

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) is considered by many to be the most influential Baptist theologian in the Anglophone world of the latter third of the ‘long’ eighteenth century. His influence is especially known in relation to his polemical work *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* that demolished the Hyper-Calvinism embedded in certain quarters of his Baptist community and that paved the way for the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society. But his impact is broader than this achievement, monumental though it was. His importance is also rooted in other polemical works directed against such products of the Enlightenment as Deism and Socinianism, his pastoral ministry, and the mentoring of an upcoming generation of pastoral leadership, especially evident in his contribution to ordination services. The aim of this study is to investigate one slice of the multifaceted contribution of this theological giant, namely, his ordination sermons to determine what key theological priorities shaped his understanding of pastoral ministry and what his exact influence on this Baptist community was as it relates to pastoral theology. And to put the theology of his ordination sermons in context, the study will examine them in relation to other available Particular Baptist ordination sermons of the era.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century far too many of the Particular Baptists were known for a doctrinal rigidity, which so highlighted the doctrines of grace as to deny the propriety of the free offer of the gospel. Many historians regard this as a key contributor to the numerical decline among the Particular Baptists who consequently became characterized by a lack of passionate evangelism and a distinct insularity. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century there was a significant shift among Particular Baptists as the emphasis on doctrinal

preciseness gave way to a more outward-looking and evangelistically-centered focus. At the heart of this influence was their pastoral theology.

1.2 Reason for the Study

Although the genre of ordination sermons represents a unique and important reflection on the pastoral priorities of the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth century they have been largely ignored as a locus of study. There are a few assorted articles in journals like *The Baptist Quarterly*¹ which deal with certain aspects of ordination theology and some brief mention in doctoral theses usually developing other arguments, but, apart from one recent thesis on Andrew Fuller, no major study of Particular Baptist pastoral theology from ordination sermons has been attempted.² The one study has been that of Keith Grant in his 2007 Th.M. thesis.³ As a result of the advent of evangelicalism beginning in 1730 the Particular Baptists, it is argued, appropriated some of their main characteristics by around 1770, and thus experienced a significant transformation in the pastoral office. For example Keith Grant asserts that there was an evangelical renewal of pastoral theology within the Particular Baptist church as witnessed in a

¹ For example, N. Clark, "The Meaning and Practice of Ordination" *The Baptist Quarterly* 17 (January 1958).

² A.H. Kirby, "The Theology of Andrew Fuller in its Relation to Calvinism" (Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1956); E. F. Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller's Doctrine of Salvation" (BD thesis, Oxford University, 1961); Robert Oliver, "The Emergence of a Strict and Particular Baptist Community Among the English Calvinistic Baptist, 1770-1850" (D.Phil. Thesis, CNNA, London Bible College, 1986); Thomas South, "The Response of Andrew Fuller to the Sandemanian View of Saving Faith" (Th.D. Thesis, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993); Pope Alexander Duncan, "The Influence of Andrew Fuller on Calvinism." (Th.D. Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1917); D. L. Young, "The Place of Andrew Fuller in the Developing Modern Missions Movement" (D.Phil. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); John W. Eddins Jr., "Andrew Fuller's Theology of Grace" (Ph.D. Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1957); Tom Ascol, "The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller" (Ph.D. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); Harlice E. Keown, "The Preaching of Andrew Fuller" (M.Th. Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1957); Paul Brewster, "Andrew Fuller (1754-1815): Model Baptist Pastor-Theologian" (Ph.D. Thesis. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007); Chris Chun, "The Greatest Instruction Received from Human Writings: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller" (D.Phil. Thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2008).

³ Keith Grant, "Very Affecting and Evangelical" Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and The Evangelical Renewal Of Pastoral Theology (Th.M. Thesis, Regent College, 2007).

transformation in the pastoral office. This transformation as personified in Fuller was characterized as “very affecting and evangelical” but unique in the larger evangelical revival in that it was worked out within a Congregational setting. The alteration of Particular Baptists to a more outward looking body as they embraced evangelicalism in late eighteenth century had an accompanying affect on their pastoral theology. Fuller’s emphasis on conversion and the affections in addition to a Congregationalist desire for orderliness shows that this renewal happened inside the church. Grant argues that Fuller’s *The Gospel Worthy* is mainly concerned with pastoral theology providing a theological rationale for a more activist evangelism based on the transformation of Fuller from his high Calvinist roots to a more outward looking theology. As primarily expressed in *The Gospel Worthy*, which contended that it was the duty for all to believe the gospel, he developed a new sense of assurance which produced an increased emphasis on conversion in his ministry. This represented a renewed element in his pastoral theology.

He then distinguishes Fuller’s evangelical pastoral model as congregationalist that differed somewhat from the Established Church and Methodists. Fuller’s congregationalism was the context for his pastoral theology, a model that was both conversionist and congregationalist and which emphasized evangelical ministry in balance with congregational government. Fuller believed that they were not necessarily antithetical and in fact his evangelicalism was expressed through his congregationalism. Here he briefly describes the dynamics of ordination service based mainly on secondary source with an emphasis on the larger church and more particularly on the dissenting tradition. Also he references pastoral theology in a few ordination sermons but not as a separate corpus or theology which emerges from them. He goes on to argue that this renewed pastoral theology was expressed primarily through Fuller’s preaching ministry

described as plain (in style), evangelical (in content), and affectionate (in application), which also reflected the emphasis of evangelicalism in the eighteenth century. This was evidenced for example in Fuller's interest in itinerant preaching. His study here is based largely on the premise that Fuller was influenced by Jean Claude's essays. He concludes that the evangelical transformation of the Particular Baptists was articulated mainly through a renewed pastoral theology, and was uniquely expressed through the congregationalism as reflected by Andrew Fuller. This ecclesiology emphasized voluntarism, affectionate, and evangelical priorities as expressed through his main characteristic of "very affecting and evangelical" ministry. This was the main thrust of both his personal change and the resulting influence he had on broader evangelicalism.

It seems that Grant concludes that Fuller reflects David Bebbington's definition of evangelism especially through his crucicentrism and conversionism.⁴ Fuller's distinctive contribution was in the area of his congregationalism as central to his "expression" of evangelism where the church becomes an agent for evangelist concerns.

But a major weakness of this study is that it does not examine the history of Particular Baptist pastoral theology within the tradition itself. Was there a radical transformation in their thought? There is no doubt that Andrew Fuller is at the heart of a renewal among Particular Baptists in the late eighteenth century. This renewal impacted one key element of the pastoral office which is offering Christ to all and sundry. But did this entail a complete revamping of Particular Baptist perspective on pastoral ministry? In other words when older Particular Baptists heard Andrew Fuller's ordination sermons did what they hear differ significantly than what they

⁴ See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989).

heard as younger men and women? Or did they hear much that was similar? This thesis, by detailed examination of the ordination sermons prior to the evangelical revival among Baptists around 1770, compared with Fuller's sermons, seeks to determine to what extent the revival reshaped Particular Baptist pastoral theology by considering what was new and what was different?

The question to be answered in light of an increased zeal for evangelism among eighteenth-century Particular Baptists, which led, in turn, to measurable growth in the latter part of the century, is to what was Fuller's pastoral theological contribution?

By restricting the sources to ordination sermons this study represents a manageable and cohesive body of primary source material for the historian. The distinctive significance of ordination sermons as a unique corpus of material lies primarily in their personal practicality. By their very nature they sifted out the extraneous and focused on what was essential with a theologically governed practicality. In the context of public ordination services, which is a covenantal ceremony, a usually more seasoned pastor would instruct the ordinand on the important character, qualities and duties of the pastor for successful ministry. In other words he would tell the new minister what was absolutely essential for the successful discharge of the office based on his own personal experiences in the ministry. This was getting to the heart of the matter of what was personally important for that pastor to impart to the newly appointed minister. This gives the inquirer unique insight into the main concerns of seasoned, influential and respected pastors. For those chosen to speak at the charge were largely recognized as men with preeminent gifts and graces. Further they reveal their personal theological emphases as interpreted through their inherited Particular Baptist tradition. These pastors had worked out their own unique theological convictions in day to day ministry within a clearly defined received body

of belief beginning in the seventeenth century. By comparing Fuller's sermons with others in his own tradition the researcher can ascertain trends of continuity and discontinuity among Particular Baptists and this leading theologian. This inquiry becomes even more valuable in light of Fuller's profound influence among these Particular Baptists.

The importance of pastoral theology within the context of the ordination sermon is also enhanced by the covenantal nature of the proceedings. Because ordination is essentially a covenant between the members of the church and the newly appointed pastor, their mutual pledges to one another reinforced accountability. Enhanced accountability often promotes more careful delineation both in thought and in actual implementation. It is one thing to profess the importance of a particular pastoral theology and quite another to publically express your determination to live it out in that very community. Further, since every aspect of their pastoral theological tradition could not be expressed due to the time limitations of a ceremony, only the priorities were discussed and publically and mutually agreed upon. This largely neglected corpus of material reveals pastoral priorities uniquely in both an ideological (theological) and pragmatic (practical) way which makes it an essential source for understanding Particular Baptist theological precedence.

Fuller's significant influence among eighteenth century Baptists might help to explain their increased zeal for evangelism and the resulting growth that occurred. For at the heart of Fuller's axiom of, "eminent spirituality produces eminent usefulness" was an activism that was directly tied to the pastor's piety. In other words, he believed that in order for the church to flourish the pastor must be in close communion with God. In addition, he believed that the church member's piety also affected the approbation of God's presence and his accompanying blessing so that the church might become a key means for building the kingdom of God. In this

sense the destiny of all human history was directly tied to the holiness in his people. In modern North American Evangelicalism, which is still very activist in its approach to evangelism but where personal piety rooted in a biblical and doctrinal confessional framework is largely waning, Fuller's balanced approach between an adherence to doctrine combined with an emphasis on personal holiness is instructional.⁵ It is possible to be both pious and biblically confessional while effectively seeking to evangelize the world.

1.3 Hypothesis

The connection between personal holiness and effectiveness in evangelism is a vital aspect of pastoral theology. The connection between piety and growth through evangelism was at the heart of Particular Baptist growth of the late eighteenth century. Prior to this awakening when the Baptists were more inward focused, piety was understood more in terms of doctrinal precision than through a passion to promote the cause of Christ in the world. As a result there was measurable numeric decline. Did Fuller's pastoral theological emphasis on eminent spirituality which helped to foster this evangelical growth represent a radical revamping of previous Particular Baptist pastoral theological priorities?

1.4 Historiographical Approach

The goal of this study is to unearth Fuller's pastoral theological priorities, which it will be argued are clearly displayed through a study of his ordination sermons. Mainly following the preferred methodology described by James Bradley and Richard Muller this study seeks to utilize a synchronic or organic model where the major priorities of the Particular Baptists in their broader

⁵ See for example, David Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge: Is there meaning in this text?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

pastoral theological concerns are examined.⁶ These theological concerns were also influenced and shaped by other socio-political factors of the Enlightenment. Central to this method is a responsible treatment of the primary sources. A major reason for choosing ordination sermons as the basis of this study is to reliably manage the amount of material and so deal with it judiciously. Since this is essentially a study of the history of doctrine within this Baptist tradition in the eighteenth century, Fuller's thought needs to be traced in order to determine his priorities. Is Fuller radically different in his emphasis from other Baptists in the tradition? From there one can begin to answer broader questions in relation to his socio-political, theological, climate-and more specifically in relation to the Evangelical Revival and the concomitant shift away from a denominationally inward looking organism.

To accomplish this Fuller's life and influence will first be reviewed, especially among Particular Baptists of the eighteenth century. There were strong personal and theological influences that affected his shift from the more inward high Calvinism he inherited to the more experiential and evangelistic theology he would give his life to promote. By reviewing primary and secondary sources, including his diaries and letters, this study will seek to understand the forces that shaped this change. From there Fuller's life and influence will be placed within the larger socio-political climate of the eighteenth century. The Age of Enlightenment and the reaction in some quarters against all forms of tyranny also affected the outlook of dissenting churches.

After the milieu of the Particular Baptists has been briefly described emerging from their seventeenth century roots, the study will focus on the available eighteenth century Particular

⁶ James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 31-32.

Baptist sermons. It is important to establish the significance and influence of the ordination service to Particular Baptists and here the historian is greatly assisted with published records of Baptist life that reveals valuable information of the dynamics of the ordination service in John Rippon's *Register*. It provides information on who attended, the format and length of the services, as well as invaluable information on the participants. Once the significance of these services is established, the study seeks to narrow the focus, in accordance with the primary sources, to determine the main priorities of Particular Baptist's pastoral theology as seen particularly in the ordination sermons.

There are many ways to organize a study of these sermons but, following James Bradley and Richard Muller, a method most consistent with the sources themselves is preferred. For example one possibility is to study them in light of the theological distinction between high Calvinism (Gillism) or the more moderate Calvinism represented in Fuller (Fullerism). The weakness with this method is that there is so much continuity, albeit not always recognized by scholars, between these two sub-traditions, that it is all but impossible to distinguish between who even really is or is not a high Calvinist. For example even with the so-called father of high Calvinism, John Gill, it is hotly debated whether or not he actually gave free offers of the gospel.⁷ Even a cursory reading of the ordination sermons reveals that there is so much continuity in the tradition that is more productive and consistent to study them as a theological homogeneity. Therefore the main distinction in regards to changes in theological emphases is more effectively evaluated primarily by date. Although an exact date is difficult, if not impossible to pin point, there is a noticeable theological shift in emphasis discernible between

⁷ Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids, 1986), 77-107. Here Thomas Nettles questions whether the term "high-Calvinist" is an accurate description of Gill's theology.

the earlier and latter part of the eighteenth century. This study of Particular Baptist ordination sermons is based on all available primary published sermons mainly gathered from Bristol Baptist College in England and Angus Library at Oxford. The main goal is to identify and describe the pastoral theology that emerges in order to evaluate potential changes in their emphases.

Fuller had such a clear theological stress in his ordination sermons that his thought can be justly compared with other Particular Baptists in light of his unique prominence and influence especially in the latter part of the century. Since this emphasis of eminent spirituality and eminent usefulness is also noticeable in the greater Evangelical Revival it provides intriguing links between Fuller's own theological transition and the growth of the Particular Baptists with the rise of Evangelicalism. So although a primary goal is to evaluate Fuller's thought within with the developing context of his Baptist heritage, the study has implications for the larger church.

1.5 Source review

1.5.1 A Review of Fuller Scholarship to Date

Recently there has been a renewed interest in the study of Fuller as demonstrated by the upcoming production of a new critical edition of Fuller's works.⁸ Until Peter Morden's full length monograph of Fuller's life which is a published master's degree entitled, *Offering Christ to the World* (2003), the most substantial recent work was published in 1942 by Gilbert Laws.⁹ A less sympathetic recent work by George Ella, rather than presenting an objective overview of Fuller's life, is more polemical in nature defending high Calvinism in light of Fuller's (perceived

⁸ Edited by Michael Haykin, the aim is to produce a modern critical edition of the entire corpus of Andrew Fuller's published and unpublished works in fifteen volumes. <http://mgghistor.blogspot.com/2005/10/andrew-fuller-works-project.html>.

⁹ Gilbert Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1942).

destructive) theological influence.¹⁰ Prior to these more recent books the largely inaccessible works of Ryland (1816, 1818), Morris (1826), and Fuller's son Andrew Gunton (1882), represented the primary biographies on Fuller.¹¹

There are also a number of theses written on Fuller including two recent contributions by Chris Chun and Paul Brewster.¹² None of these however deal substantially with Fuller in relation to his pastoral theology as seen in his ordination sermons. In addition there has been a fairly constant stream of journal articles and contributions in books dealing with various aspects of Fuller's life and theology.¹³ The most comprehensive in the journals to date perhaps is seen in

¹⁰ George Ella, *Law and Gospel: in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Eggleston: Go Publications, 1996).

¹¹ John Ryland Jr., *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller* (London: Button and Son, 1816, 1818); J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: Wrightman and Cramp, 1826); Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Men Worth Remembering: Andrew Fuller* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882). Charles Stuart, *A Short Memoir of the Late Mr. Andrew Fuller* (Edinburgh, 1815), 3.

¹² A.H. Kirby, "The Theology of Andrew Fuller in its Relation to Calvinism" (Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1956); E. F. Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller's Doctrine of Salvation" (BD thesis, Oxford University, 1961); Robert Oliver, "The Emergence of a Strict and Particular Baptist Community Among the English Calvinistic Baptist, 1770-1850" (D.Phil. Thesis, CNNA, London Bible College, 1986); Thomas South, "The Response of Andrew Fuller to the Sandemanian View of Saving Faith" (Th.D. Thesis, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993); Pope Alexander Duncan, "The Influence of Andrew Fuller on Calvinism." (Th.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1917); D. L. Young, "The Place of Andrew Fuller in the Developing Modern Missions Movement" (D.Phil. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); John W. Eddins Jr., "Andrew Fuller's Theology of Grace" (Ph.D. Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1957); Tom Ascol, "The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller" (Ph.D. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); Harlice E. Keown, "The Preaching of Andrew Fuller" (M.Th. Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1957); Paul Brewster, "Andrew Fuller (1754-1815): Model Baptist Pastor-Theologian" (Ph.D. Thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007); Chris Chun, "The Greatest Instruction Received from Human Writings: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller" (D.Phil. Thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2008).

¹³ For example see, E. A. Payne, "Andrew Fuller as Letter Writer," BQ 15, no.7 (Jul. 1954):290-296; A. H. Kirby, "Andrew Fuller, Evangelical Calvinist," BQ 15, no. 5 (Jan. 1954); Nigel Wheeler, "The Ordination Sermons of Andrew Fuller," *Eusebia* (Spring 2008). Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller*. Dundas: Joshua Press, 2001; Michael A. G. Haykin, ed. *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*. Vol. 6, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004. In addition Michael Haykin is editing the upcoming critical edition of Fuller.

the work of E. F. Clipsham in the early 1960's until recently.¹⁴ Still Fuller's pastoral theology in his ordination sermons has been almost totally neglected.

1.5.2 Other Sources Consulted

Primary sources are used as the basis of analysis wherever possible. So for example when considering the seventeenth century forbearers of the Particular Baptists the *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660* is consulted, as are the earliest Baptist histories.¹⁵

Throughout reference is made to Fuller's correspondences which are found at Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, England. They were collected by Ernest Payne, and then typed by Joyce Booth, a librarian at the Angus Library, who transcribed them to typescript. They were scanned to disk by Nigel Wheeler in 2005.¹⁶ Allusions to Fuller's diary, which is housed at Bristol Baptist College in Bristol, England, are used to gain unique insight into Fuller's inner life and also help to date certain documents and events.

¹⁴ E. F. Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism," BQ 20, no. 1-4 (1967); "1. The Development of a Doctrine," 99-114; "2. Fuller and John Calvin," 147-54; "3. The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation," 215-25; "4. Fuller as a Theologian," 269-76; For book contribution see for example, Tom Nettles, "On the Road Again," in *By His Grace and For His Glory: A Historical, Theological and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 108-130.

¹⁵ For example B. R. White ed., *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660* (London: The Baptist Historical Society); Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, From the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George 1, 4 Vols* (London: Crosby, 1738).

¹⁶ For example Fuller's letter to Charles Stuart, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, England and the library at Bristol Baptist College, Bristol, England, Letter to Charles Stuart, Edinburgh, 1798 [Transcribed by Joyce A. Booth from a calendar of Fuller's letters prefaced by the Rev. Ernest A. Payne found in manuscript box (4/5/1)] (Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford).

The analysis of the eighteenth Century Particular Baptists pastoral theology is based on thirty-two extant published sermons beginning in the Long Eighteenth century with Nehemiah Coxe's sermon of 1681 to the ordination of George Sample in 1818.¹⁷

¹⁷ *A Sermon Preached at the ordination of an Elder and Deacons in a Baptised Congregation in London by Nehemiah Cox.* London, Printed for Tho. Fabian, at the Bible in Saint Paul's Church-Yard, a corner Shop next Cheap-Side. 168; *The Works of the late Reverend and Learned Mr. Joseph Stennett. Vol. II. Containing Fifteen Sermons Never Before Publish'd* London: Printed in the year MDCCXXI. *Sermon III. Preach'd at the Ordination of the Revd. Mr. David Rees and Two Deacons; in a Church of Christ at Limehouse, Feb. 19, 1705-6; The Duty of a Pastor to his People. Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend George Braithwaite, M.A. March 28, 1734.* Sermon XXXVII in A Collection of Sermons and Tracts: In Two Volumes. Volume II. Ordination Sermons. Several of which were never before Printed. By the late Reverend and Learned John Gill, D.D. To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author. Vol. II. London: Printed for George Keith in Gracechurch-Street. MDCCCLXXIII. Pp.1-13; *A SERMON PREACHED AT AN ORDINATION OF DEACONS. MARCH 5, 1735. Published at the REQUEST of some who heard it. Printed, and Sold by AARON WARD, at the King's-Arms in Little-Britain. London, 1735.* http://www.mountzionpbc.org/index/jb_writings.htm accessed 3.09.05; *The Work of a Gospel-Minister recommended to Consideration.* A Charge delivered at the Ordinations of the Reverend Mr. John Gill, Mr. James Larwill, Mr. Isaac Gould, Mr. Bonner Stone, and Mr. Walter Richards. Sermon XXXVIII in A Collection of Sermons and Tracts: In Two Volumes. Volume II. Ordination Sermons. Several of which were never before Printed. By the late Reverend and Learned John Gill, D.D. To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author. Vol. II. London: Printed for George Keith in Gracechurch-Street. MDCCCLXXIII. Pp. 14-29. Isaac Gould involved in John Davis ordination; *The Solemn Charge of a Christian Minister Considered. A Sermon Preach'd at the Ordination of the Revd Mr John Ryland, on the 26th of July, 1750* by John Brine. London: Printed for John Ward, at the King's Arms, in Cornhill, Opposite the Royal Exchange; *The Charge of God to Feed the Flock of Slaughter. A Sermon Preach'd at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. James Fall, of Goodman's-Fields, London, On the 28th March, 1754.* In the late Rev. Mr. William Bentley's Meeting-House, in Crispin-Street, Spital Fields. To which is added, A True, and Candid Narrative of the Churches Proceedings, in the Affair of their Separation, given at the time of ordination, by Capt. Thomas Best, one of their Worthy Deacons. By James Fall, of Watford, Hert's. I Corinthians 14:9; Philippians.1:18. London: Lemon-Street, Goodman's Fields.1754; *The Obligations of a People to their Faithful Minister. Represented in a Discourse Preached at the Ordination of the Revd. Mr. Samuel Burford, September 4, 1755.* By Benjamin Wallin. London: MDCCCLV; *Diligence in Study Recommended to Ministers. In a Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Richard Rist, in Harlow, Essex. December 15, 1756.* Published at the Request of the Church. By John Brine. London: Printed for and Sold by John Ward, at the King's Arms, against the Royal Exchange; by George Keith, in Grace-church-street; and by John Eynon, Printseller the Corner of Castle Alley, by the Royal Exchange. MDCCCLVII; *Memoirs of the late Rev. Wm. Crabtree, first pastor of the Baptist Church at Bradford, Yorkshire. To which is added a sermon, preached to the church at the ordination of the Rev. Joshua Wood, of Halifax, August 6, 1760* by Isaac Mann. London: published and sold by Button and Son, 1815. - *The Regard Which The Churches Of Christ Owe To Their Ministers. A Sermon, Preached At The Ordination Of The Rev. Joshua Wood, Of Halifax, August 6, 1760,* by the Rev. William Crabtree; *The Doctrine of the Cherubim Opened and Explained.* A Sermon at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. John Davis, at Waltham-Abbey. Preached August 15, 1764. Sermon XXXIX in A Collection of Sermons and Tracts: In Two Volumes. Volume II. Ordination Sermons. Several of which were never before Printed. By the late Reverend and Learned John Gill, D.D. To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author. Vol. II. London: Printed for George Keith in Gracechurch-Street. MDCCCLXXIII; *The Form of Sound Words to be Held Fast.* A Charge Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. John Reynolds. Sermon XL in A Collection of Sermons and Tracts: In Two Volumes. Volume II. Ordination Sermons. Several of which were never before Printed. By the late Reverend and Learned John Gill, D.D. To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author. Vol. II. London: Printed for George Keith in Gracechurch-Street. MDCCCLXXIII. Pp.49-64; *A Charge and Sermon, Together with an Introductory*

Discourse, and Confession of faith, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Caleb Evans, August 18, 1767, in Broad-Mead, Bristol. Publish'd at the request of the church, and the ministers then present. Bristol: Printed and sold by S. Farley, in Castle-Green; sold also by J. Buckland, in Paternoster Row, and G. Keith, in Gracechurch-street London, 1767; *A Charge and Sermon together with an Introductory Discourse and Confession of Faith Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Abraham Booth Feb.16, 1769, in Goodman's Fields.* Published by the Request of the Church. London, Printed for G. Keith, Gracechurch Street; J. Buckland, Paternoster Row; W. Harris, St Paul's Church-yard; B. Tomkins, Fenchurch Street; J. Gurney, Holborn, 1769. Charge by Benjamin Wallin; *God's Approbation The Study of Faithful Ministers. A Sermon delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. George Moreton, Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering. Nov. 20th, 1771. The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Robert Hall, Arnsby, Leicestershire. Consisting of Sermons, Essays, and Miscellaneous Pieces. Collected and Arranged by J.W. Morris, with a Prefatory Memoir of the Author. London: Published by W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, Stationers' Hall Court, 1828; A Charge and Sermon, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Thomas Dunscombe, at Coate, Oxon, August 4th, 1773. The Charge by Caleb Evans, M.A.. The Sermon by Hugh Evans, M.A.. Bristol: Printed and Sold by W. Pine, T. Cadell, M. Ward, & C. And J. Buckland, in London; A Charge and a Sermon, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Job David, October 7, 1773, at Frome, Somersetshire. The Charge by Daniel Turner, M.A.. The Sermon by Caleb Evans, M.A. Published at the Request of the Church. Bristol: Printed and Sold by W. Pine, T. Cadell, M. Ward, & C. And by J. Buckland, in London; *The Able Minister. A Sermon Preached in Broad-mead, Before the Bristol Education Society, August 18, 1773.* By Hugh Evans, M.A. Published at the Request of the Society, Bristol. W. Pine; *Preaching Christ and not Self. A Sermon preached at Tuckers-Street-meeting, Bristol, at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Janes.* May 26th, 1774. By Benjamin Fawcett, M.A. to which are added, Mr. Janes's Confession of Faith, and a Charge, Delivered on the Same Occasion. By Andrew Kinsman. Shrewsbury: Printed by J. Eddowes; and sold by W. Pine, T. Cadell, and W. Ward, in Bristol; and by J. Buckland, in Paternoster Row, London; *The Divine Appointment, and Great Importance of the Christian Ministry Considered,* in a Sermon, Preached in Broad-mead, Bristol, before the Bristol-Educational-Society, August 13, 1777. By Daniel Turner M. A. Published at the Request of the Society. Bristol: Printed and sold by W. Pine, T. Cadell, M. Ward, & C. –and by G. Keith, J. Buckland, E. and C. Dilly. London; *Three Discourses Addressed to the Congregation at Maze-Pond, Southwark, on their Public Declaration of having chosen Mr. James Dore their pastor.* March 25th, 1784. Cambridge, Printed by J. Archdeacon, Printer to the University; and sold by C. Dilly in the Poultry. MDCCLXXXIV. (Introductory discourse - Isaiah 54, James Dore relates his account - Church relates their account leading up to the placement of James Dore – Mr. Dore gives the statement of faith - Charge given by William Dore - 1 Thessalonians 2:4, Mr. Clark addressed the church from Jeremiah 3:15; *Pastoral Cautions: An Address to the Late Mr. Thomas Hopkins, when Ordained Pastor of the Church of Christ,* in Eagle Street, Red Lion Square, July 13, 1785. *The Works of Abraham Booth, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church Assembling in Little Prescott Street, Goodman's Fields, London. With Some Account of His Life and Writings in Three Volumes.* Vol. III London, Button and Sons, Paternoster Row, 1813; *A Charge and Sermon, Together with a Confession of Faith, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. George Birley,* on Wednesday, October 18, 1786 at St. Ives, Huntingdonshire. London: Printed for J. Buckland, Paternoster Row. *The Service of God, in the Gospel of his Son, explained and illustrated. A Charge Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. George Birley,* October 18, 1786, at St. Ives. By Dan Taylor; *Miscellaneous Works of Robert Robinson, late pastor of the Baptist Church and Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Cambridge; in Four Volumes: To Which are prefixed Brief Memoirs of his Life and Writings.* Vol. IV. Harlow: Printed by B. Flower, 1807. Sermon IX. A Discourse Preached at the ordination of George Birley, at St Ives, Huntingdonshire, Oct. 1786. pp. 39-59; *The Duty of the Ministers to be Nursing Fathers to the Church; and the Duty of Churches to Regard Ministers as the Gift of Christ: A Charge, Delivered by the Rev. John Ryland, D. D. of Bristol; and a Sermon, Delivered by the Rev. S. Pearce, M.A., of Birmingham; in the Dissenters Meeting-House, Angel-Street, Worcester, at the Ordination of the Rev. W. Belsher, to the Pastorate of the Baptist Church, meeting in Silver-Street, in the same city: Together with an Introductory Address, by the Rev. G. Osborn, and also Mr. Belsher's Declaration of Religious Sentiments.* Sold by Button, London; *A Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of Mr. George Hardstaffe, to the Pastoral care of the General Baptist Church, at Kirkby-Woodhouse, near Mansfield Nottinghamshire, August 14, 1799.* By Samuel Deacon. London: Printed by James Sammells. George's Court, Clerkenwell; *The Difficulties and Supports of a Gospel Minister; and the Duties incumbent on a Christian Church: A Charge by John Ryland, D.D. And a Sermon, by James Hinton; Delivered Nov. 17, 1801, At the Ordination of Thomas Coles, A.M. to the Pastoral Care of the Baptist**

An important source for discovering the actual dynamics of the ordination service is John Rippon's, *The Baptist Annual Register* (1790-1802), the first English Baptist periodical.

Geoffrey Nuttall states that, "No other denomination has such a fine contemporary record of its churches and their ministers as exists for the 1790s in Rippon's *Baptist Annual Register*."¹⁸ Also Ken Manley believes that the thirteen years that it was published cover the most important period

Church, at Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire. Bristol: Printed by Harris and Bryan. And sold by Button, in London; James, in Bristol; And by the Booksellers in Oxford; *The Difficulties of the Christian Ministry, and the Means of Surmounting them; with the Obedience of Churches to their Pastors Explained and Enforced: A Charge*, by the Rev. J. Ryland, D.D.. and a Sermon by the Rev. Andrew Fuller; Together with an Introductory Address, by the Rev. J. Sutcliff; Delivered June 23, 1802, At the Ordination of Thomas Morgan, To the Pastoral Office over the Baptist Church, meeting in Cannon-street, Birmingham: And, also, Mr. Morgan's Declaration of Religious Sentiments. Birmingham, Printed by J. Belcher; And sold by Button and Son, Paternoster Row, London, 1802; *On the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister: A Discourse, Delivered to the Rev. James Robertson, at his Ordination over the Independent Church at Stretton, Warwickshire. Published 1812. The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. with A Memoir of his Life by Dr. Gregory; Reminiscences, by John Greene, ESQ.: and his Character as a Preacher, by the Rev. John Foster.* Published under the Superintendence of Olinthus Gregory, LL.D. F.R.A.S., Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Military Academy; and Joseph Belcher, D.D. In Four Volumes. Vol. I. New-York: Published by Harper and Brothers, No. 82 Cliff-Street. 1849; *An Address to the Rev. Eustace Carey, On His Designation as a Christian Missionary to India. The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. with A Memoir of his Life by Dr. Gregory; Reminiscences, by John Greene, ESQ.: and his Character as a Preacher, by the Rev. John Foster.* Published under the Superintendence of Olinthus Gregory, LL.D.. F.R.A.S., Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Military Academy; and Joseph Belcher, D.D. In Four Volumes. Vol. I. New-York: Published by Harper and Brothers, No. 82 Cliff-Street. 1849; *Advice and Encouragement to Young Ministers-Two Sermons, Addressed Principally to the Students of the Two Baptist Academies at Stepney and at Bristol. The First Preached June 23, 1814, At the Rev. Dr. Rippon's Meeting, Carterlane, Southwark; The Second, August 3, 1814, At the Rev. Dr. Ryland's, Broad Mead, Bristol. By Joseph Kinghorn. Norwich: Printed and Sold by Bacon, Kinnebrook, and Co. and may be had of G. Kitton, Norwich; of Button and Son, London; and I. James, Bristol, 1814; The Substance of a Charge, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. J. K. Hall, at Kettering, November 8, 1815. [From the notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford.] The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. with A Memoir of his Life by Dr. Gregory; Reminiscences, by John Greene, ESQ.: and his Character as a Preacher, by the Rev. John Foster.* Published under the Superintendence of Olinthus Gregory, LL.D.. F.R.A.S., Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Military Academy; and Joseph Belcher, D.D. In Four Volumes. Vol. IV. New-York: Published by Harper and Brothers, 329 & 331 Pearl Street, Franklin Square, 1854; *The Qualifications Necessary for the Discharge of the Duties of the Christian Ministry. A Pastoral Charge, Addressed to Mr. George Sample, on his Ordination over the Baptist Church, Assembling at West-Gate, Newcastle upon Tyne, October 21, 1818.* By William Steadman D.D. Theological tutor of the Baptist Academy, Bradford, Yorkshire. Published from the Ms. of the Author. By particular request. London: published and sold by Button and Son, Paternoster Row: 1819.

¹⁸ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "The Baptist Churches and their Ministers in the 1790s Rippon's Baptist Annual Register" *The Baptist Quarterly* 30 (October 1984), 383.

in the history of the Particular Baptists.¹⁹ So we have a unique trace of Particular Baptists ministerial activity during a vital phase of their chronicle in the eighteenth century.²⁰

For the analyses of Fuller's published ordination sermons contained in his *Works* the three volume modern Sprinkle edition (1988) and the five volume work of William Ball (1837) were used.²¹ In addition some original copies of sermons found at Fuller's former church in Kettering, England were consulted.

1.6 Chapters outline

Chapter 2 will describe an overview of Fuller's life, the forces that shaped him as a man as well as his theology, and the impact of his life and labours in the ministry particularly in reference to his pastoral theology.

Chapter 3 places Fuller in the larger socio-political, theological tradition of the Particular Baptists beginning in the seventeenth century. Significant events that had a profound impact on Baptist activism in relation to the Established Church (Church of England) such as the Act of Toleration (May 1689) are considered. It places Fuller's origins in the Particular Baptists puritan-Separatist roots.

¹⁹ Manley, *Redeeming Love*, 139.

²⁰ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register: For 1794, 1795, 1796-1797. Including Sketches of the State of Religion Among Different Denominations of Good Men at Home and Abroad* (London: Dilly, Button, Thomas, 1796).

²¹ A. Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, With a Memoir of his Life by the Rev Andrew Gunton Fuller* (A.G. Fuller ed., rev. ed. J. Belcher: 3 vols; Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1988 [1845]); A. Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, With a Memoir of his Life by the Rev Andrew Gunton Fuller. A New Edition in Five Volumes* (London: William Ball, Paternoster, 1837). In addition to these Joseph Belcher, *The Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: Sermons, Essays, Letters, and other Miscellaneous Papers, not included in his Published Works* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1856), and J. W. Morris, ed. *Miscellaneous Pieces on Various Subjects Collected and Arranged by J. W. Morris: Intended as a Supplement to His Memoirs of the Author* [Andrew Fuller] (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1826) were also consulted.

Chapter 4 describes the dynamics and the importance of ordination sermons particularly to the Baptists. Their significant influence reflects their importance in authority. Also the actual procedure of the ceremony is described which in itself reflects its importance to the Baptists.

Chapter 5 will examine the pastoral theological emphases that emerge from eighteenth century Particular Baptist sermons. The major themes of their pastoral theology are analysed, reviewed and collated to describe theological continuity with the tradition.

Chapter 6 will examine Fuller's distinctive emphasis that comes from his ordination sermons to determine what key theological priorities shaped his understanding of pastoral ministry.

Chapter 7 will conclude with an analysis of the continuity and discontinuity between Fuller and the mainstream thought of his tradition with a view to determine what unique theological contribution he made. The goal is also to determine the extent of renewal among Particular Baptists especially between the earlier and latter part of the century.

CHAPTER 2 THE LIFE AND INFLUENCE OF ANDREW FULLER

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe Fuller's ministry including the social, theological, and religious influences that shaped him both as a man and as a pastor. His life will be examined from his inherited roots in high Calvinism to his rise as the champion of the free offer of the Gospel. Fuller's influence will be examined by considering his ministry as a pastor, his ministry as a theologian, his ministry as a missionary leader, his ministry as defender of political rights, and his ministry as a pastoral advisor. All these factors helped shape Fuller's ideal of the pastoral ministry.

2.2 Birth and Early Childhood

According to one account, when Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) was born in a farming community in the unassuming village of Wicken in Cambridgeshire, England, about seven miles from the cathedral city of Ely on 6 February 1754, "the fen-ditches were all convulsed, the earth shook to its very centre, and the devils ran frightened to one corner of Hell."¹ Robert Hall Jr. (1764-1831) who recorded this hyperbolic report was referring to the effect that Fuller's theological efforts would have on the influence of High Calvinism in the region. Fuller, who was destined to become one of the foremost Baptist theologians of the eighteenth century in Britain and America, was born in a modest farmhouse in this former marsh land that, according to his son Andrew Gunton

¹ John Greene, "Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, A. M." in Olinthus Gregory and Joseph Belcher eds., *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A. M. with a Memoir of his Life, by Dr. Gregory; Reminiscences, by John Greene, ESQ.; and his Character as a Preacher, by the Rev. John Foster* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1854), IV, 27.

Fuller, was overshadowed by the ancient Ely Cathedral's majestic octagonal tower.² The cathedral tower emblematically reflected the power and dominance of the established church (Church of England) but Fuller was born into a dissenting tradition of Puritanism on both his father's and mother's side.³

His father Robert Fuller (1723-1781) and his mother Philippa Gunton (1726-1816) were Baptists and all three of their sons, Robert (b.1747), John (b.1748), and Andrew, would later occupy leadership positions in Baptist churches with the former two serving as deacons and the latter serving as a prominent pastor. Like their father the two eldest boys Robert and John were farmers by profession and Andrew himself would practice what was then called "husbandry" until his "twentieth year."⁴ His background in farming formed some of his most dominant characteristics as a man. For example, speaking of taking a challenge to plow a straight line in a field, which was a noteworthy accomplishment among farmers, Fuller says:

One day I saw such a line, which had just been drawn, and I thought, "Now I have it." Accordingly, I laid hold of the plough, and putting one of the horses into the furrow which had been made, I resolved to keep him walking in it, and thus secure a parallel line. By and by, however, I observed that there were wrinkles in this furrow, and when I came to them, they turned out to be larger in mine than in the original. On perceiving this I threw the plough aside, and determined never to be an imitator.⁵

This commitment to intellectual independence would emerge as a consistent feature of Fuller's later ministry. In fact Gilbert Laws believes that, "Nothing is more

² Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882), 14: "But a vast expanse of country is visible from a rise of a few feet bounded by elevations, on which are to be seen ancient churches, notably those of Swaffham Prior, and that queen of cathedrals, Ely Minster, which is almost everywhere conspicuous. It still serves as a landmark to the whole district..."

³ A. Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, With a Memoir of his Life by the Rev Andrew Gunton Fuller* (A.G. Fuller ed., rev. ed. J. Belcher: 3 vols; Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1988 [1845]), I, 2.

⁴ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 5)*.

⁵ Gilbert Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: The Carey Press, 1942), 14.

remarkable about Fuller than his independence. He thought for himself, and to great purpose...⁶ Especially in regard to his theological works, Fuller did not accept others' ideas uncritically but he consistently evaluated them against the standard of the Bible.⁷ Another key characteristic of Fuller's ministry was his great industriousness and most probably this tremendous work ethic was cultivated on the farms of the Fenland.⁸

In 1761 Robert Fuller moved his family to Soham about three miles away where Andrew and his brothers were attending the local grammar school and where his wife Philippa was already a member of the Calvinistic Baptist church.⁹ Robert Fuller was a regular "hearer,"¹⁰ but Andrew was concerned that his father remained unconverted at his death.¹¹ The pastor of the Baptist work at Soham was a man named John Eve (d.1782), a High Calvinist,¹² who, reflecting the pervading theology of his day among far too many quarters of Particular Baptists, did not believe in the "free offer" of the gospel.¹³ As a result Fuller would later write in a letter to his Scottish friend Charles Stuart (1745-1826) in 1798, that Mr. Eve "had little or nothing to say to the unconverted."¹⁴

⁶ Laws, *Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder*, 14.

⁷ William Ward, *A Sketch of the Character of the Late Andrew Fuller, In a Sermon Preached at the Lal Bazar Chapel, Calcutta, on Lord's Day, October 1, 1815* (London: Button and Sons, 1817), 7: "His remarkably strong perceptions, thus assisted by a confident reliance on, and a most extensive knowledge of, divine revelation, enabled him to examine received opinions without that timidity so common to weaker minds, and without those predilections to which so many are the degraded slaves. He did not receive any human creed: he looked into the perfect law of liberty; he walked amongst the sacred penmen as one who had received at least the mantle of Elijah."

⁸ Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller*, 18.

⁹ Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller*, 13.

¹⁰ A "hearer" was a person who regularly attended the church but was not a member.

¹¹ John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (2nd ed.; London: Button & Son, 1818), 88.

¹² "High Calvinism," was also known as "hyper-Calvinism," "ultra Calvinism," or Fuller's terms, "false-Calvinism," or "pseudo-Calvinism." It was characterized mainly by a rejection of the free offer of the gospel denying it was the *duty* of the unregenerate to believe in Christ and a belief in eternal justification.

¹³ "Free Offer" refers to an indiscriminate invitation of the gospel to all people.

¹⁴ Letter to Charles Stuart, Edinburgh, 1798 [Transcribed by Joyce A. Booth from a calendar of Fuller's letters prefaced by the Rev. Ernest A. Payne found in manuscript box (4/5/1)] (Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford).

2.3 Conversion

Fuller initially had little concern for his own eternal welfare despite the fact that he regularly attended a Calvinistic dissenting church while he was growing up. Reflecting on his early days Fuller describes his most prevalent sins before his conversion as “lying, cursing, and swearing.”¹⁵ Although he periodically experienced a certain amount of success in conquering these deviations it was only temporary and his repentance was short lived. It seems the preaching he was hearing did not provide Fuller with any satisfactory answers to the questions forming in his mind concerning his eternal state. Always an avid reader, he began to search for answers in Christian literature.¹⁶ The most memorable of these books included *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* by John Bunyan (1628-1688) and the *Gospel Sonnets* of Ralph Erskine (1685-1752). The former of these works is the spiritual autobiography of John Bunyan, the lowly tinker who became a renowned preacher and author. The book was written during his imprisonment in 1666 and describes Bunyan’s spiritual passage from an irreverent life characterized by blasphemy to a new life free of bondage to sin and guilt. *Grace Abounding* records a life that begins in despair but ends with a life “full of comfort,” and thankfulness for “grace abounding.”¹⁷ Bunyan was describing the very condition Fuller was experiencing and as he read he related Bunyan’s experience to his own and was overcome with weeping. Yet, he was still not permanently relieved of his inward distress and continued in sin as before.

Again in 1767 he began to feel concern about his spiritual destiny but because of the influence of a High Calvinistic theology that taught that a sinner needed a “warrant,”

¹⁵ *Fuller’s Letters*, 4/5/1).

¹⁶ Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller*, 24.

¹⁷ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners and the Pilgrim’s Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 103.

or special qualification to come to Christ, Fuller was in a state of a hopeless despair.¹⁸ But one day as the words of the apostle in Romans 6:14, “Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace,” came to mind, he felt an overwhelming joy and freedom. According to High Calvinistic dogma this might be the special sign that confirmed salvation.¹⁹ But this latest resolution to fight sin proved to be transitory and Fuller realized there was no real change as his former apathy, especially in the practice of prayer, soon returned. After yet another similar experience in the year 1769, when Fuller was fifteen years old, his former convictions returned but this time resulted in genuine evangelical conversion. The intense conviction of sin that Fuller experienced at this time increased to the point of desperation. Fuller describes feeling like a drowning man,

...looking every way for help, or, rather catching for something by which he might save his life. I tried to find whether there was any hope in the Divine mercy – any in the Saviour of sinners; but felt repulsed by the thought of mercy having been so basely abused already. In this state of mind, as I was moving slowly on, I thought of the resolution of Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).²⁰

As he repeated to himself these verses in Job he realized that if he were to be saved he must cast himself on the mercy of Christ alone. When he began to focus on Christ’s ability and desire to save rather than his own sin and failure Fuller at last found peace for his troubled soul. He was no longer willing to depend on his own futile efforts to reform himself and according to his friend Dr Charles Stuart (1745-1826) “perceived

¹⁸ A “warrant” was a special subjective revelation of God whereby a person’s mind was unusually impressed, typically with a particular scripture text, which served as a sign, that he/she were among the elect.

¹⁹ *Fuller’s Letters*, 4/5/1. “Now the suggestion of a text of scripture to the mind, especially if it came with power, was generally considered by the religious people with whom I occasionally associated, as a promise coming immediately from God. I therefore so understood it, and thought that God had thus revealed to me that I was in a state of salvation and that therefore iniquity should not, as I had feared, be my ruin.”

²⁰ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works*, I, 5).

now, that if he were saved, he must be saved in spite of himself – that even if God forgave his past sins, he should still destroy his own soul in a day.”²¹ Andrew Fuller had truly repented this time and determined to consecrate his life to Christ.

2.4 Baptism

In March 1770 as Fuller witnessed a public believer’s baptism for the first time he was greatly moved by the experience and was convinced that it represented the apostolic mode of baptism. “The solemn immersion of a person, on a profession of faith in Christ, carried such conviction with it, that I wept like a child, on the occasion. ... I was fully persuaded, that this was the primitive way of baptizing, and that every Christian was bound to attend to this institution of our blessed Lord.”²² About a month later Fuller himself was baptized and joined the Soham church as a member. As he matured as a Christian he grew to love the church and the pastor Mr. Eve, but perhaps the most formative relationship in this early stage of his Christian life was with a man named Joseph Diver (d.1780) with whom he was baptized. Fuller’s grandson, Thomas Ekins Fuller, describes Diver at this time as a man about forty years old and somewhat reclusive and thoughtful.²³ He and Fuller soon became close friends and regularly discussed aspects of practical Christianity together.

During these early years at Soham a dispute arose over the power of sinful men to do the will of God and to keep themselves from sin. The issue was precipitated by Fuller’s challenge to a church member who drank too much. The member responded that it was not within his power to repent. Eventually he was excommunicated but the basic

²¹ Charles Stuart, *A Short Memoir of the Late Mr. Andrew Fuller* (Edinburgh, 1815), 3.

²² Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 22.

²³ *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of Andrew Fuller* (London: J. Heaton & Sons, 1863), 16.

issues remained contentious. The pastor John Eve argued that there was a difference between internal and external power in relation to a man's response to sin. Fuller recounting Eve's position says, "We certainly could keep ourselves from open sins. We had no power," he observed, "to do things spiritually good; but outward acts, we had power both to obey the will of God and disobey it."²⁴ He believed that men could not do anything spiritually good but they could keep themselves from blatant acts of sin.²⁵ But the church rejected his position and because of the dispute the pastor resigned and the church was almost dissolved. This episode provides insight into both Fuller as a Christian in particular and eighteenth-century Calvinistic Baptist life in general. First, there was in Fuller, even at this early stage in his Christian life, a deep desire that the people of God live holy lives. He boldly confronted sin, recognizing that authentic Christianity was more than a mere profession but one that demanded a holy lifestyle to affirm its genuineness and protect its integrity. Similarly, we see in the church at Soham a strong commitment to truth and therefore a willingness and desire to practice church discipline. The Bible was esteemed as the ultimate authority in all church matters not just as a principle but also as a practical truth. This experience was extremely traumatic for Fuller because he valued peace and harmony in the church but his personal struggle in answering the questions raised by the dispute would provide the foundation of much of his later apologetic ministry.

²⁴ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 8-9)*.

²⁵ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 9)*.

2.5 Fuller's Ministry

John Eve left Soham in October 1771 and Joseph Diver, who was now a deacon, took over the responsibility of filling the pulpit. However, one morning he was sick and Fuller was given an opportunity to speak extempore to the church. His first sermon lasted about thirty minutes and was well received by the church.²⁶ Providentially, the day before he had been practicing preaching a sermon to himself on Psalm 30:5 and remembered feeling comfortable that he could expound it publicly. This gave him confidence to agree to the spur-of-the-moment request to preach. Due to his initial success he was asked to speak again, but the next time he preached he felt he did not do as well. Discouraged he did not speak again for over a year.

In January 1774 an elderly lady in the church passed away and requested that Fuller preach her funeral service. In response to her request the church at Soham called him as their minister. After a probation period of a year he was officially ordained as the pastor of the Soham church in May 1775. Robert Hall, Sr. (1728-1791) of Arnsby, considered one of the wisest and most trusted counselors of the Northamptonshire Association, preached his ordination sermon.²⁷ Hall would prove to be a life-long mentor for Fuller, who in turn loved him as a father.²⁸

From the beginning of his ministry one of Fuller's central tenets as a pastor was the authority of God's word. He saw the Bible as the infallible rule for Christian living

²⁶ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 29.

²⁷ Thornton Elwyn, *Particular Baptists of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association as Reflected in the Circular Letters, 1765-1820* (<http://www.rpc.ox.ac.uk/bq/elwyn-2.htm>; accessed November 14, 2004), 1-3. The Northamptonshire Association was founded in Kettering in 1765 for the key purposes of unity in fellowship and promotion of the Particular Baptist cause. Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, his Friends and his Times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994), 111. The church at Soham had applied for, and had been accepted into membership in, the Northamptonshire Association on 8 June 1775.

²⁸ Laws, *Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder*, 31.

and consistent with this applied himself to learning its doctrines. He believed that complete dependence on God was essential for success in pastoral ministry and made Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths,” a verse he regularly applied to his life.²⁹ In this period at Soham he also sought to understand and apply the scriptures to his life by devoting himself to searching for answers to some of the prevailing theological questions of the day. These included debates about the pre-existence of Christ’s human soul before his incarnation and the question of whether the title “son” was given to Christ in his pre-incarnate state. The main theological challenge that would engage him for much of his life, though, was the “Modern Question,” which he first encountered in a systematic argument in 1775.³⁰ It dealt with whether or not it was unregenerate man’s duty to believe the gospel.³¹ This inquiry would eventually culminate in a major theological shift in Fuller’s theology that in turn would have a lasting and profound effect on the theology and practice of the British Particular Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³²

²⁹ “Amongst others, I was aware of the danger of being drawn into acquaintance with the other sex which might prove injurious to my spiritual welfare. While poring over these things...I was led to think of that passage: ‘In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.’ This made me weep for joy; and for forty-five years I have scarcely entered on any serious engagement without thinking of these words, and entreating the Divine direction.” Thomas Fuller, *Life and Writings*, 15-16.

³⁰ Matthias Maurice (1684-1738) published a book in 1737 called *The Modern Question Modestly Answer’d*. Alan P. Sell says, “Here he [Maurice] forsook High Calvinism, and proclaimed the duty of hearers of the Word to believe in Christ.” [*The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation*] (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998), 78. For more on the “Modern Question” in Northamptonshire, see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “Northamptonshire and The Modern Question: A Turning-Point in Eighteenth Century Dissent” *Journal of Theological Studies* 16 (1965).

³¹ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 15)*.

³² Not all believe that these influences were necessarily positive. For example see George M. Ella, *Law and Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Durham: GO Publications, 1996), 11.

Another important aspect of Fuller’s personality and a key to understanding his ministry was his desire and ability to maintain “spiritual” friendships.³³ On 28 May 1776 Fuller met John Sutcliff (1752-1814) at the Northamptonshire Association meeting at Olney. John Sutcliff was the pastor of the Particular Baptist Church at Olney and, as we shall see, his friendship and influence is deeply woven into the fabric of Fuller’s story. Shortly afterwards in 1778 Fuller also met John Ryland Jr. (1753-1825), who was at this time co-pastor of the Calvinistic Baptist church at Northampton. Both these men proved to be lifelong friends, working side-by-side in furthering the work of the Baptist denomination especially through the promotion of the Baptist Missionary Society. As E. F. Clipsham notes, Fuller’s involvement with the eighteenth-century evangelical revival among the Baptists is essentially a story of teamwork.³⁴ These men all shared a common theological identity as they were all re-evaluating certain aspects of High Calvinistic theology. In particular, there was a common appreciation for the writings of the New England divine Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) which they circulated amongst themselves.³⁵ They all came to believe in, and to actively promote, the theological belief that it was the duty of all who hear the gospel to believe in Jesus Christ. In particular, Jonathan Edwards’ theology provided the answers they were seeking, especially in his book, *A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue, and Vice, Reward*

³³ M. A. G. Haykin ed., *The Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller* (Dundas: Joshua Press, 2001), 42.

³⁴ E. F. Clipsham, “Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism” *The Baptist Quarterly* 20, no. 6 (April 1964): 270.

³⁵ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 35)*.

and *Punishment, Praise and Blame* (hereafter referred to as *Freedom of the Will*).³⁶

Edwards' *Freedom of the Will* significantly influenced Fuller's thinking, particularly the distinction between natural and moral inability. For Fuller this distinction clearly articulated a line of thought, towards which he was already moving, which would form the basis of his argument in his influential soteriological *magnum opus*, *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*.³⁷

On 23 December 1776 Fuller married Sarah Gardiner (1756-1792), a member of the Soham church. Together they had eleven children but only three would survive infancy. As mentioned, one of the remarkable features of Fuller's life was his indefatigable energy and productivity even amidst severe trials. A trial that he often faced was the loss of loved ones and especially of his beloved children. In particular, the death of a daughter named Sarah (1779-1786) sorely grieved him. His good friend and first biographer John Ryland Jr. recalls the deep love Fuller had for the girl. Ryland writes, "With respect to his parental tenderness towards his daughter, I was an eye-witness to the uncommon degree in which it was manifested."³⁸ Fuller had committed her to God at a very early age and was almost overwhelmed when she died of the measles at six and half years old. While she was dying Fuller describes his anguish in his diary:

Death! Death is all around me! My friends die... Death and judgment is all I can think about! ... On the 25th, in particular, my distress seemed beyond all measure. I lay

³⁶ Originally the work was recommended to Fuller by Robert Hall in 1775, but Fuller did not read it until 1777, two years later. A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 14)*. Paul Ramsay ed. Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957): 118-119: Edwards' *Freedom of the Will* was first published in Boston in the year 1754. A second and third edition was brought out by publishers in London in 1762 and 1768 in the decade following Edwards' death in 1758. To the third edition, the 'Remarks' on *Lord Kames' Essays* were added for the first time. The fourth English edition appeared in 1775 and in 1790 two more British editions.

³⁷ Andrew Fuller, *Gospel Worthy (Works, II, 330)*. In the preface to the *Gospel Worthy*, Fuller states his interest and dependence on President Edwards' *Freedom of the Will* particularly in reference to the difference between natural and moral inability.

³⁸ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 270.

before the Lord, weeping like David, and refusing to be comforted. This brought on, I have reason to think, a bilious cholic: a painful affliction it was; and the more so, as it prevented my ever seeing my child alive again! Yes, she is gone! On Tuesday morning, May 30, as I lay ill in bed, in another room, I heard a whispering. I inquired, and all were silent..... all were silent..... but all is well! I feel reconciled to God. I called my family round my bed. I sat up, and prayed as well as I could; I bowed my head, and worshipped, and blessed a taking as well as a giving God.³⁹

Despite these tremendous trials Fuller found strength in God's sovereign and benevolent care and this enabled him to press forward with his duties as a pastor. Later on in his ministry he would remember these trials and use them to minister sensitively and with empathy to others facing similar difficulties.⁴⁰

His wife Sarah died six years later after a bout of mental illness. During certain episodes she thought that Andrew was an imposter who had infiltrated the house. Fuller writes, "'No,' she would say to me, with a countenance full of inexpressible anguish, 'this is not my home...you are not my husband...these are not my children.'"⁴¹ She was always trying to "escape" and so Andrew was forced to lock the doors to keep her safe at home. Despite his great love for her, when she eventually died Fuller characteristically responded with humble resignation. "It is the cup which my Father hath given me to drink, and shall I not drink it?"⁴² Fuller married again on 30 December 1794, this time to Miss Ann Coles (d.1825), daughter of the Rev. William Coles (1735-1809), a Baptist pastor from Ampthill in Bedfordshire.⁴³

³⁹ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 283-284.

⁴⁰ For example in a letter to his friend Christopher Anderson written in 1809 concerning the death of a niece, Fuller adds his biblical perspective and encouragement remembering the death of his own daughter Sarah. See Joseph Belcher, *The Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: Sermons, Essays, Letters, and other Miscellaneous Papers, not included in his Published Works* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1856), 303.

⁴¹ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 59)*.

⁴² A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 61)*.

⁴³ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 293.

Fuller pastored the church at Soham for seven years. As his theology began to shift further away from its High Calvinist roots so also his preaching underwent a transformation. Increasingly it was becoming characterized by a passion to share that all sinners were welcomed to trust in Christ without any special sign that they were among the “elect.” A small minority of people in the church was alarmed at this change and became disgruntled with this aspect of his ministry.⁴⁴ In addition to these conflicts Fuller was also struggling with insufficient finances as the exiguous resources of the poor church could not afford an adequate salary to support his growing family.

At the same time he was struggling with these issues the congregation of the Baptist church at Kettering who had heard him preach on many occasions approached him to become their full- time pastor. Despite the temptation of the opportunity at the larger Kettering church which could pay him what he needed and which was more theologically compatible, Fuller agonized long and hard over the decision to accept their offer. He considered the relationship between a church and its pastor to be a covenant relationship ordained by God similar to a marriage and his hesitation was based on a desire to make certain that he was doing the will of God.⁴⁵ Ryland says, “Men who fear not God, would risk the welfare of a nation with fewer searchings of heart than it cost him to determine whether he should leave a little dissenting church, scarcely containing forty members besides himself and his wife.”⁴⁶ Fuller’s diary at this time reveals some of his internal struggles. “My heart often aches in thinking of my situation. Lord, what is duty? Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes.”⁴⁷ Fuller loved the people at

⁴⁴ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 18)*.

⁴⁵ *Laws, Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder, 41*.

⁴⁶ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 19)*.

⁴⁷ Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller, 46*.

Soham and was reluctant to leave them without a shepherd so he sought the Lord in prayer with fasting even as he was considering the counsel of trusted advisors.⁴⁸ In May 1781 at the annual association meeting Fuller asked for the advice of nine assembled ministers.⁴⁹ They unanimously advised him to pursue the opportunity at Kettering. Fuller's sense of duty was not satisfied, though, as he was concerned that he may have presented only his side of the story without properly representing the opinions of the Soham church.⁵⁰ So both Fuller and the church sought answers through an arbitration committee consisting of three ministers. The results were that one justified his removal, another condemned it, and the third was neutral.⁵¹ As the issue of whether he should leave or stay was still not decided, the case was referred to Robert Robinson (1735-1790) from Cambridge, a businessman, farmer and pastor, who advised that Fuller should continue at Soham for a full year and the congregation should raise his income to twenty-six pounds a year clear of all deductions.⁵² Fuller was making about thirteen pounds a year salary at the time.⁵³ It is indicative of Fuller's character that even though the counsel of men was sought the Word of God was the final arbitrator. In a diary entry of 10 January 1780 Fuller prayed:

Nor do thou suffer my own *fancy* to misguide 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*. Yet, Lord, I am afraid, seeing I am as liable to err as other

⁴⁸ A. G. *Memoir* (*Works*, I, 31).

⁴⁹ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir* (*Works*, I, 29): The ministers were Abraham Booth, Caleb Evans, John Gill, Jr., Thomas Guy, Robert Hall, Sr., Richard Hopper, John Ryland Sr., John Ryland Jr., and John Sutcliff.

⁵⁰ A. G. Fuller, *The Principal Works and Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: with a New Memoir of his Life, by his Son* (London, Henry G. Bohn, 182), 29.

⁵¹ Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller*, 49.

⁵² Laws, *Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder*, 42. Laws feels that Robinson may have thought that Fuller could engage in multiple occupations like himself to supplement his income. Fuller tried bi-vocational ministry by setting up a school, which had failed by April 1780. J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society* (London: Paternoster Row, 1816), 29.

⁵³ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir* (*Works*, I, 19).

men, lest I should be led aside from truth by mine own imagination. Hast thou not promised, “The meek thou wilt guide in judgment, and the meek thou wilt teach thy way”?⁵⁴

Appropriating the promise of Psalm 25:9, he trusted that ultimately the Lord would guide him.

In October 1782 Fuller moved to Kettering to the church known as the “Little Meeting House,” a term that distinguished it from an independent church known as the “Great Meeting House.”⁵⁵ Following another probation period of a year he was formally installed as their pastor. He ministered at the “Little Meeting House” in Kettering for the next thirty-two years but there was a certain irony underlying this transfer. It is noteworthy that John Gill (1697-1771), whose parents were founding members of the Baptist church at Kettering, and John Brine (1703-65), both considered the fathers of High Calvinism among the Baptists, were both born in Kettering.⁵⁶ Now the man credited with bringing down the strongholds of High Calvinist dogma was pastoring the church that had nurtured young Gill and Brine in the faith.

The Baptist church at Kettering had eighty-eight members when Fuller was called, but the number of “hearers” was much higher than the membership numbers indicated. At the time of Fuller’s death the membership numbered one hundred and seventy-four with about one thousand hearers⁵⁷ and at this time the population of Kettering was only about three thousand and three hundred people.⁵⁸ According to Laws

⁵⁴ A. G. Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 20)*.

⁵⁵ Laws, *Pastor, Theologian Ropeholder*, 43.

⁵⁶ Robert W. Oliver, “John Gill (1697-1771)” in Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910* (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), I, 145.

⁵⁷ Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 110.

⁵⁸ R. L. Greenall, “After Fuller: Baptists in Nineteenth Century Kettering” *The Kettering Connection-Northamptonshire Baptists and Overseas Missions*, R. L. Greenall (ed) (Leicester: Department of Adult Education, 1993), 33.

many were afraid to commit to membership because they doubted if they were truly among the elect.⁵⁹ He quips, “The door-step of the church was very high indeed,” which he feels may account for the high number of hearers.⁶⁰ This interpretation is open to challenge however, as it is hard to imagine that this many people would sit under Fuller’s ministry so long and still maintain a High Calvinist position. Perhaps Fuller’s views on strict communion might also have contributed to this state of affairs. Regardless, the situation at Kettering was typical of the period. The elder Robert Hall gave the charge to Fuller from 1 Timothy 4:12 with John Ryland Jr. preaching to the people from Acts 20:31.

The move put Fuller into closer and more frequent contact with John Sutcliff, John Ryland, and Robert Hall, men who would emerge as the key leaders of the British Calvinistic Baptists and who greatly influenced the direction and growth of the denomination.⁶¹ Perhaps their main influence on Fuller’s theology would be introducing him to the New England theology of Jonathan Edwards. On 23 April 1784⁶² Ryland received from John Erskine (1721-1803)⁶³ a copy of Edwards’ *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture Promises and Prophecies concerning the Last Time*.⁶⁴ He immediately

⁵⁹ Laws, *Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder*, 44.

⁶⁰ Laws, *Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder*, 44.

⁶¹ George M. Ella disagrees that their influence, especially Fuller’s, was positive. Ella, *Law and Gospel*, 193.

⁶² Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 158.

⁶³ John Erskine was a Scottish Presbyterian divine involved in transatlantic letter writing. See the discussion of transatlantic evangelical correspondence in relation to Erskine in Susan O’Brien, “A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755” *The American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 811-832.

⁶⁴ The influence on Fuller is reflected in his diary where he comments, “Some serious tenderness of spirit, and concern for the carnality of my heart, for some days past. Read to our friends, this evening, a part of Mr. Edwards’s *Attempt to Promote Prayer for the Revival of Religion*, to excite them to the like practice. Felt my heart profited, and much solemnized by what I read.” This extract is found in Fuller’s

shared it with Sutcliff and Fuller and as a result they committed to spend every second Tuesday of every other month to “seek the revival of real religion, and the extension of Christ’s kingdom in the world.”⁶⁵ At the annual association meeting of that year Fuller preached a sermon on 2 Corinthians 5:7 entitled *The Nature and Importance of Walking by Faith*. Following Fuller’s sermon Sutcliff proposed the churches of the association meet to pray that God would send revival. They met every first Monday of the month for one hour.⁶⁶ Soon other Particular Baptist churches in other associations throughout England began similar corporate prayer regiments.⁶⁷ These prayer meetings continued for another forty years and were directly linked to renewal among British Particular Baptists⁶⁸ while at the same time nurturing thoughts of expansion beyond Britain.⁶⁹ This renewed interest in corporate prayer may provide evidence of a shift among the Particular Baptists from “a garden enclosed”⁷⁰ that primarily looked within towards an interest in influencing the wider church and the world in general. They now seemed more concerned to pray that all evangelicals experience success in the spread of the gospel.⁷¹

Fuller continued to remain very active in the Northamptonshire Association and his leadership became so significant that J. W. Morris describes him as functioning as a

Diary, now at Bristol Baptist College, written 9 July 1784. Andrew Fuller, *Diary and Spiritual Thoughts [1784-1801]*.

⁶⁵ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 96.

⁶⁶ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 164.

⁶⁷ In 1786 these prayer meetings began among the Warwickshire churches and in the Western Association by 1790. See Peter Morden, “Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions” in Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 240.

⁶⁸ Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 109.

⁶⁹ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey: The Father of Modern Missions* (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1993), 9-11.

⁷⁰ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 20. Haykin describes how early eighteenth-century Particular Baptists had “limited their horizons to the maintenance of congregational life” as a means of self-preservation and “delighted in describing themselves as ‘a garden enclosed’ (Song of Solomon 4:12).”

⁷¹ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 165.

kind of an unofficial “bishop” of the Baptists.⁷² One of the ways he contributed was regularly writing some of the circular letters distributed annually to the churches of the association. For example, shortly after the “1784 Call to Prayer,” Fuller wrote a circular letter entitled *Causes of Declension in Religion, and Means of Revival*. In it he called for self-examination among the churches to remove any potential cause for a decline in spiritual vitality. He challenged them to consider whether or not there existed in their churches a contentedness with only a superficial acquaintance with the gospel and also if they were satisfied with only a surface level concern of holiness and prayer.⁷³ He was anxious to encourage churches to repent as a necessary precursor to revival.⁷⁴

Another important role Fuller played in the Northamptonshire Association was his involvement in the ordination sermons of new pastors. Through this means he could challenge a new generation of leadership, and in turn the community they influenced to, among other things, participate in effective evangelism based on the evangelical Calvinism carefully articulated in his *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*.

2.5.1 The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation

The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation was published in two editions. It was originally written in 1781 to confirm in Fuller’s own mind whether men needed a warrant to come to Christ. At this time he had no thoughts of publishing it.⁷⁵ The first edition, published in 1785, was entitled *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of all Acceptation: or the Obligations of Men Fully to Credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes*

⁷² Morris, *Life and Writings*, 83.

⁷³ Fuller, *Declension in Religion* (*Works*, III, 318).

⁷⁴ Fuller, *Declension in Religion* (*Works*, III, 323).

⁷⁵ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 328, 329).

*Known. Wherein is Considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of Those Where the Gospel Comes in that Matter.*⁷⁶ The second edition, which represents the more mature soteriology of Fuller, was published in 1801 under the title *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation, or the Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ, with Corrections and Additions to which is added an Appendix, On the Necessity of a Holy Disposition in Order to Believing in Christ*. As mentioned, the initial key motivation for exploring these theological issues stemmed from his original situation at Soham when John Eve resigned over the question of whether a person could keep himself from sin. As Fuller delved deeper into the issue he noticed that scripture often exhorts and commands *all people* to repent.⁷⁷ In Fuller's mind Edwards' distinction between moral and natural inability in his *Freedom of the Will* was one of the keys to understanding the errors both of Arminianism and of High Calvinism. Both of these assumed that if God commands something men and women must possess certain capabilities to obey or it would be unjust. Whereas Arminians reasoned that in order for God to be just man must have the innate ability to respond to his commands, High Calvinists argued that in order to be just God simply does not require unregenerate man to obey God's spiritual commands. "Where no grace is given, they are united in supposing that no duty can be required; which, if true, 'grace is no more grace'."⁷⁸ Here Edwards' distinction between moral and natural inability was helpful to Fuller. Edwards argues that all men have the natural ability to respond to the gospel but morally they will not because of the imputation of sin from the "fall" of

⁷⁶ Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of all Acceptation: or the Obligations of Men Fully to Credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes Known. Wherein is Considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of Those Where the Gospel Comes in that Matter* (Northampton: T. Dicey & Co., 1785). This first edition is not found in his complete *Works*.

⁷⁷ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 328).

⁷⁸ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 330).

Adam.⁷⁹ As Peter Morden summarizes: “a person could not come” to Christ “because they would not come” to Christ.⁸⁰ Fuller also found support from older Puritan divines like John Bunyan and John Owen (1616-1683) in that he found evidence that they regularly made indiscriminate calls to repent and turn to Christ.⁸¹ Arminians and High Calvinists alike sought to refute the *Gospel Worthy* in print. Against both of these camps, Fuller found in Edwards’ theology a defense of the biblical balance between the antinomic realities of the divine sovereignty of God and human responsibility.

The subtitle *The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ* effectively summarized the main thesis of the *Gospel Worthy*, for, at the time of publication, a central purpose of the book was to provide the theological rationale to motivate churches to share the gospel through evangelical appeals to all and sundry to repent and believe in Christ.⁸² The work itself is divided into three parts. In part one Fuller stressed the importance of a correct understanding of the true nature of biblical faith. High Calvinists like Lewis Wayman (fl. 1730-1740) had argued that faith must contain “a persuasion of our interest in spiritual blessings.”⁸³ Fuller agreed that true faith may indeed contain assurance of salvation but that it was not the central aspect of saving faith. An unbeliever may be convinced that he is in a state of salvation but this in itself does not validate his faith as authentic. Under the High Calvinist scheme a person tended to place his trust in faith itself rather than the gospel. Fuller, on the other hand, believed that true faith trusts

⁷⁹ Romans 5:12.

⁸⁰ Morden, *Offering Christ*, 44.

⁸¹ Arthur H. Kirkby, *Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)* (London: Independent Press, 1961), 11. See Andrew Fuller, “Gospel Worthy” (*Works*, II, 367).

⁸² Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 386).

⁸³ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 333).

what God has revealed in scripture about Christ and his salvation.⁸⁴ As a result biblical faith must be directed outwards with Christ as its focus. High Calvinism encouraged people to gaze inward for assurance seeking to see if they were among the “elect.” They looked for a “warrant” as evidence to apply for Christ’s mercy, while for Fuller the “warrant” was the gospel offer itself.⁸⁵

Part two of the *Gospel Worthy* is concerned with Fuller’s main thesis that faith in Christ is the duty of all who hear, or who have the opportunity to hear, the gospel. He provided six arguments to support his position. First, Fuller argued that “unconverted sinners are commanded, exhorted, and invited to believe in Christ for salvation.”⁸⁶ It followed that those who hear the Gospel are expected to respond in faith. “All who hear” includes not only the elect, but unbelievers also, as evidenced in scripture passages like Psalm 2:12 and John 12:36. The second main argument is that every person is required to accept and obey whatever God reveals.⁸⁷ If God reveals something as true his creatures should not doubt it. To neglect God’s revelation is a violation of duty and those who do not choose Christ are condemned in scripture as being disobedient.⁸⁸ Third, “though the gospel, strictly speaking, is not a law, but a message of pure grace, yet it virtually requires obedience, and such an obedience as includes saving faith.”⁸⁹ The Gospel by virtue of its content requires obedience to it. So Fuller says for example that just as the goodness of God is not a law yet deserves a reaction of gratitude, so the Gospel requires

⁸⁴ E. F. Clipsham, “Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism” *The Baptist Quarterly* 20 (January 1964), 215; *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 332-342).

⁸⁵ Gerald L. Priest, “Andrew Fuller, Hyper-Calvinism, and the Modern Question” in Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 54.

⁸⁶ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 343).

⁸⁷ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 349).

⁸⁸ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 352).

⁸⁹ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (*Works*, II, 352).

an appropriate response of obedience.⁹⁰ Fourth, “the want of faith in Christ is ascribed in the scriptures to men’s depravity, and is itself represented as a heinous sin.”⁹¹ The lack of faith itself is considered as sin in the Bible so it must be a duty to believe. Fifth, “God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on sinners for their not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹² Only sin can be the cause of God’s punishment and sin is a breach of duty.⁹³ Finally, “other spiritual exercises which sustain an inseparable connection with faith in Christ are represented as the duty of man in general.”⁹⁴ Repentance, which is a general duty of all men, is thus a spiritual exercise resulting in spiritual blessing but is inseparable from faith. The third section of the *Gospel Worthy* responds to seven major arguments against Fuller’s theology.⁹⁵

The importance of the *Gospel Worthy* can be seen through its continuing influence in the nineteenth century. Among the Calvinistic Baptists two opposing theological ideologies emerged, the one known as “Fullerism” and the other known as “Gillism.” The former system, based on the arguments in the *Gospel Worthy*, made it theologically consistent to call all men to repentance while the latter system viewed such universal calls as a perversion of the true gospel.⁹⁶ The second edition of the *Gospel Worthy* received fierce opposition not only from some High Calvinists, but also from

⁹⁰ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (Works, II, 352).

⁹¹ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (Works, II, 354).

⁹² Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (Works, II, 358).

⁹³ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (Works, II, 358).

⁹⁴ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (Works, II, 360).

⁹⁵ Fuller, *Gospel Worthy* (Works, II, 366-382). These arguments relate to such things as the principle of holiness possessed by man in innocence, the decrees of God, particular redemption, sinners under the covenant of works, the inability of sinners to believe in Christ and do what is spiritually good, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of a divine principle to believe.

⁹⁶ Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Lake Charles, Louisiana: Cor Meum Tibi, 2002), 110. George M. Ella would not consider *Gillism* to represent the charges often laid against Hyper-Calvinism in that he would deny the charge that they did not evangelize. Ella, *Law and Gospel*, 193.

some more sympathetic and moderate Calvinistic Baptists like Abraham Booth (1734-1806).⁹⁷ It should be noted that despite the controversy between Booth and Fuller, both men as leading Particular Baptists of the latter eighteenth century⁹⁸ remained cordial with one another.⁹⁹ Fuller could still refer to Booth as a “good man and upright.”¹⁰⁰ In turn Booth gave his support to the Baptist Missionary Society.

The *Gospel Worthy* in its second edition represented the crystallization of Fuller’s thought and provided clear and concise theological rationale for what many Particular Baptists already believed. As a result it had significant influence on British Particular Baptists in reminding them of, and consequently restoring them back to, their seventeenth-century Particular Baptist evangelistic heritage.¹⁰¹ Many consider the *Gospel Worthy* to be the key factor in rejuvenating evangelistic activity among British Particular Baptists. Doyle Young writes, “This book, more than any other single influence, drew the attention of Baptists back to the importance of evangelism. Its significance was monumental.”¹⁰² In regard to emancipation from High Calvinism, Morris noted at this time:

A considerable revolution has in consequence taken place in the sentiments of the Baptist denomination, and a greater relish excited for spiritual and practical religion. A

⁹⁷ For Fuller’s response see, *Six Letters to Dr. Ryland Respecting the Controversy with the Rev. A. Booth*, (Works, II, 699- 715).

⁹⁸ Abraham Booth was a leading Particular Baptist minister who pastored Prescott Street Baptist Church in London for almost thirty-seven years. See Robert W. Oliver, “Abraham Booth (1734-1806)” in Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910* (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), II, 31.

⁹⁹ Robert W. Oliver, “Andrew Fuller and Abraham Booth” in Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 203.

¹⁰⁰ Letter to William Carey, November 26, 1802 [Transcribed by Joyce A. Booth from a calendar of Fuller’s letters prefaced by the Rev. Ernest A. Payne found in manuscript box (4/5/1)] (Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford).

¹⁰¹ Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2001), 269.

¹⁰² Doyle L. Young, “The Place of Andrew Fuller in the Developing Modern Mission Movement” (Ph.D. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981), 130.

wider separation has been made between real and nominal Christians of the same community; between Antinomian Calvinists and Calvinistic believers; while a closer union has been effected amongst the genuine friends of evangelical truth.¹⁰³

Thus, by positively influencing the milieu of the Particular Baptists, the *Gospel Worthy* paved the way for evangelical preaching, personal evangelism, and overseas missions by providing these Christians with the biblical justification to make appeals for souls.¹⁰⁴ The new evangelistic environment contributed to an era of expansionistic optimism where confidence was mounting that God was about to enlarge His kingdom on earth.¹⁰⁵

2.5.2 Other Theological Controversies

Throughout his career Fuller was involved in a variety of debates combating theological errors of his day. An important work refuting the Socinianism¹⁰⁶ of Joseph Priestly (1733-1804) entitled, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to their Moral Tendency*, was written in 1793.¹⁰⁷ Fuller effectively argued that Socinianism, which denied the trinity of the Godhead and the deity of Christ, produced a vastly inferior form of morality to that of orthodox Christianity.

¹⁰³ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 272.

¹⁰⁴ Morden, *Offering Christ*, 139.

¹⁰⁵ Morden, "Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions," 240.

¹⁰⁶ Walter A. Elwell ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology 3rd ed.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), s. v. "Socinus, Faustus (1539-1604)," by P. Kubricht: Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) believed scripture should be interpreted rationally. "This philosophical framework led him to deny the deity of Christ." He did not believe the cross bought forgiveness of sins, he denied the Trinity, original sin, predestination and the resurrection of the body. His ideas were the root of later Unitarian movements.

¹⁰⁷ Fuller, *Socinian Systems Examined*, (*Works*, II, 108).

Another influential work and one of his most popular apologetic works was a defense against the Deism of men like Thomas Paine (1737-1809).¹⁰⁸ In 1800 the work *The Gospel its Own Witness* was published (and subsequently reprinted numerous times) and represented the most significant eighteenth-century Baptist defense against Deism.¹⁰⁹

Finally, his *Strictures on Sandemanianism in Twelve Letters to a Friend* (1810) countered the arguments of the doctrine of Robert Sandeman (1718-1771) who taught that faith was an intellectual consent to the doctrines of scripture.¹¹⁰ Fuller argued that true knowledge of Christ necessarily involves the affections of the heart where a proper understanding of doctrine leads to a love and delight in the living resurrected person of Jesus Christ. In other words true Christianity for Fuller was a relationship *with* a person rather than a mere assent to certain truths *about* a person.

2.5.3 Other Writings

Mention should also be made of Fuller's memoir for his good friend Samuel Pearce (1766-1799) entitled *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, M.A.* (1800).¹¹¹ Pearce was the pastor of Cannon Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. He was well loved in the group of friends that consisted of John Ryland, John Sutcliff, Robert Hall Jr. (1764-

¹⁰⁸ Walter A. Elwell ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), s. v. "Deism," by M. H. Macdonald: Deism was a movement of rationalistic thought in the eighteenth century. Deists differ from orthodox Christianity in that they "deny the Trinity, the incarnation, the divine authority of the Bible, the atonement, miracles, any particular elect people such as Israel, and any supernatural redemptive act in history."

¹⁰⁹ Fuller, *Gospel It's Own Witness* (*Works*, II, 1). Timothy Larsen, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), s. v. "Fuller, Andrew (1754-1815)" by M. A. G. Haykin.

¹¹⁰ Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism* (*Works*, II, 561). See also the online article by Michael Haykin, *Defenders of the Faith: Andrew Fuller and the Sandemanians* (<http://www.evangelical-times.org>., accessed 9 November 2004). And Michael A. G. Haykin, "Andrew Fuller and the Sandemanian Controversy" in Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 226.

¹¹¹ Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce* (*Works*, III, 367).

1831), William Carey (1761-1834), and Fuller. They all recognized his exceptional piety and he became known as “the seraphic Pearce” for his chief characteristic of “holy love.”¹¹² The descriptive of “holy love” referred not only to his great love to God, but also to his concomitant evangelistic passion for the salvation of souls. When funding for the Baptist Missionary Society seemed only like a quixotic ideal Pearce managed to raise the munificent amount of seventy pounds for the society. He himself earnestly desired to go out as a missionary but his ministerial peers felt he was needed more at home.¹¹³ When their verdict was pronounced, Pearce humbly submitted to their counsel despite his enormous personal disappointment.¹¹⁴ This self-sacrificing Christian submission was one of the traits that endeared him so much to his colleagues. Fuller was on a fund raising trip to Scotland when he heard of the death of Pearce. He was so overcome he cried, “O Jonathan, very pleasant hast thou been unto me. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan... God of Samuel Pearce be my God.”¹¹⁵ Pearce died young at the age of thirty-three and Fuller’s *Memoirs* portray him as a kind of Baptist David Brainerd (1718-1747) who was known by all for his deep love of God, personal holiness, and effectiveness as an evangelistic preacher.¹¹⁶ Fuller’s memoir of Pearce proved to be a very popular work gaining a high place “in the public estimation.”¹¹⁷

In addition to his controversial works and Pearce’s *Memoirs*, Fuller also authored much personal correspondence, circular letters to the Northamptonshire Association,

¹¹² Tom Wells, “Samuel Pearce (1766-1799)” *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910* Vol. II. Michael A. G. Haykin ed., (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 183. See also (*Works*, III, 429).

¹¹³ Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce* (*Works*, III, 380).

¹¹⁴ Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce* (*Works*, III, 384, 389).

¹¹⁵ Laws, *Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder*, 81.

¹¹⁶ Norman Pettit, ed. Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). David Brainerd, whose biography was written by Jonathan Edwards, was a missionary to the North American Indians of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York.

¹¹⁷ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 181. See also T.E. Fuller, *Life of Fuller*, 214.

numerous sermons, evangelistic tracts, various essays, book reviews, answers to queries in journal articles, a personal diary, articles on various theological topics and he even began a systematic theology. He also produced two major expository works, one on Genesis and one on Revelation. What is particularly remarkable about this prodigious literary output is that it was written while pastoring a growing church in addition to all his duties as the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society.

2.5.4 Baptist Missionary Society

By 1792, the Particular Baptists in Britain were growing stronger. This set the stage for the formation of *The Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen* (afterwards called the Baptist Missionary Society and abbreviated BMS).¹¹⁸ William Carey, one of the first missionaries of the BMS and often credited as the “founder of the modern missionary movement,”¹¹⁹ was born in the small village of Paulerspury in the Midlands of England. He was converted at the age of seventeen and in October 1783 John Ryland Jr. baptized Carey in the River Nene at Northampton.¹²⁰ Six years later in 1789 Carey accepted a call to become pastor of the church at Harvey Lane in Leicester. This would put him in the company of like-minded men who would nurture and facilitate his desire for a missionary society to reach the world with the gospel.¹²¹

The formation and success of the BMS was a result of the perseverance and vision of Carey, the industriousness of Fuller and his friends, as well as an evangelical climate

¹¹⁸ Morden, *Offering Christ*, 129-130.

¹¹⁹ Morden, *Offering Christ*, 129. Morden points out that this nomenclature is in some ways misleading as Carey was not the first protestant missionary sent from Europe. Also Carey was greatly influenced by the American missionary David Brainerd.

¹²⁰ Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 26.

¹²¹ John C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (2 vols.: London, 1859), I, 7.

where churches and individuals were willing to provide prayer and financial resources for the cause.¹²² However, the focus here is on Fuller's important contribution. John Ryland Jr., who himself was a key figure in the development of the BMS wrote,

With regard to Mr. Fuller's active concern for the welfare of the Baptist Mission, from his appointment as Secretary, at its first formation, till his death, it is impossible to do full justice to his indefatigable zeal, his assiduous attention to whatever could promote its welfare, and the uncommon prudence with which he conducted all measures that related to it at home, and gave counsel to those that needed it most abroad.¹²³

2.5.4.1 Formation of the BMS

At the Clipstone ministers meeting on 27 April 1791 two important sermons were delivered. The first was John Sutcliff's sermon *Jealousy for the Lord of Hosts Illustrated*, based on 1 Kings 19:10.¹²⁴ The second sermon was given by Fuller and was entitled *The Instances, Evil, and Tendency of Delay, in the Concerns of Religion*. It was based on Haggai 1:2.¹²⁵ In this address Fuller challenged Christians to consider whether they were guilty of procrastination which had resulted in halfhearted efforts in world evangelization:

There is something of this procrastinating spirit that runs through a great part of our life, and it is of great detriment to us in the work of God. We know of many things that should be done, and cannot in conscience directly oppose them; but still we find excuses for our inactivity.¹²⁶

Fuller was appealing for action in addition to prayer. He recognized that God ordained "ordinary means" like evangelistic preaching as the outworking of his sovereign

¹²² F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, from 1792 to 1842*. Vol.1 (London: T. Ward & Co. and G. & J. Dyer, 1842), 5; Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 147-8.

¹²³ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 147.

¹²⁴ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 149. For the entire text of the sermon, see Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 355-365.

¹²⁵ Fuller, *Delay in Religious Concerns (Works, I, 145-51)*.

¹²⁶ Fuller, *Delay in Religious Concerns (Works, I, 145)*.

plan. This reminder countered a High Calvinist dogma that emphasized God's sovereignty almost to the exclusion of any human responsibility. Fuller writes:

*We pray for the conversion and salvation of the world, and yet neglect the ordinary means by which those ends have been used to be accomplished. It pleased God, heretofore, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed; and there is reason to think it will still please God to work by that distinguish means. Ought we not then at least to try by some means to convey more of the good news of salvation to the world around us than has hitherto been conveyed?*¹²⁷

Morris viewed this sermon as highly influential in the formation of the BMS. He commented:

The latter of these sermons [Fuller's] made such an impression on the minds of the ministers present, and the audience in general, as will not easily be forgotten. Every heart was penetrated with the subject; and the ministers retired, scarcely able to speak to one another. A scene of such deep solemnity has seldom been witnessed. Mr. Carey, perceiving the impression on all around him, could not suffer the company to separate until they had come to some resolution on the forming of a missionary society; and a society would then have been formed, but for the well-known deliberative prudence of Mr. Sutcliffe.¹²⁸

The founding of a missionary society was to be delayed despite Carey's impassioned pleas. Instead, a resolution was made suggesting that Carey publish something on the subject of world missions. The pamphlet he published the following year on 12 May 1792 was entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* which seemed to draw on some ideas presented in Fuller's *The Instances, Evil, and Tendency Of Delay, In The Concerns Of Religion*.¹²⁹ Here Carey argued that the "Great Commission," a common descriptive for a text found in Matthew

¹²⁷ Fuller, *Delay in Religious Concerns (Works, I, 148)*.

¹²⁸ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 98-99.

¹²⁹ Morden, *Offering Christ*, 134.

28:18-20 where Christ commands his disciples “to make disciples of all nations,” was as binding on all believers as it was on the apostolic church.¹³⁰

The next key event in the formation of the BMS was on 30 May 1792¹³¹ when Carey delivered the annual sermon at the Northamptonshire associational meeting at Friar Lane in Nottingham. His text was taken from Isaiah 54:2-3: “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtain....” Carey’s two main points were “expect great things,” “attempt great things.”¹³² John Ryland commented on the effects the sermon had on the congregation:

If all the people had lifted up their voice and wept, as the children of Israel did at Bochim, (Judges ii.) I should not have wondered at the effect: it would have only seemed proportionate to the cause; so clearly did he prove the criminality of our supineness in the cause of God. A resolution was printed, in this year's Letter, “That a plan be prepared, against the next Ministers’ Meeting at Kettering, for forming a *Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen.*”¹³³

Yet after the sermon it initially appeared that again nothing concrete would be done. J. C. Marshman (1794-1877) depicted the scene thus: “Carey seized Fuller by the hand in desperation, inquiring whether ‘they were again going away without doing anything?’ Carey’s appeal evidently moved Fuller who then took the initiative from which others had held back.”¹³⁴ So with Carey’s prompting, Fuller submitted the above-

¹³⁰ Matthew 28:18-20 – ‘And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.’

¹³¹ Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 13. Stanley points out the fact that often the date is often given incorrectly as 31 May 1792.

¹³² Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 150. Ryland remembers it as “expect great things from God, and to attempt great things for God.” See Haykin’s discussion of the theories of what exactly was said. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 217.

¹³³ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 150.

¹³⁴ Brian Stanley, “The Origins and Early Work of the Baptist Missionary Society” in *The Kettering Connection- Northamptonshire Baptists and Overseas Missions*, R. I. Greenall, (ed.) (Leicester: Department of Adult Education, 1993), 20.

mentioned resolution, “that a plan be prepared against the next ministers meeting at Kettering, for forming a *Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen*.”

The BMS was officially formed in Kettering on 2 October 1792 by fourteen men crowded into Martha Wallis’s parlor. She was the widow of a deacon from the Kettering church, Beeby Wallis (1735-1792), who had been so influential in Fuller’s coming to Kettering, and who had died earlier in April.¹³⁵ Fuller was the best qualified to be the society’s first secretary. Duly appointed as such, he served from its inception until his death in 1815.¹³⁶ Indeed, his level of commitment to the role of secretary was such that some saw it as a chief cause of his death. Morris says of Fuller that he “lived and died a martyr to the mission.”¹³⁷ Fuller’s vision for the mission was of a group of men penetrating into a previously undiscovered mine. With no guide but God, though dangerous and frightening, they were determined to “attempt great things.” Carey would go down, as it were, to the mission field and Fuller and their colleagues would “hold the rope.”¹³⁸ They all viewed their responsibilities as a sacred oath. It is vital to note that for these men an oath was not simply a casual verbal agreement, but a binding covenant that they would attempt to fulfill no matter the personal cost. As mentioned, in Fuller’s case this commitment most probably cost him his life. Fuller’s main responsibilities as secretary included theological and letter writing, wide ranging administrative duties, fundraising for the mission, various pastoral obligations, and frequent polemical justifications for the mission both home and abroad.

¹³⁵ John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late John Gill, D. D.*, (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, Publications, 1991 [1838]), 2. William Wallis (d.1712), Beeby’s great-grandfather, was the first pastor of the congregation. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 219.

¹³⁶ E. F. Clipsham, “Andrew Fuller and the Baptist Mission” *Foundations*, 10, no.1 (January-March, 1967): 5.

¹³⁷ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 49.

¹³⁸ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 157.

2.5.5 The Theologian

Fuller's theological writings, and especially the *Gospel Worthy*, had contributed to the creation of a sympathetic evangelical environment among the British Baptists, which helped to justify and sustain a society like the BMS. In this sense Fuller was the chief “thinker” behind the mission.¹³⁹ He possessed a common-sense practicality that helped guide the mission through uncharted waters. His no-nonsense wisdom was based on certain key theological underpinnings. First, Christ is the unique revelation of God in the Gospel and God has freely offered Christ to the world through his obedient servants.¹⁴⁰ Fuller's great confidence in the mission's ability to overcome all obstacles – spiritual, political, and financial – was reinforced by an Edwardsean post-millennial optimism which supposed that God's eschatological plan for mankind's salvation could not be thwarted.¹⁴¹

These theological convictions were communicated and reinforced through regular correspondence to the missionaries, encouraging, exhorting, and sometimes rebuking them. When Fuller gave a sermonic charge to new missionaries going to the field he encouraged them to develop and maintain a deep spirituality as they went as representatives of God. In a charge delivered to the first missionaries of the BMS in 1793, for example, Fuller admonished them, saying, “The heathen will judge of the character of your God, and of your religion, by what they see of your own character.”¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Clipsham, “Fuller and the Baptist Mission,” 6.

¹⁴⁰ Clipsham, “Fuller and the Baptist Mission,” 6-7.

¹⁴¹ Fuller, *The Promise of the Spirit* (Works, III, 363). See Morden, “Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions,” 240.

¹⁴² Fuller, *The Nature and Encouragements of the Missionary Work* (Works, I, 511).

As Timothy George, a foremost Baptist historian, rightly argues, Fuller was the leading theologian of the fledgling missionary movement.¹⁴³

2.5.6 The Administrator

Fuller was also the chief administrator of the mission, managing its affairs mostly from his manse at Kettering for twenty-two years.¹⁴⁴ Bureaucracy was always kept to a minimum and consisted mainly of an annual conference and occasional committee meetings.¹⁴⁵ The reluctance to expand the formal organization of the mission was based on its philosophy to care for the missionaries as “ropeholders.” Consequently Fuller would spend upwards of eleven hours a day at his desk personally managing the affairs of the mission.¹⁴⁶ His main duties as secretary included letter writing and issuing regular periodical accounts of the society;¹⁴⁷ supplying missionary news to Rippon’s *Baptist Annual Register* as well as contributing pieces to the *Evangelical* and *Baptist Magazine*. He was even involved in the minutiae of details concerning the delivery and tracking of missionary supplies.¹⁴⁸

2.5.7 The Fundraiser

Obviously the mission needed significant amounts of money and so one of Fuller’s key tasks as secretary was to raise funds. The whole initiative of a foreign mission was founded on a solid base of at least nine years of prayer and in like manner

¹⁴³ See Morden, *Offering Christ*, 139.

¹⁴⁴ Clipsham, “Fuller and the Baptist Mission,” 8.

¹⁴⁵ Clipsham, “Fuller and the Baptist Mission,” 8.

¹⁴⁶ Clipsham, “Fuller and the Baptist Mission,” 9.

¹⁴⁷ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 147.

¹⁴⁸ T.E. Fuller, *Life of Fuller*, 102. Thomas Fuller, Andrew Fuller’s grandson, describes the discovery of an undelivered cask sitting in a warehouse filled with supplies intended for the missionaries. Fuller was sent to London to investigate.

prayer was at the foundation of their fundraising activities.¹⁴⁹ Fuller's chief method for fundraising was through individual and corporate appeals, which included preaching, personal visits, and letter writing. A strong confidence that God would complete what he had begun gave Fuller great boldness when soliciting funds. In a letter to John Fawcett (1740-1817), who at that time was a stranger, Fuller writes:

Any sums of money conveyed to me, brother Carey of Leicester, Sutcliff of Olney, Ryland of Northampton, or Hogg of Thrapstone, will be thankfully received. The sooner the better, as time is short – Mr. Carey will be in your part in the course of a week or two on a visit to a relation. Hear him preach, and you will give him a collection.¹⁵⁰

In addition to these individual appeals, Fuller also traveled extensively raising funds for the mission through preaching tours. These tours included five trips to Scotland during the years 1799-1813,¹⁵¹ one to each of Ireland (1804), and Wales (1812), as well as many to London, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Essex, and to the West of England. These tours often covered great distances and kept him away from his church at Kettering for up to three months a year.¹⁵² These herculean efforts took their toll on his health. Morris later noted: "In serving the mission, he had no idea of sparing himself; but while his health was constantly impaired by the greatness of his exertions, he persevered in them with unabating ardour to the very last."¹⁵³ Not only did Fuller preach extensively during these tours, but he also conducted numerous individual meetings with pastors and

¹⁴⁹ J. Jr. Fawcett, *An Account Of The Life, Ministry And Writings Of The Late Rev John Fawcett*, D. D. (London: Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, 1818), 294.

¹⁵⁰ Fawcett, *Account*, 294-5. This is found in a letter from Fuller to Fawcett dated 28 January 1792. (Cites Morden, *Offering Christ*, 146). John Fawcett (1740-1817) was John Sutcliff's pastor in Yorkshire at Wainsgate Baptist Church and author of the popular hymn *Blessed be the Tie that Binds*.

¹⁵¹ The dates of the Scotland trips were 1799, 1802, 1805, 1808, and 1813. Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 156.

¹⁵² Morden, *Offering Christ*, 147.

¹⁵³ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 157.

congregational members. He could travel up to forty miles a day¹⁵⁴ visiting and collecting while preaching up to three times a day on a Sunday.¹⁵⁵ In addition he would often stay up late into the evening talking to ministers or writing letters and all this despite failing health in the last dozen years of his life.¹⁵⁶ Fuller himself believed that a paralytic stroke he suffered in January 1793 and that caused a loss of muscle control in his face was related to his exhausting labors.¹⁵⁷ Truly no one in England did more than Fuller to support the mission.¹⁵⁸

2.5.8 The Pastoral Advisor

From its inception there was a concern that the BMS might develop into an impersonal institution, possibly threatening the personal covenant between the missionaries and the representatives of the Particular Baptists at home in England. They wanted the BMS to be a mission owned by the churches. For Fuller the issue was not primarily a fear of losing control as it was a concern to honour his commitment to God and the missionaries in fulfillment of his oath as a “ropeholder.” In this sense the mission was to be an extension of the church and so Fuller viewed his primary role as pastoral. Undeniably his theological, administrative, polemical and fund raising tasks were an outworking of his pastoral concern. He was involved in selecting and preparing the missionaries, delivering charges to them through ordination sermons, and encouraging,

¹⁵⁴ Between the years 1750-59 the average journey time in England was just under three miles per hour. It had risen to approximately seven miles per hour at the time of Fuller’s death in 1815. See Dan Bogart, “Turnpike Trusts and the Transportation Revolution in 18th Century England” (http://orion.oac.uci.edu/~dbogart/transportrev_oct13.pdf; accessed January 21, 2005), 38.

¹⁵⁵ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 197; Morden, *Offering Christ*, 153.

¹⁵⁶ Morden, *Offering Christ*, 153.

¹⁵⁷ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 155.

¹⁵⁸ James M. Renihan, “Out from Hyper-Calvinism: Andrew Fuller and the Promotion of Missions” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 1 (January 2004), 46.

exhorting, and rebuking them through frequent correspondence while they were on the field. For example, he did not hesitate to send a strong letter of encouragement when missionaries were feeling discouraged over their apparent lack of success.¹⁵⁹ Sometimes these letters came with the promise of a classic theological treatise like John Owen's *On the Mortification of Sin* being sent to them.¹⁶⁰ Nor did he shrink back from admonition. On one occasion he rebuked the missionary John Fountain (1767-1800) who was thought to be jeopardizing the success of the mission because of radical political views.¹⁶¹

In fine, as the chief pastoral advisor for the missionaries, Fuller was concerned for the spiritual welfare of the missionaries as individuals. In other words, he directed them not only in terms of vocational oversight, but with a pastoral concern for their souls.¹⁶²

2.5.9 The Polemical Defender of Rights

The political position of the BMS was always precarious. The British East India Company was a monopolistic trading business that had become heavily involved in British politics in the eighteenth century.¹⁶³ As a result it had a good deal of political clout in India. At times both the company and the British government itself threatened the ongoing work of the mission.¹⁶⁴ The British East India Company feared that the missionaries were interfering with the Indian culture¹⁶⁵ which in turn might harm their

¹⁵⁹ Clipsham, "Fuller and the Baptist Mission," 11.

¹⁶⁰ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 159.

¹⁶¹ *Letter to John Fountain* 25 March 1796 [Transcribed by Joyce A. Booth from a calendar of Fuller's letters prefaced by the Rev. Ernest A. Payne found in manuscript box (4/5/1)] (Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford).

¹⁶² Clipsham, "Fuller and the Baptist Mission," 11.

¹⁶³ J. H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century* (Middlesex: Penguin, Books, 1983), 25.

¹⁶⁴ Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 247.

¹⁶⁵ Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 245.

business interests.¹⁶⁶ As the chief advocate of the mission at home, Fuller was ever ready to defend its interests and to ensure its ongoing success. In fact, Clipsham feels that this was the “most outstanding aspect of Fuller’s achievement as secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society.”¹⁶⁷ Fuller’s specific involvement in the defense of the mission included advocacy with cabinet ministers, Members of Parliament, and East India directors to protect the rights and privileges of the BMS abroad. With characteristic common sense, a fund of patience, and biblical wisdom he not only provided sound judgment and advice on practical matters such as transporting money and goods to the missionaries, but he also produced a major theological treatise in defense of the mission.

In particular, two main threats against the mission became so ominous that Fuller felt a public written defense was required. The first threat concerned a mutiny of East India troops in Vellore (1807). The missionaries were accused of interfering with the Hindu religion, thus precipitating an attack on the soldiers.¹⁶⁸ The second involved a vitriolic tract published by a Muslim convert to Christianity accusing Islam of perverting the commands of God.¹⁶⁹ Back in England the missionaries were assailed in print as intolerant radicals who threatened Britain’s economic interests in Asia. These changes resulted in a motion in Parliament to expel them.¹⁷⁰ Fuller visited privately with friends and directors of the East India Company and prepared a statement defending India’s mission and the motion was defeated. The tract written against Islam became known as *The Persian Pamphlet* and it provided polemical ammunition for the enemies of the mission in Britain. In response to these events, Fuller wrote the *Apology for the Late*

¹⁶⁶ Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 253.

¹⁶⁷ Clipsham, “Fuller and the Baptist Mission,” 11.

¹⁶⁸ Peter Morden, “Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions,” 247.

¹⁶⁹ Peter Morden, “Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions,” 248.

¹⁷⁰ Young, “Developing Missions,” 222.

Christian Missions to India (1808). Its main purpose was to vindicate the character of the missionaries and set forth a plea for toleration where people were free to propagate their convictions.¹⁷¹ Fuller's sagacity, skill, energy, and self-sacrifice in defense of the mission on the home front were essential not only for its continued effectiveness, but also for its very existence.

2.5.10 Pastoral Duties

In the above description of Andrew Fuller we have seen a man of unfaltering energy capable of extraordinary activity. His exceptional exertions influenced the course of the Particular Baptist cause in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and paved the way for a renewed concern for world missions by providing solid answers to many of the key theological disputes of his generation. His writings had such an impact that he was awarded two honorary doctorate degrees, though he declined both of them.¹⁷² This achievement in itself is noteworthy, yet he accomplished all this while successfully pastoring a growing congregation at Kettering.

¹⁷¹ Fuller, *Apology for the Late Christian Mission to India* (*Works*, II, 763-836).

¹⁷² A. G. Fuller, *Memoir* (*Works*, I, 84, 85). He was offered one from the College of New Jersey (which became Princeton University in 1896) in 1798. The second was offered by Yale in 1805. Phil Roberts, [“Andrew Fuller” in Timothy George and Davis Dockery eds., *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 37] believes that Fuller accepted Yale's degree out of politeness but never used the title. He bases this on Gilbert Laws' comments in, *Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder*, 95-6: “In May of 1805 the great esteem in which Fuller's writings were held in the United States was shown in the conferring upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Yale College. This had been done before, as early as 1798, by Princeton. But Fuller had respectfully declined to use the degree.... Having taken this position he adhered to it when Yale also granted him their honorary D.D. in 1805, notwithstanding that they sent over Professor Silliman to present the honour in person and urge its acceptance. For Ryland, as head of the College, and for other reasons, Fuller thought it might be well. For himself he preferred to be Brother, not Doctor, Fuller. To Dr. Timothy Dwight, President of Yale, and grandson of the beloved President Edwards of Princeton, Fuller sent a gracious letter of appreciation of the honour and a renewed assertion of his reasons for not using the degree.”

His pastoral influence on the BMS has been briefly surveyed but there needs to be a closer look at the discharge of his pastoral responsibilities in his home church in Kettering. He was without official help until 1811 when John Keen Hall (1786-1829) joined as the assistant pastor.¹⁷³ Until that time, as has already been noticed, Fuller was away from his congregation for up to three months a year mostly raising funds for the BMS. At times Fuller himself feared he might be neglecting his pastoral responsibilities at Kettering. He lamented on 27 October 1794: “I long to visit my congregation, that I may know more of their spiritual concerns, and be able to preach their cases.”¹⁷⁴ Despite his long absences the church at Kettering continued to grow which led to the rebuilding of their Meeting House in 1805. In fact, an epitaph written by the Kettering congregation at Fuller’s death praises his life and ministry:

...His ardent piety, the strength and soundness of his judgment, his intimate knowledge of the human heart, and his profound acquaintance with the scriptures, eminently qualified him for the ministerial office, which he sustained amongst them thirty-two years. The force and originality of his genius, aided by undaunted firmness, raised him from obscurity to high distinction in the religious world...¹⁷⁵

These words give the impression that his people genuinely loved him and were well satisfied with the discharge of his pastoral responsibilities. It seems they understood that Fuller’s calling, reinforced by his unique giftedness, inevitably extended his ministry beyond their local church. This love was mutual. Fuller believed that the great secret for ruling a church was to love them and make sure they knew they were loved.¹⁷⁶ In a letter

¹⁷³ Fuller mentions to Carey that he had an assistant for the summer in 1802. “We shall have an unusual load of business and expense this summer. I must get an assistant, as I had last summer in Stennet. He is now in Ireland.” *Letter to William Carey* 28 February 1803 [Transcribed by Joyce A. Booth from a calendar of Fuller’s letters prefaced by the Rev. Ernest A. Payne found in manuscript box (4/5/1)] (Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford).

¹⁷⁴ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 155.

¹⁷⁵ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 385.

¹⁷⁶ Fuller, *Counsels to a Young Minister* (Works, III, 497).

to a young ordinand written in 1810 Fuller could say to him: “I have been pastor of the church which I now serve for nearly thirty years, without a single difference.”¹⁷⁷ He attributes this mutual harmony to his practice of periodically yielding to the advice his deacons, even when his opinion differed. He humbly recognized that as a Pastor he was not infallible and that others opinions were truly valuable.

The epitaph refers both to his knowledge of the human and heart and to his knowledge of scripture. As a preacher Fuller was preeminently expositional, practical, evangelical, and experiential. Throughout his career Fuller would preach through most of the books of the Bible.¹⁷⁸ His main theme was the glory of God revealed in the cross of Christ and lived out in experiential religion.¹⁷⁹

In addition to enduring the deaths of many friends and loved ones, Fuller also had to cope with a chronic illness caused by a diseased liver.¹⁸⁰ As a result throughout his life he was susceptible to illness, especially “bilious affections.”¹⁸¹ Also, the more he wrote in the latter years of his ministry, the more severe were the headaches he experienced.¹⁸² In the closing years of his life he often had difficulty breathing accompanied with a violent cough, indigestion, bilious sickness, and fever.¹⁸³ As remarkable as his productivity was, one must carefully consider the context in which it was accomplished, amidst not only extraordinary grief and suffering including many deaths of family and friends, living with a wayward son, and opposition from friends and foes, but also amidst intense physical

¹⁷⁷ Fuller, *Counsels to a Young Minister* (Works, III, 497).

¹⁷⁸ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 382.

¹⁷⁹ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 382; Morris, *Life and Writings*, 69.

¹⁸⁰ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 441.

¹⁸¹ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 441.

¹⁸² Morris, *Life and Writings*, 441.

¹⁸³ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 442.

suffering bordering on near incapacitation.¹⁸⁴ He truly lived one of his favorite maxims, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”¹⁸⁵ Despite all this illness he still worked up to twelve hours a day at his desk. His wife complained about his excessive labors and Fuller answers,

Ah, my dear, the way for us to have any joy is to rejoice in all our labour, and then we shall have plenty.” “But you allow yourself no time for recreation,” continues the pleading wife.” “Oh, no,” he replies; “all my recreation is a change of work.” She tries once more: “Yes, but you will wear yourself out.” He replies, slowly and solemnly: “I cannot be worn out in a better cause; we must ‘work while it is day.’”¹⁸⁶

He could press on in the midst of these severe trials because he truly believed what he taught: that God was both good and sovereign and would provide grace to support him. On his death bed Fuller wrote to his friend John Ryland Jr.,

I have preached and written much against the *abuse* of the doctrine of grace; but that doctrine is all my salvation and all my desire. I have no other hope, than from salvation by mere sovereign, efficacious grace, through the atonement of my Lord and Saviour. With this hope, I can go into eternity with composure. Come, Lord Jesus! Come when thou wilt! Here I am; let him do with me as seemeth him good!¹⁸⁷

The doctrine of the cross was central to Fuller’s theology, and with Christ as his example of suffering he expected no less for himself. At his conversion he had submitted his will and his life to God and his cause.

2.6 Death

Andrew Fuller died in his manse in Kettering on 7 May 1815, a Sunday, at the age of sixty-one. As he lay dying he could hear hymns being sung in his adjoining chapel and he whispered to his child by his bedside, “I wish I had strength enough,” “To do what

¹⁸⁴ Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Memoir (Works, I, 70-73)*.

¹⁸⁵ T. E. Fuller, *Life of Fuller*, 293. This maxim is found in Ecclesiastes 9:10.

¹⁸⁶ T. E. Fuller, *Life of Fuller*, 302-3.

¹⁸⁷ Ryland, *Work of Faith, Labour of Love*, 355.

father?” she replied, “To worship child!”¹⁸⁸ He died about half an hour later. Robert Hall was preaching at the time when someone interrupted his sermon with a whisper about Fuller’s death. “An audible wail went up” as the congregation “quickly interpreted the movement. The service was closed with a few tender and touching words, and a short pouring out of the heart to Him who gave and had taken away.”¹⁸⁹

His funeral service was attended by about two thousand people with John Ryland Jr. preaching on Romans 8:10. An earlier biographer and once friend of Fuller, J. W. Morris, summarized Fuller’s life as follows:

He possessed a most sincere desire to Glorify God, and his whole life was devoted to that all-important object. It may be doubted whether, since Luther’s time any man could be found on this side of the globe, who had laboured more to cultivate and extend the knowledge of the truth than Mr. Fuller...¹⁹⁰

It is almost universally accepted that Fuller was among the greatest Baptist theologians of the eighteenth century in America and Britain. He accomplished great things for the cause of Christ. Yet, in the words of his fellow Kettering minister Thomas Toller, he died, not great in his own eyes, but merely as “a penitent sinner at the foot of the cross.”¹⁹¹

2.7 Conclusion

All these factors contributed to the formation of his pastoral theology which was at the center of late eighteenth century Baptist renewal. But Fuller did not stand alone and was a part of a clearly defined tradition beginning in the seventeenth century. The next chapter

¹⁸⁸ T. E. Fuller, *Life of Fuller*, 310.

¹⁸⁹ A.G. Fuller, *Andrew Fuller*, 190-1.

¹⁹⁰ Morris, *Life and Writings*, 496.

¹⁹¹ Ryland, *Life of Faith, Labour of Love*, 363: Mr. Toller was a close friend of Fuller. He pastored the Independent church at Kettering.

will consider that tradition and its roots to help further understand Fuller's theological and socio-political underpinnings.