapted to the times, Fuller proved highly influential. Theologians of other evangelical denominations such as the Scottish Presbyterian Thomas Chalmers were deeply molded by him, but it was in his own body, the Particular Baptists, that he carried most weight. The three English academies for training ministers soon adopted his point of view; in Wales there was more resistance, but his convictions prevailed; and in America the New Hampshire Confession of 1833, which became the normal theological standard, North and South, was modeled on his tenets. Consequently Fuller's convictions formed the touchstone of Baptist orthodoxy for the rest of the century, and in some places beyond that. Fuller was prepared to adopt bold alterations to the system of beliefs he inherited for the sake of making the Christian message intelligible to his contemporaries, but he was also acutely conscious that the spirit of the age could lead to a distortion of sound teaching. He was an expert in the adjustment of the relations of gospel and culture.

SBJT: Why should Southern Baptists know something about Andrew Fuller?

David Allen: Southern Baptists owe a great debt to Andrew Fuller whether they know it or not. Though Fuller died thirty years before the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention, he cast a giant shadow over our early

forefathers. As a pastor, theologian, author, and missiologist, Fuller was a titan among Baptists in England. He played an instrumental role in the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society along with another famous Baptist stalwart, William Carey.

Southern Baptists should know about Andrew Fuller for his influence on our Baptist theology. Though his writings fill three large volumes of very small print today, his most important work: *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, was published in 1785 and revised and republished in 1801. Fuller made a major breakthrough amidst the stifling influence of 18th century hyper-Calvinism with this work. He argued two key theses that would impact Baptists in England and Southern Baptists in America. First, Fuller believed it is the duty of all sinners to believe and obey the gospel. Thus, all sinners should be encouraged through the preaching of the Gospel to believe in Christ. Second, Fuller believed that it is the duty of preachers to offer the gospel to all people. These twin theological themes would shape the warp and woof of the theology of the newly formed Southern Baptist Convention, and reverberate down through the corridors of time to this day.

Southern Baptists should know about Andrew Fuller because he was a man of the Book who took theology seriously. Baptists have been called “a people of the Book” because of their commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture and its final authority for all faith and practice. Fuller held the Scripture in highest esteem. When his understanding of the extent of the atonement came into conflict with what he later concluded the Bible to say on the subject, Fuller was not hesitant to change his personal theology in submission to what he believed Scripture taught. Fuller’s theological shift from a position of Christ’s limited sin-bearing to a universal sin-bearing brought him much criticism; some even falsely accusing him of having become an Arminian. But Fuller stuck to his guns and

revised the section on particular redemption in the second edition of *Gospel Worthy*.

Southern Baptists should know about Andrew Fuller because of his influence in preaching. Acceptance of Fuller’s theological paradigm alone changed the way many Baptists preached, including Fuller himself. Whereas in his first edition of *Gospel Worthy*, Fuller spoke about being cautious in one’s evangelistic preaching, in the later edition it seems as if Fuller threw caution to the wind and exhorted preachers not to be reticent in preaching the gospel. A new note of urgency permeated his own preaching because he viewed the universal call of the gospel to all people everywhere to be firmly grounded in the universal extent of the atonement itself.

Fuller’s “Thoughts on Preaching in Letters to a Young Minister” is sage counsel on the art of expository preaching. The fountainhead of Southern Baptist homiletics, John A. Broadus, in his *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* spoke many times of Fuller’s preaching influence on Baptists in America. Broadus noted that Fuller was essentially self-taught and had no training in or knowledge of the original languages of Scripture, like some of our Southern Baptist pastors today. Yet from an English Bible, he produced excellent expositions and serves even today as a model of biblical preaching.

Southern Baptists should know about Fuller because of his missionary heart and influence on Baptist missions. William Carey’s most famous work, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* was deeply indebted to his friend, Andrew Fuller. Both men viewed Matthew 28:19–20 as the key biblical text for missions. As a result of their vision and commitment, the “Par-

David L. Allen serves as the Dean of the School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Professor of Preaching, Director of the Center for Expository Preaching, and holds the George W. Truett Chair of Pastoral Ministry.

He served as senior pastor of two churches for twenty-one years. He is the author and/or editor of numerous books, including *Hebrews* (New American Commentary Series, B&H, 2010) and *Whosoever Will: a Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (B&H, 2010).

ticular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen” was founded in October 1792. Fuller’s *Gospel Worthy* provided the theological foundation for a world-wide missionary outreach that has characterized Baptists, and especially Southern Baptists, to this day.

Today, Southern Baptists rally around the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20 as the stackpole for all we believe and do in missions and evangelism. Believing that the love of God extends to all people of all nations, and that all people are “saveable,” Southern Baptists give their prayers, money, and themselves to the call of God to tell the world that Jesus saves. Such missionary zeal is at least in part due to the influence and legacy of Andrew Fuller on us. His passion for the Word, for preaching, for evangelism and missions, and for the extension of Christ’s kingdom continues to spur Southern Baptists to greater service today. He being dead yet speaks.

SBJT: One of the biggest areas of controversy among Baptists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was over the question of communion. Who could take the Lord’s Supper in a Baptist Church? Where did Andrew Fuller stand on this issue?

Ian Hugh Clary: For Andrew Fuller this debate,

which stretched back to the seventeenth century among Baptists, was deeply connected to Christ’s injunction in the Great Commission: “To treat a person as a member of Christ’s visible kingdom, and as being in a state of salvation, who lives in the neglect of what Christ has commanded to all his followers [believer’s baptism by immersion], and this, it may be, knowingly, is to put asunder what Christ has joined together.” Open communion was a denigration of

baptism, and was therefore also a sin issue: “To connive at a known omission of the will of Christ must be wrong, and must render us partakers of other men’s sins.” This, said Fuller, was a consequence that could not be avoided by the open communion position.

Fuller’s views were tested in the context of his involvement with the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), which, in India consisted of men who were his close friends: William Carey, William Ward, and Joshua Marshman. Deferring to Fuller’s leadership in England, the BMS missionaries in India initially decided to maintain closed communion. In 1805, however, a Church of England chaplain with the East India Company named David Brown (1762–1812), moved to Serampore as Provost of the nearby College of Fort William. This forced Carey and the others to redress the question, though all along Ward had been strongly opposed to the closed position. In 1805 the missionaries adopted an official open communion policy, with Carey as the last to acquiesce. Their reasoning was understandable: “We cannot doubt whether a Watts, an Edwards ... did right in partaking of the Lord’s Supper, though really unbaptized.” Fuller was nonplussed by the news of this statement, and wrote to Carey in 1806 who, with Marshman, sought to convince Ward and the others to revert to the previously held closed communion. This they finally did in 1811, and the debate was not to be renewed.

Not all were ultimately happy with the decision. In November 1815, after Fuller’s death the previous May, Ward wrote to Ryland, who was then Principal of the Baptist College in Bristol. Ward lamented that his fellow missionaries had been wrong in their adoption of closed communion, and were in violation of the law of love: “but I throw away the guns to preserve the ship.” For his part, Ryland reflected on the disagreement with Fuller and said, “I repeatedly expressed myself more freely and strongly to him, than I did to any man in England; yet without giving him offense.”

Ian Hugh Clary is a graduate of Toronto Baptist Seminary (ThM) and a doctoral candidate at the Universiteit van die Vrystaat (Blomfontein) where he is writing a dissertation on the evangelical historiography of Arnold Dallimore.

He is a contributor to two forthcoming academic books in church history and has published articles in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, *Puritan Reformed Journal*, *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, *American Theological Inquiry*. Ian is the pastor of BridgeWay Covenant Church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada where he lives with his wife, Vicky, and two children.

By God's grace, the ship was preserved and the BMS survived the difference between friends. E. Daniel Potts says that after the debate, "Disagreements were rare among this superlatively distinctive group of missionary pioneers ... fortunately this quarrel was kept on a friendly plane and, basic though it was, was not allowed to mar their extraordinary labours." The "seraphic" Pearce well captures the friendship shared between these Baptists when he wrote: "It is not often that we meet with men, whose openness of mind, steadiness of attachment, & spirituality of temper, invite our friendship with ... force & sweetness." Such is the friendship that could perform a theological triage and conclude that the communion question was of tertiary importance—as strongly held as some of their opinions were on the matter. For these men, the failure to bring the gospel to the world was too costly a price to pay for a division among friends.

SBJT: How did Jonathan Edwards, the premier American theologian in the 18th century, influence Andrew Fuller? Was Fuller an uncritical disciple?

Chris Chun: The answer to the first question is quite obvious, since I find it difficult to overstate Andrew Fuller's esteem for the premier American theologian. In fact, my recent monograph (2012)¹ is dedicated to demonstrating the significance of that influence. "The Greatest instruction" that Fuller "received from human writings,"² to cite his own words, was from Jonathan Edwards. Fuller described him as the "great writer"³ and praised Edwardsean ideas as better than "any human performance" Fuller had ever read.⁴ Of course, there were other writers who influenced Fuller's life and thought. In Fuller's conception of the distinction between natural and moral ability and inability, Caleb Evans was an important figure. Fuller's missiological optimism might have been influenced by Moses Lowman. With regard to Fuller's epistemology, John Owen may be the person to whom he was deeply indebted. On the subject of doctrines

of atonement, justification, and imputation, New Divinity men like Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, and Jonathan Edwards, Jr. come to mind. Despite these various influences, in every case Fuller credited Edwards as the principal teacher to whom he had a theological indebtedness. Edwards towered over the other influential theologians who have been mentioned because his ideas gave Fuller intellectual "pleasure"⁵ and "satisfaction"⁶ in the context of the prevailing skepticism of the Enlightenment. Edwardsean Calvinism provided Fuller with the philosophical underpinnings and theological categories to become one of the foremost Christian apologists of his day. Moreover, when Fuller referred to Edwards as a "penetrating, edifying writer,"⁷ he underscored how the spirituality of Edwards influenced his devotional life.

The second question, whether Fuller was an uncritical disciple of Edwards, is challenging since it requires sifting through Fuller's theology to determine to what degree he not only agreed, but also disagreed with Edwards. For instance, when Edwards' protégé, Samuel Hopkins of New England and Fuller were embroiled in a debate, Fuller not only opposed the New Divinity School, but at times even abandoned Edwards, his revered mentor. To offer but one example: on the subject of regarding "God as the author of sin," Hopkins was much closer

to Edwards than was Fuller. In sustaining the Edwardsean line of reasoning that God is the ultimate cause of evil, Hopkins quoted at length from *Freedom of the Will*. Even though Edwards detested portraying God as the author of sin, he did, in the final analysis, acknowledge God as the author of the permissive cause of sin.⁸ However, in following Edwards on efficient and deficient distinctions, and perhaps more swiftly and certainly

Chris Chun serves as the Associate Professor of Church History and the Chair of Historical and Theological Studies at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. Chun is the author of numerous journal articles as well as the author of *Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2012). He is currently co-editing *Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things: William Carey & Adoniram Judson, Mission Pioneers* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, forthcoming in 2013). Dr. Chun is also a frequent speaker at churches, seminars and retreats.

more metaphysically than Edwards, Hopkins also saw God as the author of sin: “God, in fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass, may be, in this sense, the origin and cause of sin, consistent with infinite holiness.”⁹

Hopkins claimed that God causing and authoring sin is not at odds with his holiness because “God is only the negative cause of moral evil.”¹⁰ However, Fuller did not approve at all of Hopkins’ idea.¹¹ In a letter to Hopkins, Fuller reprimanded Hopkins by stating that, although he “enjoyed great pleasure in reading many of [Hopkins’] metaphysical pieces,” he still felt that Edwards’ followers in New England paid too much attention to blind imitation of Edwardsean reasoning:

I have observed that whenever an extraordinary man has been raised up, like President Edwards, who excelled in some particular doctrines, or manner of reasoning, it is usual for his followers and admirers too much to confine their attention to his doctrines or manner of reasoning, as though all excellence was there concentrated. I allow that your present writer [i.e., Fuller] do not implicitly follow Edwards, as to his sentiments, but that you preserve a spirit of free enquiry: Yet I must say, it appears to me that several of your men [i.e., New England theologians] possess a rage of imitating his metaphysical manner, till some of them become metaphysic mad.¹²

Despite his great admiration for Edwards and his successors in New England, Fuller did not follow their philosophical reasonings when they were contrary to what Fuller believed to be taught in the Scriptures. Despite his fondness for Edwards and the New England theologians, Fuller did not subscribe to their views on every issue. His deep commitment to the Scripture could not be overridden by any system of philosophy, including one of Jonathan Edwards him-

self. Thus, Fuller’s contemporary biographer, J. W. Morris, was correct in stating that “Mr. Fuller dissented from opinions of the American writers, and as freely stated his own convictions.”¹³

ENDNOTES

¹ Parts of this answer have published in Chris Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Studies in the History of Christian Traditions; Leiden: Brill, 2012).

² Andrew Fuller, “Letter IV. Baxterianism, January 22, 1803” in *The Complete Works of the Rev Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of his Life by the Rev. Andrew Gunton Fuller* (Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:715. Henceforth, it will be abbreviated as: WAF.

³ *Abram Justified by Faith* in WAF, 3:63.

⁴ “Fuller’s Letter to Timothy Dwight on June 1, 1805” in WAF, 1:85.

⁵ Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation* (Northampton: T. Dicey, 1785), v.

⁶ *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1801) in WAF, 2:330.

⁷ “Extracts from his Diary on February 3, 1781” in WAF, 1:25.

⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will* (ed. Paul Ramsey; 26 Vols.; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 1:399. Cf. Samuel Hopkins in *System of Doctrines Contained in Divine Revelation* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1811), 135.

⁹ Hopkins, *System of Doctrines*, 127.

¹⁰ Hopkins, *System of Doctrines*, 129.

¹¹ Andrew Fuller, “Letter to Dr. Hopkins,” in J. W. Morris, *Memoirs; Miscellaneous Pieces: On Various Religious Subjects* (London: Paternoster Row, 1826), 295. Evidently, this original correspondence between Fuller and Hopkins can be found in the Grant Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. See Allen Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will: A Century of American Theological Debate* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 290, n.6.

¹² Fuller, “Letter to Dr. Hopkins,” in Morris, *Memoirs*, 296.

¹³ Morris, *Memoirs*, 297.