

# “So valuable a life...”: A Biographical Sketch of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)

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## INTRODUCTION

Soon after the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in 1792, Andrew Fuller was in London in his capacity as the Society’s secretary, trying to solicit much needed funding for this new venture in overseas mission. One of the people he approached

was Richard Cecil, a leading evangelical Anglican clergyman. Cecil refused to give any money and also spoke in “slighting terms” of the Particular Baptist denomination to which Fuller belonged. Cecil was prepared, however, to make an exception of the writer of the theological treatise *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. This he described, without knowing that he was speaking to its author, as “one of the most masterly productions

I know.” When Fuller replied that this was in fact his own work, Cecil “rose from his chair, expressed the most eager apologies and earnestly pressed a subscription.” But the visitor had been stung and initially refused to accept it. “You do not give in faith!” he protested. In concluding his account of this episode, Fuller’s son and biographer, Andrew Gunton Fuller, recorded that “it was not without considerable persuasion that the perhaps too sensitive collector could be induced to receive the money.”<sup>1</sup>

As this incident suggests, Andrew Fuller was one of the foremost English Baptist ministers of his day. He was probably best known by his contemporaries and by subsequent generations for the reasons just highlighted: he was the secretary of the BMS from its inception until his death and the author of *The Gospel Worthy*, a seminal work advocating evangelical Calvinism. But Fuller also published on a wide range of other theological and apologetic subjects, as well as spending the whole of his ministry as a local church pastor. This sketch

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seeks to trace the main contours of his life and ministry, highlighting the main reasons he is such a noteworthy figure.

### **EARLY LIFE AND WIDER CONTEXT**

Andrew Fuller was born on February 6, 1754, at Wicken, a village near Ely in Cambridgeshire, the youngest son of Robert Fuller and Philippa Gunton.<sup>2</sup> Robert was a tenant farmer, working a succession of small dairy farms, and in 1761 he moved his family a distance of two and a half miles to the village of Soham. Both parents were Dissenters and Baptists, although Robert appears to have been less committed than his wife. Philippa became a member of the Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptist church at Soham, and the whole family attended regularly. Her own mother, also called Philippa, had actually been one of the founding members of the church. In 1775 her son Andrew, despite having little by way of formal education, would become its pastor.

It is important to locate the young pastor in his theological and ecclesial context. Especially significant to this was High Calvinism. Fundamental to this theology was the belief that it was not the “duty” of the unconverted to repent and believe the gospel, since total depravity rendered them incapable of doing so. High Calvinism had serious consequences for preaching. A typical Sunday congregation could not be urged to repent and believe the gospel. Such “indiscriminate exhortations to faith and repentance” were, firstly, a nonsense because it was not the duty of the unregenerate to believe and, secondly, dangerous, because they might encourage false professions which could sully the purity of the church. Put simply, it was considered both theologically wrong and practically dangerous to offer the gospel openly and freely to all.

The Particular Baptist chapel at Soham stands as an example of a church heavily influenced by High Calvinism, with the pastor prior to Fuller, John Eve, having “little or nothing to say to the unconverted.”<sup>3</sup> This was not the only reason

the church at Soham was small and struggling,<sup>4</sup> but it was a major factor. Other churches in the denomination were also affected by High Calvinism.<sup>5</sup> Fuller’s own trenchant assessment of English Particular Baptist life during this period is worth quoting. “Had matters gone on but a few years longer,” he declared, “the Baptists would have become a perfect dunghill in society.”<sup>6</sup>

### **FULLER AND EVANGELICAL CALVINISM**

The young Fuller had himself imbibed High Calvinism,<sup>7</sup> but late in December 1779 he decided, with some trepidation, to introduce “open offers” of the gospel into his preaching. It should come as little surprise that as he did so he encountered opposition from within his congregation.<sup>8</sup> What had led to this change in thinking and practice, a change that was costly for him personally? The evidence points to a number of interconnected reasons. These include his reflections on his own conversion. This had occurred in 1769, after a period of conviction lasting at least three years. Significantly, it appears Fuller put his trust in Christ without receiving any help from his pastor. This experience resulted in much theological reflection on what he later described as the “erroneous views of the gospel,” which had kept him in “darkness and despondency for so long.”<sup>9</sup>

A renewed engagement with the Bible was, by Fuller’s own testimony, also important. His resolve to search the scriptures before accepting that something was true was commented on by a number of his early biographers.<sup>10</sup> This commitment also appears in a solemn and private “covenant” with God discovered by Fuller’s “tombstone” biographer, John Ryland, Jr., among his subject’s private papers.<sup>11</sup> The covenant was written on January 10, 1780, just after Fuller had started to pursue his new approach to preaching. It was not intended for publication, or indeed to be seen by anyone except its author. At the heart of the covenant was the following passage,

Let not the sleight of wicked men, who lie in wait to deceive, nor even the pious character of good men (who yet may be under great mistakes), draw me aside. Nor do Thou suffer my own fancy to guide me. Lord, Thou hast given me a determination to take up no principle at second hand; but to search for everything at the pure fountain of Thy word.<sup>12</sup>

This is especially valuable for being heartfelt and private, and also because of the humility before God it reveals. And there is good evidence to suggest what was resolved in private was worked out in public. Of course, an approach to scripture that is free of cultural presuppositions is not possible and I am not suggesting Fuller achieved this. His reading of the Bible continued to be influenced by a range of factors, for example, his temperament, his background and his times. But his commitment to revise his thinking and praxis to make it—he believed—more congruent with scriptural teaching is striking. He was willing to submit inherited theological shibboleths to a rigorous biblical critique and change them accordingly, even though this led to opposition.

Such biblicism was one of the hallmarks of the Evangelical Revival, and engagement with evangelical literature was vitally important as Fuller's approach shifted. The influence of the writings of Jonathan Edwards, the New England theologian of the Revival, is especially noteworthy. Fuller probably read Edwards' *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of Will* in 1777.<sup>13</sup> The treatise (which was written to combat Arminianism) was largely philosophical rather than theological (the first reference to Jesus Christ does not occur for 175 pages, taking the text from the Yale edition).<sup>14</sup> Yet this was the Edwards work which was important to Fuller because of the way it distinguished between "natural" and "moral" inability,<sup>15</sup> thus providing a grounding for applied, invitational

preaching. As a Calvinist, Edwards believed that no one could respond to the gospel without the electing grace of God and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Thus far, he and the High Calvinists were agreed. But he maintained people's inability to respond was not because of a lack of any "natural" powers. Rather, their inability was wholly of the "moral" or "criminal" kind. Everyone had the natural powers to come to Christ, but the unregenerate person would always stubbornly refuse to do so. Crucially, therefore, if someone failed to respond to the gospel they were still criminally culpable. These arguments from the American evangelical theologian underpinned the Soham pastor's change of approach.<sup>16</sup> If all sinners were criminally responsible it was surely their duty to believe even though some would never do this. And if it was the duty of sinners to respond, then it was the preacher's corresponding duty to urge them to do so. There is hard evidence Edwards was decisively shaping Fuller's thought as early as 1778 or even 1777.<sup>17</sup> The theological development which led to his change in preaching practice was moulded by his reading of evangelical literature.

Finally, it is vital to note that, soon after he had become pastor at Soham, Fuller took the congregation into the Northamptonshire Association of Particular Baptist churches. This was on June 8, 1775. The decision to join was taken by the "unanimous consent" of the church members, although the implications of the step they were taking would not have been recognised by all of them.<sup>18</sup> Northamptonshire Association life brought Fuller into contact with men such as Robert Hall, Sr., John Sutcliff, and Ryland, Jr. who were themselves committed to Edwardsean evangelical Calvinism. It was Hall who had first recommended the young Soham pastor read Jonathan Edwards,<sup>19</sup> whilst Sutcliff and Ryland became firm friends and *confidantes*. These Northamptonshire friendships are analysed in more detail in the article by Paul Brewster in this edition of *SBJT*. They were of great importance in

both encouraging and supporting Fuller's change of theology, and once again they show the way evangelicalism was shaping him. Overall, this shift from High Calvinism to an expansive, evangelistically-minded, evangelical Calvinism was a watershed moment in Fuller's life and ministry. It set the trajectory for what was to follow.

### MOVE TO KETTERING AND DEVELOPING PREACHING MINISTRY

Fuller's difficulties at Soham continued, although by the early 1780s he was beginning to see moderate success, with some conversions and an increased number coming to Sunday worship. But opposition to him was hardening too, and he found himself increasingly unhappy, not just, it has to be said, as a result of his invitational preaching. A major problem was that the church was poor and struggled to support their pastor. Fuller had married Sarah Gardiner in 1776 and by the 1780s they had a growing family. His stipend of £13 *per annum*, even with an additional £5 from the Particular Baptist Fund in London, was woefully inadequate. Attempts to supplement this, first by a small shop and then a school, failed. Even the success of his ministry was a source of frustration, as the meeting house was not large enough to accommodate those who wanted to come and the members were unwilling to look for a more suitable place of worship, even when their landlord raised the rent. Against this background, his friends in the Northamptonshire Association began to suggest he should be open to the possibility of a move.<sup>20</sup> When Fuller began to receive approaches from the "Little Meeting" in Kettering, Northamptonshire, a fellowship that had already adopted evangelical Calvinism and which was also able to support him financially, he agonized over what to do. With a heavy heart, he finally settled there in 1782. He would remain as pastor of the Kettering church for the rest of his ministry.

According to his son, Fuller gave himself with "constitutional ardour" to the work at

Kettering.<sup>21</sup> Examples of his regular Sunday preaching from the early period of his ministry at the church survive only as shorthand notes. In fact many of the sermons included in his published *Works* are recorded only in abbreviated form.<sup>22</sup> But a message given in 1784, entitled "The Nature and Importance of Walking by Faith", was later published. This was preached at a meeting of the Northamptonshire Association held at Nottingham. Yet, because it exists in a more complete form, it is likely to give a better impression of Fuller's general style and approach.<sup>23</sup>

His text was 2 Corinthians 5:7, "We walk by faith, not by sight," and he dealt with his subject carefully and systematically yet with fervor. Two short passages will serve to give a flavor of his concerns and his pulpit style. As he dealt in the second section of his message with the importance of "walking by faith," he spoke passionately of God's glory,

O brethren, let the *glory* of God lie near our hearts! Let it be dearer to us than our dearest delights! Herein consists the criterion of true love to him. Let us, after the noble example of Joshua and Caleb, "follow the Lord fully." Let us approve of everything that tends to glorify him. Let us be reconciled to his conduct, who "suffers us to hunger, that we may know that man lives not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If he should bring us to hard and difficult situations ... let us remember that it is that he may give us an opportunity of glorifying him, by trusting him in the dark. The more difficult the trial, the more glory to him that bears us through, and the greater opportunity is afforded us for proving that we can indeed trust him with *all* our concerns—that we can trust him even when we cannot see the end of his present dispensations.

Fuller concluded his message with a stirring appeal,

Christians, ministers, brethren, all of us! let us realise the subject. Let us pray, and preach, and hear, and do everything we do with eternity in view! Let us deal much more with Christ and with invisible realities. Let us, whenever called, freely deny ourselves for his sake, and trust him to make up the loss. Let us not faint under present difficulties, but consider them as opportunities afforded to us to glorify God. Let us be ashamed that we derive our happiness so much from things below, and so little from things above. In one word, let us fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life!<sup>24</sup>

As to content, Fuller's deep concern for God's glory is evident, as is a trust in his sovereignty and goodness. This was a trust that needed to be displayed in the "dark" as well as in the light. There is also the stress, especially in the second extract, on Christians giving themselves unstintingly in Christian service. Such emphases were typical of the evangelical Calvinism of Fuller's circle. The combination of deep faith in God and vigorous practical action was to prove a potent mix, as we will see.

As to delivery, some of Fuller's power in the pulpit survived the transfer of his sermon to the printed page despite the rather awkward, "In one word, let us fight the good fight of faith, and..." Ryland commented more generally on Fuller as a preacher, saying that he "loved men" and had "an evident unction from the Holy One." Although there were some who excelled him for "fluency" and popular appeal, Ryland held that his friend had been an effective, extempore preacher.<sup>25</sup> Some critical remarks concerning Fuller's preaching do appear in other early biographies. Roger Hayden summarizes some of these comments. Fuller lacked "easy elocution," and his voice although "strong" could also be "heavy."<sup>26</sup> In addition, he seems to have spent little time in preparation for some of his weekly local church preaching, with Gunton Fuller commenting, "it was not often

that Mr Fuller's preparations for the pulpit were elaborate."<sup>27</sup> Time would increasingly be at a premium for him as his ministry grew. Nevertheless, he could rise to the occasion for something like the Nottingham meeting, and he was a popular speaker. Certainly, there is little difficulty in believing his son's comment, "Sleepy hearers were not often found in Mr Fuller's congregation."<sup>28</sup>

## PERSONAL STRUGGLES

The period 1783-90 saw many opportunities for wider ministry, and he began to gain a reputation as a published author. Nevertheless, these years were difficult for him spiritually. Fuller's diary entries show that he struggled with assurance of salvation for much of the 1780s. For example, on September 12, 1780, while still at Soham, he wrote,

Very much in doubt respecting my being in a state of grace ... The Lord have mercy on me, for I know not how it is with me. One thing I know, that if I be a Christian at all, real Christianity in me is inexpressibly small in degree. O what a vast distance is there between what I ought to be, and what I am! If I am a saint at all, I know I am one of the least of all saints. I mean, that the workings of real grace in my soul are so feeble, that I hardly think they can be feebler in any true Christian ... I think of late, I cannot in prayer consider myself as a Christian, but as a sinner casting myself at Christ's feet for mercy.<sup>29</sup>

By 1786 this lack of assurance had spilled over into full blown spiritual depression. His final surviving diary entry for 1786 was made on Sunday, June 11. Fuller had recently heard Robert Hall, Sr. preach, taking as his text Proverbs 30:2, "Surely I am more brutish than any man." Fuller was convinced these words were far more applicable to him than to Hall, so he proceeded to preach on them himself that Sunday. The next diary entry that Ryland discovered was dated October 3, 1789, over three years

later. Ryland recorded that between sixteen to eighteen leaves had been torn out (presumably by Fuller himself), but in his October 3 entry the Kettering pastor confessed he had written nothing at all for “about a year and a half” for, he recorded, “it seemed to me that my life was not worth writing.” He described it as a time of “lukewarmness,” “backsliding” and much “hardness of heart.”<sup>30</sup> Looking back on this period in 1796, in a letter to the missionary John Thomas in India, he wrote of “a deep dejection” that had gripped him, which although he “strove to throw it off in company” returned as soon as he was in private.<sup>31</sup> For a period of over three years, Fuller was, by his own reckoning, struggling with spiritual depression.

Fuller’s diary does not necessarily give a rounded picture of his spiritual life. Bruce Hindmarsh, in his study of John Newton, comments that because his subject’s diary was used as a means of “disciplined self-examination” in the Puritan tradition, its confessional and sometimes “self-recriminatory” tone are not necessarily reflective of his spirituality as a whole. In other words, taken on its own, the diary is likely to be a distortion of Newton’s spiritual life, a distortion created by the medium itself.<sup>32</sup> Hindmarsh’s words of caution can be born in mind as the evidence of Fuller’s diary is evaluated. Probably his state of mind was often brighter than the extract quoted, and many others like them,<sup>33</sup> would lead the reader to believe. Nevertheless, there is every reason to think that his struggle for assurance and lack of joy were very real, exacerbated by his High Calvinist background with its tendency to introspective soul-searching. The recommencement of his diary at the end of 1789 did not signal any great change. It was not until after 1792 and the founding of the BMS that his mood shifted decisively.

Throughout his married life, Fuller experienced a series of personal tragedies which doubtless contributed to his depressed spiritual state. Eight of the eleven children from his marriage to Sarah Gardiner died in infancy or

in early childhood. He particularly grieved for a six year old daughter who died in 1786, immediately before the onset of his severest depression. “I lay before the Lord,” he said, “weeping like David and refusing to be comforted.”<sup>34</sup> Tragically, Sarah Fuller herself was to die in distressing circumstances in 1792. For about three months before her death Sarah, heavily pregnant, was “seized with hysterical afflictions” which “deprived her of her senses.”<sup>35</sup> Despite occasional periods where she was calmer, she often failed to recognize her husband, and was sometimes violent towards him. “I ... was overcome with grief,” recorded Fuller, “I wept with her.” She died on August 23, the same day she had given birth to her eleventh child, Bathoni, who herself only survived a few weeks. Such was life for many lower-middle class English families at the end of the eighteenth century.

In the period after 1792, Fuller found some happiness in his personal life again. In December 1794 he married Ann Coles, a pastor’s daughter from Maulden, Bedfordshire.<sup>36</sup> Fuller’s comment in his diary, that “this day will probably stamp my future life with increasing happiness or misery,” does not sound particularly optimistic. Yet the marriage was a good one, although there was still much grief, with three of the six children Ann bore also dying in infancy. To add to this sadness, Fuller’s eldest son from his previous marriage, Robert, caused him great pain. Robert Fuller rejected the Christian faith and left home to join the navy. After a spell on merchant ships, he was press ganged into naval service once again in 1801. Later he was flogged for desertion in Ireland. He died and was buried at sea in 1809. Fuller’s letters to his son convey some of the depth of anguish he felt. The Sunday after he received news of Robert’s death, the father wept openly in the pulpit, and some of those in his congregation who knew what had happened wept with him. All of this means that Fuller accomplished much of his most significant work in the midst of spiritual struggles and personal tragedy.

## THEOLOGICAL AND APOLOGETIC WRITING

*The Gospel Worthy*, first published in 1785, was, as already noted, Fuller's most important work. It propounded his brand of Edwardsean, invitational Calvinism and helped speed the revival in Particular Baptist life which even then was beginning to gather pace.<sup>37</sup> Yet he published much else besides. He responded to various critiques of *The Gospel Worthy*, for example engaging with the evangelical General Baptist Dan Taylor.<sup>38</sup> He published two apologetic works opposing Socinianism, the first of these being *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to Their Moral Tendency*, which appeared in 1793.<sup>39</sup> The title of the book is revealing. Fuller was certainly concerned to defend Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy, but he also wanted to show that Calvinistic evangelicalism rightly understood led to changed lives—that its “moral” benefits were greater than alternative systems of belief. The dual evangelical stress on right thinking and right practice can be seen. *The Gospel its Own Witness* was completed in 1799.<sup>40</sup> In it Fuller challenged Deism, one of the supreme examples of eighteenth-century rationalism. *The Gospel its Own Witness* engaged especially with Thomas Paine, whose famous book *The Rights of Man* first appeared in 1791, two years after the French Revolution. An American edition of this book soon appeared.<sup>41</sup> Fuller, who was self-taught as a theologian, was engaging with important thinkers on the national and international scene, with real success.

Further works followed. Fuller's *Letters to Mr Vidler, on the Doctrine of Universal Salvation* was published in 1802, following earlier engagements with Vidler's views in the *Evangelical Magazine* and the *Universalist's Miscellany*, with the Kettering pastor writing anonymously under the *nom de plume* or the pen name, “Gaius.”<sup>42</sup> He also contended with antinomianism particularly in his *Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught*

*and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures*.<sup>43</sup> These books were again characterized by both biblical theology and practical intent. Fuller wrote as a pastor/scholar with a heart for evangelism and his work always had a cutting edge. All of these books increased his reputation as an author, and by at least the 1790s he was well respected in the wider evangelical world. Yet it was in the founding of the BMS that Fuller's commitment to gospel ministry found its greatest expression.

## FULLER AND THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

On October 2, 1792, at least fourteen men crammed themselves into the parlor of a Kettering home (the dimensions of the room were twelve feet by ten).<sup>44</sup> Those who had gathered agreed to the formation of the “Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen.” Of the fourteen who were there, thirteen pledged an annual subscription. The only one who did not, William Carey, was in fact the greatest enthusiast for overseas mission present. Probably the minimum subscription required (half a guinea) was beyond Carey's limited financial means. Fuller became the Society's secretary, a natural choice given his capacity for hard work and his own commitment to cross-cultural mission. This commitment had been shown in a sermon preached at an Association meeting on April 27, 1791, in which he urged his hearers to consider actively such work.<sup>45</sup> Carey and John Thomas were to become the Society's first missionaries, arriving in India aboard the Danish East Indiaman the *Kron Princessa Maria* on November 7, 1793. It is worth underlining the importance of the BMS in the history of global Christianity. As Brian Stanley states, the Society's foundation “marks a turning point in the history of Christian missionary endeavour.”<sup>46</sup> Although there were precedents, for example, the extraordinary efforts of Moravians,<sup>47</sup> the BMS set the pattern for the voluntary societies which made up the so-called modern missionary

movement on both sides of the Atlantic. From the seemingly inauspicious beginnings of their first meeting, Fuller and the Northamptonshire Particular Baptists were becoming involved in something of worldwide significance.

As secretary of the BMS, Fuller issued the regular *Periodical Accounts* of the Society and supplied missionary news to various Baptist and evangelical publications.<sup>48</sup> He was involved in the selection of missionaries who were sent to India and other destinations, such as the Caribbean, and he wrote regularly to those in the field (a bound volume of transcriptions of his correspondence to missionaries in India is over 600 pages long).<sup>49</sup> All of this was in addition to his efforts promoting the burgeoning work of the BMS through visits such as the one to Cecil in London, longer tours and yet more letter writing.<sup>50</sup> He also defended the Society in print.<sup>51</sup> All of this is evidence of the extent to which he dedicated himself to the BMS after 1792. All this he did on a voluntary basis, whilst continuing as pastor of the “Little Meeting.”

It was probably Fuller’s longer tours that did most to raise awareness and support for the Mission. He was regularly away from Kettering for up to three months of each year, travelling huge distances on behalf of the Society. As late as 1814, by which time his health was deteriorating rapidly, he was working at an extraordinary pace. His itinerary for May to July of that year was as follows. In May and June he was visiting Olney, Bedford, Leicester, Bocking in Essex and London. In July he was in the north of England, on successive Sundays at Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle and Hull. As Fuller had surveyed this programme before setting out, he had written, “May the Lord strengthen me for these labours!”<sup>52</sup> a prayer which would have been much needed. More remarkable still were journeys to Wales, Ireland and Scotland. His extensive Scottish tours are the best documented of all his travels on behalf of the Society. In all he visited Scotland five times—in 1799, 1802, 1805, 1808 and 1813—producing what was described as a “hallowed excitement,” enjoying

great personal popularity.<sup>53</sup> Overall, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the cause of the BMS.

Such activity led to great joy. In the years following 1792 Fuller had never been happier, discovering his involvement in the Mission was a means of “reviving his soul.” As he engaged in evangelical action, he became less introspective (indeed, he now had little time for such introspection) and his battles for assurance of salvation were at last won. As he worked for the BMS he discovered he felt “more genuine love to God and his cause” than at any previous time in his life.<sup>54</sup> As secretary of this new venture, Fuller was both active and fulfilled.

Yet the dynamic he had discovered—activity in the cause of Christ led to joy—was strained to breaking point from the 1800s onwards by the extraordinary pace at which he was working. One of his letters, from as early as March 1800, captures the dilemma he was increasingly facing,

[Samuel] Pearce’s memoirs are now loudly called for. I sit down almost in despair ... My wife looks at me with a tear ready to drop, and says, “My dear, you have hardly time to speak to me.” My friends at home are kind, but they also say, “You have no time to see us or know us, and you will soon be worn out.” Amidst all this there is “Come again to Scotland—come to Portsmouth—come to Plymouth—come to Bristol.”<sup>55</sup>

Fuller’s joy never entirely left him, but although he “rejoiced in all his labors” his health began to fail and, in Ryland’s judgment, he “sunk under [his burden of work] into a premature grave.”<sup>56</sup> For much of the 1800s he was unwell and, finally, on September 4, 1814, his condition became critical.<sup>57</sup> He had to spend a full two weeks in bed and never properly recovered his strength. By March 1815 he was conscious he was dying, and on April 2 he preached for the last time, from Isaiah 66:1-2, “Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.” As he presided at communion with his people, speaking slowly and haltingly, “he seemed absorbed in the contempla-



tion of a crucified, risen exalted Redeemer.” He was confined to bed soon after this, made arrangements for his own funeral service (Ryland was to preach on Romans 8:10), and was nursed by his family. Among his last words were, “my hope is such that I am not afraid to plunge into eternity.” He died on May 7, aged sixty-two. A comment from Morris serves as an epitaph, “He lived and died a martyr to the Mission.”<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

A letter from a member of the Kettering congregation to Ryland, dated August 19, 1801, contains the following lines, “Mr F.’s exertions are too much for his health ... Dear sir, pray for us, that so valuable a life may yet be continued.”<sup>59</sup> Of course, to declare a life “valuable” is to make subjective judgment. The factors which led to the anonymous church member using this word—Fuller’s multifaceted work for the BMS, his theological and apologetic writing, his preaching and pastoral work, his modelling of an evangelical spirituality—would not weigh so heavily with every observer. Yet I hope this brief sketch has shown that his life was certainly an important one. He was not only a local church pastor, but a denominational leader whose published works had a shaping effect on others, and in his ministry for the BMS he was involved in a movement the implications of which continue to reverberate around the globe.

What can also be stated is that a new generation of pastor/scholars are finding his life and work worthy of study. The last thirty years have seen a resurgence of interest in Fuller, a resurgence which shows no sign of abating. This renewed interest is partly because his importance in the history of Christianity, particularly global evangelical Christianity, is increasingly accepted. It is also because his example and writing provide resources for those doing theology and engaging in mission in a variety of contemporary contexts. A new generation, then, are recognising Fuller’s “value,” and so there is a sense that the ministry of this remarkable Christian leader continues today.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), 112.
- <sup>2</sup> See John Ryland, Jr., *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1st ed.; London: Button and Son, 1816; 2nd ed., 1818), 8-10, for this and other details in this paragraph. In this sketch I cite from the 2nd ed. of Ryland’s biography unless otherwise stated.
- <sup>3</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 11.
- <sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the causes of Particular Baptist decline, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994), 20-24.
- <sup>5</sup> The extent to which High Calvinism influenced eighteenth-century Particular Baptist life has been much debated. For a discussion of the issues, see Peter J. Morden, “Baptist and Evangelical: Andrew Fuller and the Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation,” *Bulletin of the Strict Baptist Historical Society* (Autumn, 2011), 2-4.
- <sup>6</sup> John Webster Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Rev Andrew Fuller* (1st ed.; High Wycombe: n.p., 1816; 2nd ed.; London: Wightman and Cramp, 1826), 1st ed., 267.
- <sup>7</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 31-32.
- <sup>8</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Fuller*, 168; Ryland, *Fuller*, 44.
- <sup>9</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 19.
- <sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Ryland, *Fuller*, 43.
- <sup>11</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Sermons ... in shorthand, with occasional meditations in longhand (Books 1-5 bound in one Vol.),” Bristol Baptist College Library (G 95 A). Book 3, 2-3, contains the covenant.
- <sup>12</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 1st ed., 203-204.
- <sup>13</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 36. For the text see Jonathan Edwards, *The Freedom of the Will*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. P. Ramsey; 26 Vols; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 1:135-440.
- <sup>14</sup> As noted by Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 153. The distinction between theology and philosophy was less sharply drawn in Edwards’ day.

- <sup>15</sup> See Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 156-62.
- <sup>16</sup> For explicit acknowledgement of his debt to Edwards, see *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, with a Memoir of his Life by the Rev. Andrew Gunton Fuller (Works)* (ed. Andrew Gunton Fuller; rev. ed. Joseph Belcher; 3 Vols; Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle; 3rd ed., 1988), 2:330.
- <sup>17</sup> See Andrew Fuller, "Thoughts on the Power of Men to do the Will of God," unpublished manuscript held by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. See, e.g., "p. 2" of Fuller's manuscript, where he writes in Edwardsean terms about the distinction between natural and moral ability. A note on the title page of the manuscript states, "Wrote (sic.) in 1777, or 1778."
- <sup>18</sup> Andrew Fuller, "A Narration of the dealings of God in a way of Providence with the Baptist Church at Soham from the year 1770," Cambridge County Records Office (NC/B – Soham R70/20), 25; Morris, *Fuller*, 1st ed., 31. Although Soham was in Cambridgeshire, the Northamptonshire Association accepted churches from neighboring counties.
- <sup>19</sup> This happened when Hall, Sr. preached at Fuller's ordination in 1775. See Ryland, *Fuller*, 36.
- <sup>20</sup> Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Memoir of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, in *Works*, 1:18-19, for this and other information in this paragraph. For more on Fuller's pastoral ministry at Kettering, see Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 103-27.
- <sup>21</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir*, 34.
- <sup>22</sup> See the "Sermons and Sketches" in *Works*, 1:135-560. Many of these messages were delivered away from Kettering, for example at ordinations or the opening of new Meeting Houses.
- <sup>23</sup> The sermon is printed in *Works*, 1:117-34 (originally published, Northampton: T. Dicey, 1784).
- <sup>24</sup> *Works*, 1:132-34. Italics original.
- <sup>25</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 144.
- <sup>26</sup> Roger Hayden, "The Life and Influence of Andrew Fuller," in *The Kettering Connection: Northamptonshire Baptists and Overseas Missions* (ed. Ronald L. Greenall; Leicester: University of Leicester, 1993), 5; cf. Morris, *Fuller*, 2nd ed., 81-82.
- <sup>27</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Fuller*, 61.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>29</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 78.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>32</sup> D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 222.
- <sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Ryland, *Fuller*, 119, "I have a fountain of poison in my nature...and am far from a spiritual frame of mind."
- <sup>34</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir*, 51.
- <sup>35</sup> These and other quotations and details relating to Sarah's illness are taken from a letter from Andrew Fuller to Sarah's father, August 25, 1792, cited by A. G. Fuller, *Memoir*, 59-60.
- <sup>36</sup> For details in this paragraph, unless otherwise stated, see A. G. Fuller, *Memoir*, 66-73.; Ryland, *Fuller*, 286-91; 297-304.
- <sup>37</sup> The story of Particular Baptist renewal is one which merits an article, indeed a book, of its own. The best treatment currently available is Haykin, *One Heart and Soul*.
- <sup>38</sup> See *Works*, 2:417-560.
- <sup>39</sup> *Works*, 2:108-233 (Originally published, Market Harborough: W. Harrod, 1793).
- <sup>40</sup> For the text, see *Works*, 2:3-107.
- <sup>41</sup> Published in 1801 (New York: Isaac Collins).
- <sup>42</sup> See the review of the controversy and Fuller's book in the *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 10 (December 1802) (London: T. Williams, 1802), 497. For the text of the letters as they appeared in book form, see *Works*, 2:292-327 (originally published, Clipstone: J. W. Morris, 1802).
- <sup>43</sup> See *Works*, 2:737-762. The 2nd ed. with the full text was published posthumously (Bristol: J. G. Fuller, 1817).
- <sup>44</sup> For this and other details in this paragraph, see Samuel Pearce Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, DD* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), 88-93; Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 10-11.

- <sup>45</sup> For this sermon, first published as *The Pernicious Consequences of Delay in Religious Concerns* together with another message by John Sutcliff, see *Works*, 1:145-51. For a more detailed treatment of Fuller's message, see Peter J. Morden, "Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions," in "At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word": *Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (ed. Michael A. G. Haykin; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 242-44.
- <sup>46</sup> Stanley, *History of the BMS*, 2.
- <sup>47</sup> Ian M. Randall, "Learning from the Moravians about Prayer and Mission," unpublished paper given at Spurgeon's College, January 11, 2013.
- <sup>48</sup> Although Samuel Pearce was the editor of the *Periodical Accounts* until 1799. See Ryland, *Fuller*, 147.
- <sup>49</sup> See, e.g., "Bound Volume of Andrew Fuller Letters to W. Carey, J. Marshman, W. Ward and other BMS Missionaries, 1795-1815, transcribed in India, with an index compiled by A. Gunton Fuller," Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford (3/170).
- <sup>50</sup> For examples of letters promoting the work of the BMS, see those reproduced in John Fawcett, Jr., *An Account of the Life ... of the Late Rev. John Fawcett* (London: Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, 1818), 292-94.
- <sup>51</sup> See Morden, "Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions," 246-55.
- <sup>52</sup> Morris, *Fuller*, 1st ed., 156; *The Baptist Magazine*, Vol. 7 (London: W. Button, 1815), 272-73.
- <sup>53</sup> Francis A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society of England from 1792 to 1842* (2 Vols; London: T. Ward and G. & J. Dyer, 1842), 1:21; Ryland, *Fuller*, 156.
- <sup>54</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 155, citing Fuller's diary entry for July 18, 1794. For more detail on how Fuller overcame his struggles with assurance, see Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 157-79.
- <sup>55</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Fuller*, 91-92.
- <sup>56</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 381.
- <sup>57</sup> For the details and quotations included in this paragraph, see A. G. Fuller, *Memoir*, 99-120.
- <sup>58</sup> Morris, *Fuller*, 2nd ed., 49.
- <sup>59</sup> Ryland, *Fuller*, 344. Fuller was extremely unwell at the time although, of course, he recovered.