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TENDING TO LOVE—“THE PLANT OF PARADISE”:

ANDREW FULLER ON LOVE AND ITS

ROLE IN LOCAL CHURCH REVIVAL

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by

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

TENDING TO LOVE—“THE PLANT OF PARADISE”:

ANDREW FULLER ON LOVE AND ITS

ROLE IN LOCAL CHURCH REVIVAL

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To my wife and dearest friend, Melanie.

To our children, Jeremiah, Elliana, Elizabeth, and Owen.

You help me know more of Christ's love for His Church.

May all our hearts be knit to the Savior's.

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## PREFACE

Christ took on flesh for the church, lived a righteous life for the church, suffered and died for the church—though he knew no sin he became sin for us, and was crushed for our iniquities; he was raised from the dead for the church that he might live to intercede for the church. Jesus loved the church and gave himself up for her. I want to love like that, so it is a prayer of mine that I and other Christians who claim Christ as Lord and Savior love as he loves and what he loves. May Christ’s priority of loving the church become our priority in the local church.

I want to especially thank a few churches that have shown and taught me more of what Christlike love is like. To the members of First Baptist Church (Hacienda Heights, California), thank you. Laboring for you as your pastor and together with you for the name of Christ has been a great encouragement. May we continue to work for each other’s ongoing joy in Christ, and for our community’s discovery of that same joy. Thanks also to Capitol Hill Baptist Church (Washington, DC), Third Avenue Baptist Church (Louisville, Kentucky), and The United Christian Church of Dubai (Dubai, United Arab Emirates); you too have shown me that membership in the church really matters. Thank you for “slowing down that I might be sped up.”

Deep gratitude and thanks go to my fathers in the faith—William Eng and Mark Dever. In your unique ways, you have been great exemplified faithful, pastoral ministry. When thinking about your ministries, I am reminded of how you gave me both the gospel and your very own selves. May God continue to use you, by his grace and for

his glory, in the lives of Chinese Baptist Church of Orange County, and Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

Thanks also to Michael Haykin, who introduced me to Andrew Fuller.

Studying the man has been food for my soul, and your deep interest in the lives and ministries of men like Fuller spurs me on to know them for myself, and introduce them to others.

Jeremy Yuen Ming Yong

Hacienda Heights, CA

December 2015

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“The Church is the mirror, that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene, in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed to the universe.”<sup>1</sup> To see local churches strengthened in their task of displaying God’s glory among the nations, this study examines the eighteenth-century Particular Baptist pastor, Andrew Fuller. Fuller was a revivalist who together with William Carey and others, helped spark what is often referred to as “the Modern Missions Movement.” Fuller is commonly known as Carey’s “rope-holder” who, as it were, belayed Carey as he descended the globe giving his life to the spread of the gospel. It was this team that founded the Baptist Missionary Society, a product of the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

While Fuller is remembered and appreciated by many today for his evangelical Calvinism, and for the pivotal role he played in the modern missions movement, his efforts to see local churches strengthened and revitalized are less well know. As Fuller longed for and worked towards revival overseas, so he did for the struggling churches in his denomination. The churches that formed the Particular Baptist denomination during

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (1830; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980), 1.

<sup>2</sup> The Baptist Missionary Society was originally named the Particular Baptist Missionary Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen, at the society’s formation in 1792. Hereafter referred to as the Baptist Missionary Society.

his time lacked unction to carry out their mission, not to mention clarity as to what their mission really was. Indeed, he was a servant of the world-wide church of God, but he was also a servant to its local manifestations—its local churches.

This thesis aims to help readers understand Fuller as a local church pastor who labored for local church revival. How did Fuller encourage churches towards greater health, and what were his prescriptions for such revival? By examining Fuller's writings, this thesis showcases what Fuller judged to be of utmost necessity that would ensure God-intended vitality—the recovery of Christian love.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

Before addressing the secondary literature on Andrew Fuller it is important to present the growing interest in Fuller studies in general. Nathan Finn's bibliographic essay reports a "renaissance" in Andrew Fuller studies over the last few decades.<sup>3</sup> The increased interest in Fuller studies may be partially accounted for by looking at two evangelical and theological movements which continue to gain traction in the early twenty-first century: the revival of Calvinistic soteriology and the revival of gospel-centered evangelism and missions.<sup>4</sup> These movements do not break new ground; rather

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<sup>3</sup> Nathan A. Finn, "The Renaissance in Andrew Fuller Studies: A Bibliographic Essay," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 44–61.

<sup>4</sup> One sees evidence of this renewed push for gospel-centered missions in the organization of Cross Conference. The conference organizers and participants aim "to mobilize students for the most dangerous and loving cause in the universe: rescuing people from eternal suffering and bringing them into the everlasting joy of friendship with Jesus." See "Why CROSS Exists," CROSS Why CROSS Exists, accessed August 6, 2015, <http://crosscon.com/about/>. It is also noteworthy that the leaders of the aforementioned missions organization (David Platt, John Piper, Thabiti Anyabwile, and others) have also been involved in the Calvinistic organization Together for the Gospel, which has picked up recent traction drawing thousands of pastors and church leaders to their biennial conference. See "Together for the Gospel," Together for the Gospel, accessed August 8, 2015, <http://t4g.org/t4g-year/2014/>. One can also think of the appointment of Calvinistic David Platt recent to President of the International Mission Board,

they represent a renewal of things past. Andrew Fuller of the eighteenth century represents much for what both of these recent movements stand for. In fact, in many ways, Fuller represents the tip of the spear of missions-minded Calvinism, as he championed the doctrines of evangelical Calvinism while reminding Christians of their mission to preach the gospel—which included calling others to obey Christ through repentance and faith.<sup>5</sup> While pastoring a Particular Baptist church, Fuller also helped form, and raise funds for, the Baptist Missionary Society. With one hand he ably defended gospel truth from the theological aberrations of his day, and with the other he supported Carey and friends in their mission efforts. No wonder there is a present and growing interest in the man. Who would not at least be intrigued by this former wrestler turned pastor-theologian, strong enough to gather troops and sharp enough to defend the truth for which they fought?

Another organization that encouraging the study of Andrew Fuller specifically, and Baptist history in general, is the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies (hereafter referred to as the Center), whose mission is “to promote the study of Baptist history as well as theological reflection on the contemporary significance of that history.”<sup>6</sup> Led by Michael A. G. Haykin, and Andrew Fuller scholar himself, and sponsored by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Kentucky), the Center offers

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the international missions arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. See Erich Bridges, “Pastor David Platt succeeds Tom Elliff as IMB president,” last modified August 27, 2014, available from <http://www.bpnews.net/43237/platt-succeeds-elliff-as-imb-president>.

<sup>5</sup> Two other popular evangelical Calvinists who labored in overseas missions are William Carey and Adoniram Judson.

<sup>6</sup> “About,” Andrew Fuller Center RSS, accessed July 14, 2014, available from <http://www.andrewfullercenter.org/about/>.

conferences on Fuller<sup>7</sup> and other notable figures and issues from church history, as well as scholarly publications on the same. Without doubt, word about Fuller continues to grow at a steady rate. Even greater interest in the man, his mark, and his ministry is expected to come when Michael A. G. Haykin and others finish work on the much-awaited fifteen-volume modern critical edition of the entire corpus of Andrew Fuller's published and unpublished works.

With the passing of time, the number of publications on Fuller will begin to reflect the growing interest in him. To date, only a handful of sustained treatments of the English pastor exist, and as secondary literature on Fuller is lacking, so it on Fuller's theology of love and love's role in local-church revival. Surveying recent works on Fuller still provides utility, as they highlight various hues of Fuller's life and thought.

Presenting a history of the era in which Fuller lived is Robert W. Oliver's *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon*. Oliver, a pastor, and lecturer at London Theological College, has written an excellent historical work on the Particular Baptists beginning chronologically from the year of John Gill's death and advancing through to the year of C. H. Spurgeon's death. Readers wanting to understand the flows of thought that Fuller reacted and responded to will no doubt benefit from the book.

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<sup>7</sup> Three conferences organized by The Andrew Fuller Center deal directly with Fuller: "Andrew Fuller the Reader" (2007), see "Andrew Fuller: The Reader, August 27-28, 2007," Andrew Fuller Center RSS, accessed August 8, 2015, <http://www.andrewfullercenter.org/conference/andrew-fuller-the-reader/>; "Andrew Fuller and His Friends" (2012), found at "Andrew Fuller and His Friends" September 21-22, 2012," Andrew Fuller Center RSS, accessed August 8, 2015, <http://www.andrewfullercenter.org/conference/andrew-fuller-and-his-friends-september-21-22-2012/>; and "Andrew Fuller and His Controversies" (2013), found at "Andrew Fuller and His Controversies" September 27-28, 2013," Andrew Fuller Center RSS, accessed August 8, 2015, <http://www.andrewfullercenter.org/conference/andrew-fuller-and-his-controversies/>.

Peter J. Morden, vice-principal of Spurgeon's College, London, has published two ground-breaking volumes on Fuller. *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (published in 2004) offers a thematic look at Fuller in his context. Touching on Fuller's leadership role in the Particular Baptist denomination, as well as some of the major controversies Fuller engaged in, Morden makes clear that Fuller was an ardent defender of orthodox Christian beliefs and evangelical Calvinism, and fought to see Christians offer Christ to the World.

Morden's second work on Fuller which was published to commemorate the bicentennial of Andrew Fuller's death (2015) is *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*. While Morden's earlier volume presents a thematic view of Fuller in his context, this true biography of Fuller offers a window into not only his context taking a chronological approach. Weaving together the events of Fuller's life, his experience of them, and the controversies he entered into, Morden presents the standard of Andrew Fuller biographies in *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*.

Furthering the discussion is Paul Brewster, fellow at the Center. Brewster's *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* situates Fuller's theological and apologetic writings in Fuller's role as pastor. Brewster contributes to the discussion by calling present-day pastors and denominational leaders to look to Fuller as a model pastor-theologian. Seeing Fuller from the angle of pastor-theologian offers a helpful view from which Fuller's theology of love can be understood.

Covering Andrew Fuller's apologetic writing, Michael A. G. Haykin has edited a volume entitled "*At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word*": *Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*. As the title indicates the book summarizes and presents Fuller's efforts to defend the

evangelical faith against the major theological and ecclesiastical errors of his day. This work helpfully shows Fuller’s exegetical acumen and the theological ability required to discharge the responsibilities of teaching sound doctrine and correcting that which contradicts it. *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word* shows Fuller as one of the “18th-century’s first-class theologians,” able to deploy his gifts in order to destroy heresy as well as build up the church in love.<sup>8</sup>

Chris Chun’s *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* offers an examination of Fuller’s main theological shaping influence. Like many pastors and theologians of his time Fuller was deeply indebted to Jonathan Edwards. Chun’s volume shows how and in what ways Fuller embraced Edwards’ theology, thereby proving that Fuller was of Edwardsean seed. Two chapters in Chun’s work relate to aspects of Christian love—“Edwards on the Affections” and “Fuller’s Theological Indebtedness to Religious Affections.”<sup>9</sup> These chapters describe how Fuller employed and expanded Edwards’ concepts in his own polemical work. Chun offers excellent philosophical assessment of the affections in both Edwards’ and Fuller’s theology, helping readers see that Fuller’s theology of love was informed by another theological great.

Regarding Fuller’s pastoral theology, Keith S. Grant’s *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology* is a beneficial work exploring the effects of

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Haykin, “*At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word*”: *Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), xix.

<sup>9</sup> See chaps. 4–5 in Chun, *The Legacy, The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, *Studies in the History of Christian Tradition* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2012), 84–141.

the eighteenth-century evangelical revival. Rather than noting the Particular Baptist churches' recovery of outward expansionist and activist roles, Grant examines the evangelical revival's effect on the inner life of those congregations, with Andrew Fuller's transformation of pastoral theology at the prime example. Grant's second chapter, "Ecclesiology: The Context of an Evangelical and Affectionate Pastoral Theology," pertains specifically to my thesis. Though his focus is how Baptist ecclesiology was particularly suited for a "lively and evangelical ministry," Grant does speak briefly to the importance of the pastor's love for the congregation and the fact that this love ought to show itself in the pastor's manner of preaching. While Grant addresses Fuller's thought *that* love ought to be present, this thesis seeks to address Fuller's teaching on *what* love is (nature), and *how* love ought to show itself (manner).<sup>10</sup>

Another recent work on Fuller's pastoral theology comes from Nigel David Wheeler and is entitled *Eminent Spirituality and Eminent Usefulness: Andrew Fuller's (1754–1815) Pastoral Theology in His Ordination Sermons*. Wheeler intends his dissertation to counter what he considers to be the "major weakness" of Grant's work—the lack of evidence proving the revamping of Fuller's pastoral theology. Wheeler asserts that a comparison of Fuller's pastoral theology to that of the Particular Baptist pastors prior to the evangelical revival would have been a useful addition to Grant's work. It is this void that Wheeler seeks to fill. Wheeler does address love in Fuller's pastoral theology but only in summary fashion and apart from local church revival. That said, Wheeler's dissertation shows certain continuities between the pastoral theologies of

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<sup>10</sup> Grant does indeed address an aspect of *how*—namely preaching. However, more ought to be said about Fuller's conception of the nature of preaching before one can fully address the method of preaching.

the Particular Baptists before and after the evangelical revival.

Moving to a more intimate glimpse of how Fuller's theology unfolded in the context of relationships is Michael A. G. Haykin's *The Armies of the Lamb*. Haykin serves as author of the introduction as well as editor of the selected personal letters of Fuller. This presentation is unique as readers see a portrait of Fuller's spirituality. *Armies of the Lamb* is a valuable contribution as it displays how Fuller's convictions and desires evidenced themselves in his relationships. The work shows pastoral theology and spirituality in action. Through these pages readers witness how Fuller developed and cultivated loving relationships with those of his generation now long gone.

### **Void in Literature**

Historian Michael A. G. Haykin laments, "Spurgeon once described Fuller as the 'greatest theologian' of his century. Yet, it is amazing that such an important figure in the history of British Evangelicalism has been largely overlooked . . . since Spurgeon's day."<sup>11</sup> This neglect has led to the void in secondary literature on Fuller. If lament from Fuller scholars can be heard over a lack of a lack of secondary literature on the Baptist pastor, an even greater one can be heard over the fact that nothing has been written on Fuller's theology of love and the leading role Fuller assigned love in local-church revival.

### **Thesis**

This thesis introduces Andrew Fuller's theology of love and shows that Fuller judged love's recovery to be the life-saving prescription that would revitalize local

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<sup>11</sup> Chun, *The Legacy*, 6.

churches. Why Christian love? Because the recovery of it meant recovering the very Christian religion. “So much as we have the love of God,” Fuller wrote, “so much we have of true religion”;<sup>12</sup> love was “*the* principle . . . characterizing the whole of our religion”<sup>13</sup> and its very “essence”<sup>14</sup> (emphasis mine). Fuller’s prescriptions for the revitalization of the local church were numerous, but in all their variations they were to Fuller, derivatives of love—what he termed “the plant of paradise.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Nature and Importance of Love to God,” in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life*, ed. Joseph Belcher (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 1:305. Hereafter, this source will be cited as *Works*.

<sup>13</sup> Fuller, “The Nature and Importance of Love to God,” 1:305.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” in *Works*, 1:357.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Gospel the Means of Universal Peace,” in *Works*, 1:260.

## CHAPTER 2

### LOVE'S DECLINE AND RETRIEVAL

#### **Possessing Every Reason to Love**

“The death of Christ . . . is not so much a member of the body of Christian doctrine as the life-blood that runs through the whole of it. The doctrine of the cross is the Christian doctrine.”<sup>1</sup> So Fuller began his sermon encouraging hearers to a greater “Conformity to the Death of Christ” (Phil 3:10).<sup>2</sup> To the late eighteenth-century Particular Baptist pastor, the entire Christian life was to be grounded in, a reliving of, and a grasping after the death of Jesus Christ; this “sacred theme” was to drive every breath.<sup>3</sup> Fuller was convinced that it was “from this doctrine that the New Testament writers fetched their most powerful motives” for all of life, especially for love.<sup>4</sup>

Do they recommend *humility*? It is thus: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Do they enforce an unreserved *devotedness to God*? It is thus: “Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Do they urge a *forgiving spirit*? It is thus: “Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Conformity to the Death of Christ,” in *Works*, 1:310.

<sup>2</sup> Phil 3:20 reads, “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”

<sup>3</sup> Fuller, “Conformity to the Death of Christ,” 1:310.

<sup>4</sup> Fuller, “Conformity to the Death of Christ,” 1:310.

forgiven you.” Do they recommend *benevolence to the poor*? It is from this: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.” The common duties of *domestic life* are enforced from this principle: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”<sup>5</sup> (Fuller’s italics)

Fuller concludes and climaxes this section explicitly tying the fruit of love to its root in the wrath-bearing death of Jesus.

If they would provoke Christians to *brotherly love*, it is from the same consideration: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God loved us, we ought also to love one another.”<sup>6</sup> (Fuller’s italics)

Grounding each of the graces in the Christian life is the doctrine of the cross. Christ “humbled himself and became obedient to death.” Through his shed blood he “bought [Christians] with a price.” Through Christ, God “hath forgiven you.” Christ, in taking on flesh to die on the cross, “became poor.” “Christ loved the church and gave himself for it,” namely by dying for it. Finally, speaking of Christ the sacrifice of atonement, “God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Just as the Father’s sending of his Son is impetus for Christian love, so is the Son’s love for the Father. This “great disinterested, and unparalleled” love blazed the path that all Christ’s disciples were to walk. If Christians are to be conformed to Christ, then Christ’s love needs to become theirs.<sup>7</sup> Spurring on the armies of the slaughtered lamb, Fuller recounts Christ’s unsurpassable love, which did not grasp after personal advantage but was humble and obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

There never was such an example of the "love of God" as that which is furnished by

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<sup>5</sup> Fuller, “Conformity to the Death of Christ,” 1:311.

<sup>6</sup> Fuller, “Conformity to the Death of Christ,” 1:311.

<sup>7</sup> Fuller, “Conformity to the Death of Christ,” 1:311.

the obedience and death of Christ. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father. He did not know his nearest relations, but as doing his Father's will. When the bitter cup was presented to him, he said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." What was this but exposing his breast, as we should say, to the sword of justice; consenting to be made a sacrifice, that God might be glorified in the salvation of sinners? It was love, working in a way of grief, that caused that affecting exclamation, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" He could endure the cross, and even despise the shame; he could bear to be betrayed, denied, and forsaken by his own disciples: but to be forsaken of God wounded him beyond any thing.<sup>8</sup>

With the footsteps of Christ so clearly before his hearers, Fuller prays that Christ's children embrace Christ's pattern and aim of loving the Father.

Oh to be made conformable to his death in these things; to love God, so as to account it our meat and drink to do his will; so as to reckon his friends our friends, and his cause our cause; to be willing to do any thing, or suffer any thing, for his name's sake; and to feel the withholding of his favour our severest loss.<sup>9</sup>

To be conformed to Christ in manners as these required Christians to love as Christ loved—the Father as Christ loved him, and men as Christ loved them. Encouraging hearers to strive after Christ's exemplary yet unequalled love, Fuller writes, "As there never was such love to God that which was manifested by Christ, so neither was there ever such *love to men*. 'He loved us and gave *himself* for us—loved us, and washed us from our sins *in his own blood*'" (Fuller's italics).<sup>10</sup> It is Christ's indefatigable and expansive love that is the basis for the Christian's.

Sadly though, while the Particular Baptist churches of Fuller's day vigorously upheld the doctrines that spoke so much of love, many often failed to actually love; they

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<sup>8</sup> Fuller, "Conformity to the Death of Christ," 1:311

<sup>9</sup> Fuller, "Conformity to the Death of Christ," 1:314.

<sup>10</sup> Fuller, "Conformity to the Death of Christ," 1:314.

struggled to show the love inherent in the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to set the darkening landscape from which Fuller’s signal for love’s retrieval eventually came to beam. Decline had crippled too many churches, so Fuller fought to crush its head by recovering and wielding Christian love.

### **Love’s Decline among the Particular Baptist Denomination**

That the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists were in spiritual decline is well established. Peter Morden ably summarizes this deterioration in *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life*.<sup>12</sup>

Based on reports, ardent spirituality had slowed down, appearing almost paralyzed. Amongst Particular Baptists, there were “universal complaints of the decay of practical and vital godliness.”<sup>13</sup> One B. Wallin, writing in 1752 in *The Christian Life*, stated his opinion “that they were living in a ‘melancholy day’ of ‘present declensions.’”<sup>14</sup> Backing up Wallin’s comment are the Western Association’s newsletters. Morden

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<sup>11</sup> For a history of the English Calvinistic Baptists, see Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006). For biographical essays on Fuller, see Andrew Gunton Fuller, “Memoir of Andrew Fuller,” in *Works*, 1:1–116. See also Peter Morden, “Andrew Fuller: A Biographical Sketch,” in *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 6 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004) 1–42. See also Tom J. Nettles, “Andrew Fuller (1754–1815),” in *The British Particular Baptists 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 2:97–141.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life*, vol. 8 in Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ*, 8.

conveys that these newsletters “regularly bemoaned the low spiritual temperature in the churches,” and called Christians to repentance and to embrace a contrite spirit, urging them to set aside time for fasting and prayer.<sup>15</sup> Isaac Hann, the herald of one 1761 letter wrote that he and a group of other ministers were “almost at a loss to know what he can say further for the stirring up of sleepy professors.”<sup>16</sup>

It is hard not to imagine the discouragement pastors experienced as they turned the pages of their newsletters, reading again of their people’s beleaguered spirituality—being neither hot nor cold (Rev 3:15), having lost their first love (Rev 2:4), and though alive, really dead to God (Rev 3:1). Of course pastors did not need newsletters to inform them of their people’s decline. They saw and experienced it. Their people were “lukewarm and careless”;<sup>17</sup> they had grown “formal in worship, and indolent in the service of God.”<sup>18</sup> This spiritual sluggardliness led to spiritual poverty, and behind this lack of action was a heart slothful and relaxed towards the things of God and all those he created.

Naturally, spiritual decline led to numeric decline in the churches. “In 1689 there were roughly 300 Calvinistic Baptist churches in England and Wales. By 1715 this number had dropped to around 220, and by 1750 Calvinistic Baptist strength was but half of what had it been in 1689.”<sup>19</sup> Had the Particular Baptists not believed that God

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<sup>15</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, “The English Particular Baptists, 1640s–1740s” (lecture, Puritan Theological Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, May 13, 2013).

preserved a remnant throughout the ages, perhaps they would have despaired unto death for their denomination.

### **Andrew Fuller's Assessment and Solution**

In 1785, the 29-year-old Fuller provided his own diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of this sluggardliness in *Causes of declension of religion, and means of revival, a circular letter to the churches of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association* (1785). It is true that at this time, Fuller thought God had begun to pour our his grace on the denomination as evidenced by “a spirit of desire after the word,” and “hearts being stirred up for the revival of God’s cause through prayer.”<sup>20</sup> But aiming for abundant and lasting blessings from God, Fuller called for greater evaluation of what caused their ailment. “If we would hope for the blessing of God upon us, there must be added to this a spirit of earnest inquiry into the causes of our declensions, and a hearty desire and endeavor for their removal.”<sup>21</sup>

Fuller then proceeded to diagnose the causes of Particular Baptist decline. Downgrade in religion occurred because of the following reasons: (1) a great degree of contentedness with a mere superficial acquaintance with the gospel, without entering into its spirit and end,<sup>22</sup> (2) a contentedness with present attainments, without aspiring after eminence in grace and holiness,<sup>23</sup> (3) making the religion of others our standard, instead

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Causes of Declension of Religion and Means of Revival, a Circular Letter to the Churches of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, 1785,” in *Works*, 3:318.

<sup>21</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>22</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:318.

<sup>23</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:320.

of the word of God,<sup>24</sup> and (4) the want of considering the consequences of our own good and evil conduct.<sup>25</sup>

For the purposes of this chapter, attention is given to Fuller’s first and second causes of decline. First listed is “a great degree of contentedness with a mere superficial acquaintance with the gospel, without entering into its spirit and end.” Fuller explains, “We may give a sort of idle assent to the truths of God, which amounts to little more than taking it for granted that they are true, and thinking no more about them.”<sup>26</sup> Laziness of mind and dullness of heart characterized the Christian culture. What roused these Christians to thought and action was not the goal of beholding God for who he is or what he has done for sinners, but only to fight against opposition—“*unless somebody opposes us*,” Fuller wrote.<sup>27</sup> One imagines the tenor of the churches complicit in such pugnacious and superficial Christianity to be little more than defensive at heart and cold and interrogatory in manner.

As Fuller addressed the Particular Baptist decline, it is possible that Fuller had his hyper-Calvinist ancestors, whom he had separated from, and eventually wrote against, in his scope.<sup>28</sup> Hyper-Calvinism, or false Calvinism as Fuller called it, was very much alive in the Particular Baptist denomination, and was well known for contending for an

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<sup>24</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:321.

<sup>25</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:322.

<sup>26</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller*, Classics of Reformed Spirituality 3 (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2001), 93.

<sup>27</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 93.

<sup>28</sup> Fuller grew up hearing the preaching of a preacher “tinged with false Calvinism,” who had “nothing to say to the unconverted.” For his exodus from hyper-Calvinism, see Andrew Gunton Fuller, “Memoir of Andrew Fuller,” 1:1–116.

extra-biblical faith and even unbiblical peculiarities stemming from their theological system.<sup>29</sup> The scope of this chapter allows only for a brief summary. In short, the theological issue of dispute between the hyper-Calvinists, and the evangelical Calvinists—of which Fuller was a leader—was whether the unregenerate are under moral obligation to repent of their sin and believe in Christ upon hearing the gospel. The false Calvinists answered in the negative—the unregenerate are not under moral obligation. The evangelical Calvinists answered in the affirmative—the unregenerate are under moral obligation to believe. The false Calvinists found an indiscriminate call to salvation to be nonsensical, meaning evangelism was hindered. The evangelical Calvinists believed it was the duty of the unregenerate to believe, thus concluding that Christians were under obligation to call them to such belief. One can see how proposing and defending a theological system that hindered evangelism, and encouraged the Christian to be silent before the unconverted—not calling all to repent and believe the gospel—would earn anyone the reputation of being “insular and self-contained.”<sup>30</sup>

Whether Fuller had his hyper-Calvinist forbears in mind, one cannot be sure, but it is clear that Fuller judged a spirituality driven by opposition and confrontation

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<sup>29</sup> For a brief summary of hyper-Calvinism during Fuller’s age, see Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English NonConformity 1690–1765* (Cambridge: Burlington Press, 1967). For criticism on Toon’s presuppositions about hyper-Calvinism, see Tom J. Nettles, “Bridge over Troubled Waters,” 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 Book House Company, 1986). For Andrew Fuller as an apologist against hyper-Calvinism, see Gerald L. Priest, “Andrew Fuller, Hyper-Calvinism, and the ‘Modern Question,’” in *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word”: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, in *Studies in Baptist History and Thought*, vol. 6 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Doreen Rosman states that some congregationalist churches, including the Particular Baptists earned this reputation by defending peculiar doctrines. Doreen Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 121. See also Michael A. G. Haykin’s section on a “garden enclosed” (Song of Solomon 4:12) in “The English Particular Baptists, 1640s–1740s” (lecture, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, May 13, 2013).

finally insufficient, and he deplored the fact that this “[seemed] to be nearly the whole of what many attain to, or seek after.”<sup>31</sup> Rebuking Christians Fuller stated in a matter-of-fact manner, “This will not influence the heart and life.”<sup>32</sup>

What then would wake the Particular Baptists to renewal? Fuller’s answer, simply put, was God and his truths. Like a God-ordained prophet, Fuller urged men to raise their gaze to behold their God. Knowing the cure to spiritual sluggishness Fuller skillfully took up the responsibilities of a spiritual physician—presenting God in his depth, calling hearers and readers to enter into the spirit and end of religion.

We maintain the doctrine of one infinitely glorious God; but do we realize the amiableness of his character? If we did we could not avoid loving him with our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.—We hold the doctrine of the universal depravity of mankind; but do we enter into its evil nature and awful tendency? If we did the one, how much lower should we lie before God, and how much more should we be filled with a self-loathing spirit! If the other, how should we feel for our fellow sinners! how earnest should we be to use all means, and have all means used, if it might please God thereby to pluck them as brands out of the burning!—We hold the doctrine of the trinity of Persons in the Godhead; but do we cordially enter into the glorious economy of redemption, wherein the conduct of the sacred Three is most gloriously displayed? Surely if we did, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost would be with us more than it is.—We avow the doctrines of free, sovereign, and efficacious grace; but do we generally feel the grace therein discovered? If we did, how long should we lie! how grateful should we be! We should seldom think of their sovereign and discriminating nature, without considering how justly God might have left us all to have had our own will, and followed our own ways; to have continued to increase our malady, and despise the only remedy! Did we properly enter into these subjects, we could not think of a great *Saviour*, and a great *salvation*, without loathing ourselves for being such great sinners; not of what God had done for and given to us, without longing to give him our little all, and feeling an habitual desire to do something for him.—If we realized our redemption by the blood of Christ, it would be natural for us to consider ourselves as bought with a price, and therefore not our own; “a price, all price beyond!” O, could we enter into this, we should readily discern the force and propriety of our body and spirit being his; his indeed!

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<sup>31</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>32</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

dearly bought, and justly due!—Finally, we all profess to believe the vanity of this life and its enjoyments, and the infinitely superior value of that above; but do we indeed enter into the these things? If we did, surely we should have more of heavenly-mindedness, and less of criminal attachment to the world.<sup>33</sup>

“O, could we enter into this.” Clearly Fuller expected believers to be moved by God and his truths. Knowledge of God was to result in loving him, his cause, and his people. Heralding the doctrine of God, Fuller writes, “We maintain the doctrine of one infinitely glorious God; but do we realize the amiableness of his character?”<sup>34</sup> “If we did,” he infers, “we could not avoid loving him with our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.”<sup>35</sup> This is the Lord Jesus’ summation of the entire Law as written in Mark 12:30. Contentment therefore with a “superficial acquaintance” with the things of God shows “disrespect to Him who has revealed them.”<sup>36</sup> In order to waken sleepy hearts Fuller then pleads, “O brethren, may it be our and your concern not to float upon the surface of Christianity, but to enter into the spirit of it!”<sup>37</sup>

The next cause of religious declension of immediate concern is “a contentedness with present attainments, without aspiring after eminence in grace and holiness.”<sup>38</sup> Not only were people content with superficiality in religion, they also lacked unction in pursuing an active biblical spirituality that aimed at fulfilling the two greatest

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<sup>33</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>34</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>35</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Nature and Importance of an Intimate Knowledge of Divine Truth,” in *Works*, 1:168.

<sup>37</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>38</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:320.

commands of loving God and neighbor (Mark 12:30–31). Speaking of this lack of concern, Fuller explains,

Few seem to aim, pray, and strive after *eminent* love to God and one another. Many appear to be contented if they can but remember the time when they had such love in exercise, and then, tacking to it the notion of perseverance without the thing, they go on and on, satisfied it seems if they do but make shift just to get to heaven at last, without much caring how.<sup>39</sup>

The Christians Fuller had in mind used God as a means of getting to the end of heaven. Naturally, these Christians were failing to fulfill the second greatest command to love others (Mark 12:31), because they failed to fulfill the first command to love God (Mark 12:30).

It is significant to note that Fuller uses the expression “eminent love to God and one another” as a further explanation of “eminence in grace and holiness.” Thus in Fuller’s mind, to aspire after grace and holiness was to strive after love of God and neighbor. The meaning of the two phrases were one and the same. Growth in grace is a growth in Christian love which not only includes loving God but others as well.

Declining in grace meant declining in Christian love to God and others. The slouched faith of the Particular Baptists was very much unlike the Apostle Paul’s, who “count[ed] everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8), and very much like the church of Sardis from biblical times (Rev 3:1–6) who had a reputation of being alive to God but were actually dead (Rev 3:1).

The great revivalist’s solution to spiritual decline was, to put it simply, a *biblical* Christianity, and the plain but sure way forward. God had addressed this type of Sardinian church before, so Fuller repeated God’s authoritative and inerrant word.

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<sup>39</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:320.

We cannot do better than to attend to the advice of the great Head of the church to a backsliding people—“Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.”—“Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die.”— “Remember how thou has received and heard, and hold fast, and repent”” (Revelation 2:5, and 3:2–3).<sup>40</sup>

Calling Christians to repent, Fuller then exhorted Christians to return to God’s basic means of grace given to his people.

Cherish a greater love to the truths of God—pay an invariable regard to the discipline of his house—cultivate love to one another—frequently mingle souls by frequently assembling yourselves together—encourage a meek, humble, and savoury spirit rather than a curious one. These are some of the “things that are ready to die.”<sup>41</sup>

This simple and strong call for Christians to return to God and his word, reflects the dyer situation a number of Particular Baptist churches found themselves in. It was a spiritually dark time such that Fuller found the need to exhort Christians to recover basic Christianity.

### **Conclusion**

How difficult it must have been to stand on the defenses of the Particular Baptist fortress and see revival sparking over the land of Protestant evangelical Christendom when within one’s own walls, a choleric spirit left his own fuming at one another and uncaring towards those outside. Yet Fuller was hopeful. He rallied the troops calling them to see and love again the beauty of the King, to renew their love for him and his people, and to take his message of love beyond their own enclosure. Retrieving love was the solution for their revival—a love for God, and an accompanying

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<sup>40</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:324.

<sup>41</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:324.

love for God’s people. Though love was “ready to die” amongst them, Fuller would not give up laboring for love’s revival.<sup>42</sup> As Fuller recognized and assigned such power to love, it is necessary to understand his theology of love, the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>42</sup> Despite the hardness of heart among English Christians, God in his steadfast love was bringing revival to the land. In Fuller’s circles, Baptist churches came to be established at an incredibly encouraging rate, so much so that from 1750–1812, the Particular Baptists had grown to 558 churches in England and Wales. By 1812 the denomination had grown to around 588 churches in England and Wales, and then by Spurgeon’s day, it had grown to 1500 churches. See Haykin, “The English Particular Baptists, 1640s–1740s.”

Bristol Baptist Academy, which came to be led by Fuller’s closest friend John Ryland Jr., was “producing a stream of ministers with vital spirituality, evangelistic concerns a catholic outlook.” D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2002), 34. Michael A. G. Haykin writes in the unpublished lecture on the friendship of Andrew Fuller and John Ryland Jr., “The majority of [Ryland’s students] went on to become Baptist pastors and missionaries, imbued with Ryland’s evangelical Calvinism and commitment to revival,” in Michael A. G. Haykin, “A Little Band of Brothers”: Friendship in the Lives of John Ryland, Jr. & Andrew Fuller—A Model for Pastors” (lecture, Puritan Theological Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, May 13, 2013).

Particular Baptist associations came to labor all the more closely being unified in mission and partnership. John Ryland Jr., though, notes some troubles with the Western Association. See John Ryland Jr., *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society from its Commencement, in 1792* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Button and Son, 1818), 2–3. Most notably, the Particular Baptists formed the missions agency known as the Baptist Missionary Society (originally called the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen), which sent out William Carey (one of its founders) and his family to India.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE TO MAN

To some, Andrew Fuller's prescription of love for local-church revival may seem like trite platitudes, ultimately lacking the power to wake the walking dead. But Fuller knew this was God's solution. No matter how weak the remedy of love may appear to man, in God's economy love was the currency used to establish and build his kingdom. Love motivated God's grand scheme of salvation. Love moved the Father to send his Son into the world. Love for the Father and his will set Jesus' face like stone to the cross, and love motivated the Son to lay down his life for sinners. Love was the solution. Since God had assigned such value to love,<sup>1</sup> his creation needed to value and cherish it accordingly.

If readers are to understand Fuller as a revivalist, readers must grasp his theology of love. This chapter introduces Fuller's theology of Christian love—its types and motivations, and then goes on to address love's leading role in local-church revival.

#### **The Christian Love of Benevolence**

##### **What Is Christian Benevolence?**

The English language today does not root benevolence in love, as revealed by the New Oxford American Dictionary's definition—"Well meaning and kindly." In this

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<sup>1</sup> For one example on the importance of love, see John 13:34–35.

definition benevolence is little more than being nice. If the term is used at all in churches it used to describe church funds designated for charitable use—the benevolent fund.

**Ultimately concerned with saving souls.** For Fuller though, the love of benevolence was not only equipped with a smile but with passionate longings over the souls of men. As Fuller understood it, this was the very “benevolence” of God. Proving biblical warrant, Fuller wrote,

The benevolence of God to men is represented in the New Testament as consisting not in his overlooking their frailties, not so much even in his forgiving their sins, as in giving his only begotten Son to die for them. Herein was love; and herein was found the grand motive to grateful obedience.<sup>2</sup>

To Fuller, any benevolence that did not fall under laboring to see souls saved was insensible in light of God’s benevolence, which was concerned with the bodies and souls of his creation.

It is this benevolence, or good-will, that Fuller thought Christians were “bound by the law of love to bear” to others.<sup>3</sup> Fuller said of himself that he sought to “promote the welfare of others “by any means in my power”<sup>4</sup> because of the conviction that men were fellow “creatures of God.”<sup>5</sup> But what exactly did Fuller mean by promoting the welfare of all men? It is the answer to this question that brings Fuller’s orthodoxy and evangelicalism to the fore. To explore this, we turn to Fuller’s controversy with the

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Letter XIV. A Comparison of Motives of Gratitude, Obedience, and Heavenly-Mindedness,” in *Works*, 2:214.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence to Men,” in *Works*, 2:163.

<sup>4</sup> Fuller, “Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence to Men,” 2:163.

<sup>5</sup> Fuller, “Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence to Men,” 2:163.

Socinians.

**Christian benevolence versus Socinian benevolence.** Socinianism was (and is) a system of belief driven by presuppositions of rationality.<sup>6</sup> It was a real threat to the church during Fuller’s day, so much so that in the decade of Fuller’s birth (1750s) “the majority of English Presbyterians and General Baptists had abandoned trinitarian orthodoxy for Arianism and Socinianism.”<sup>7</sup> The Socinians rejected the biblical teachings of the Trinity, the deity of Jesus, the incarnation, Christ’s penal substitutionary death on the cross, and the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. These orthodox doctrines were to them “corruptions of pure Christianity,” “excrescences” that had “adhered to Christianity as a result of centuries of alien growth on the pure and simple message of the man Jesus.”<sup>8</sup> To add insult to the defamed character of God, the leading eighteenth-century Socinian, Dr. Joseph Priestley, claimed the Socinian way—its beliefs and morals—were “nearer to the proper temper of Christianity” than those who held orthodoxy.<sup>9</sup>

The Socinians attacked the Christianity of the Calvinists complaining that their “dreadful corruptions . . . debased its spirit” and “virtually annihilated all the happy effects which it was eminently calculated to produce.”<sup>10</sup> Speaking of orthodox

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<sup>6</sup> For a summary of Fuller’s writings against Socinianism see Tom Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” in *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, vol. 6 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 139–73.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 70.

<sup>8</sup> Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” 140–41.

<sup>9</sup> Fuller, “Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence,” 2:161. Fuller quoting Priestley.

<sup>10</sup> Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” 147–48.

Christianity, Priestley writes, “If any system of speculative principles can operate as an axe at the root of all virtue and goodness, it is this.”<sup>11</sup> Throwing rocks at orthodox Christians, and calling good evil, he accused the adherents of this so-called corrupted Christianity to be “gloomy,” “bigoted,” “licentious,” “averse to the love of both God and man.”<sup>12</sup> Instead, in an astounding feat of self-exaltation, Priestley and the Socinians boasted that their “lives are the greatest ornament to [Christianity], and who hold it in so much purity, that, if it was fairly exhibited, and universally understood, it could hardly fail to recommend itself to the acceptance of the whole world, of Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>13</sup>

Fuller, the “Elephant of Kettering,”<sup>14</sup> found the Socinian system “spiritually and theological repulsive.”<sup>15</sup> With the Socinians waging war on both doctrinal and moral fronts, redefining Christianity and appropriating its name for itself, Fuller wanted nothing more than to dump this heretical load off God’s church.

With the opening salvo launched, Fuller seized the opportunity to respond. This he did in *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to their Moral Tendency, In a Series of Letters, Addressed to the Friends of Vital and Practical Religion*.<sup>16</sup> While Fuller sought to prove Priestley’s claim of greatest virtue to be false,

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<sup>11</sup> Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” 147–48.

<sup>12</sup> Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” 147.

<sup>13</sup> Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” 148.

<sup>14</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, “A Little Band of Brothers”: Friendship in the Lives of John Ryland, Jr. & Andrew Fuller—A Model for Pastors” (lecture, Puritan Theological Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, May 13, 2013). Haykin quotes David Phillips, *Memoir of the Life, Labors, and Extensive Usefulness of the Rev. Christmas Evans* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1843), 74.

<sup>15</sup> Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” 147.

the pressing issue in Fuller's mind was not virtue but the truth of Christianity. Virtue was simply the arena of competition to which Priestley himself summoned the Trinitarians. Thus Fuller set out to prove that any system that evacuated Christianity of its truth would lose any notion of Christian virtue.

In writing *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared*, Fuller settled "on a number of categories which all Christians would agree should be proper effects of true Christianity."<sup>17</sup> The following chapter titles (or *Letter* titles as he called them) list the categories which Fuller compared and contrasted between the Calvinistic and Socinian systems: their tendency to convert profligates, their tendency to convert professed unbelievers, an examination of the number of converts to Socinianism, on the standard of morality, on the promotion of morality in general, love to God, candour and benevolence to men, humility, charity, love to Christ, veneration for the Scriptures, and happiness or cheerfulness of tendency to religious infidelity.

Out of the various Letters, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence" is the most relevant to this discussion of Fuller's understanding of Christian love. Driving forward the thesis of *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared*, Fuller inspects the candour and benevolence of both systems in order to invalidate Priestley's exclusive claim that the Socinians walked "nearer to the proper temper of Christianity than they."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew Fuller, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to their Moral Tendency, In a Series of Letters, Addressed to the Friends of Vital and Practical Religion to which is added a postscript, establishing the principle of the work against the exceptions of Dr. Toulmin, Mr. Belsham, etc.*, in *Works*, 2:108–287.

<sup>17</sup> Nettles, "Christianity Pure and Simple," 149.

<sup>18</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:161. Fuller quoting Priestley.

In Fuller's assessment, benevolence in the Socinian system stopped short because it dealt only with the temporal concerns of men to the neglect of their eternal state. Their "love" fell victim to their own religious principles, or rather the lack thereof. In bringing the Socinian error to light, Fuller quotes Dr. Priestley,

If we could be so happy, as to believe that there are no errors but what men may be circumstanced as to be innocently betrayed into, that any mistake of the head is very consistent with rectitude of heart, and that all differences in modes of worship may be only the different methods by which different men (who are equally the offspring of God) are endeavoring to honour and obey their common parent, our differences of opinion would have no tendency to lessen our mutual love and esteem.<sup>19</sup>

Priestley maintained the Socinian system enabled a greater love and esteem for men because of their agreeability and even compatibility with other religious beliefs and practices. In Priestley's system, to welcome others meant welcoming and esteeming their beliefs. This however, appalled Fuller. A system that claims to be based on God's divine revelation, but judges there to be "no errors," only "innocent betrayals" consistent with a "rectitude" or righteousness "of heart," moves directly against the belief in the authority and inerrancy of God's Scripture.<sup>20</sup> This "benevolence," Fuller said, is nothing more than a determination to discard God's truth. "A great deal of what is called candour and benevolence among Socinians is nothing else but indifference to all religious principle."<sup>21</sup> The Socinian may appear more loving and welcoming in their desire to accept all and exclude none, but to Fuller these moves rendered the Socinian system full of neither candour nor benevolence.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:162.

<sup>20</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:162.

<sup>21</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:162.

<sup>22</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:162.

In the evangelical Christian system, the virtue of benevolence (and all other virtues) is to be exercised in service and submission to Jesus Christ and his truth. To determine the true nature of candour and benevolence, Fuller plainly pointed readers to the practice of Christ and his apostles. It was obvious to Fuller that New Testament benevolence went so much further than the Socinian counterfeit in that it sought “to promote their welfare both as to this life *and that which is to come*” (italics mine).<sup>23</sup> Socinian good-will submitted to men, whereas Christian good-will was in service and submission to Jesus Christ and his truth. True Christian benevolence, Fuller said, leads men to address not only the temporal and physical, but the eternal and spiritual. True love towards men labors to see their souls saved. This is what distinguished true benevolence from the false.

By re-envisioning the gospel, removing God’s truth from it, the Socinians were left with vapid niceness, which Fuller knew could never save but only condemn. This is why Fuller chided, “The candour and benevolence of Socinians is destructive of benevolence, as exemplified in the Scriptures.”<sup>24</sup> Continuing, Fuller writes,

Benevolence in Christ and his apostles extended not merely, nor mainly, to the bodies of men, *but to their souls*; nor did they think so favourably of mankind as to desist from warning and alarming them, but the reverse. They viewed the whole world as “lying in wickedness,—in a perishing condition ; and hazarded the loss of every earthly enjoyment to rescue them from it, as from the jaws of destruction.”<sup>25</sup> (italics mine)

Desiring the salvation of souls, the benevolence of Christ evidenced itself by speaking

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<sup>23</sup> Fuller, “Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence,” 2:163.

<sup>24</sup> Fuller, “Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence,” 2:163.

<sup>25</sup> Fuller, “Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence,” 2:164.

words against sinners, issuing warnings to them about eternal punishment. This was good-will compelled by truth. Apparently, Socinian benevolence was determined to rid the world of Jesus' truth. For the Apostles, the truth that Jesus saves those who repent and believe as well as judges those who do not, moved them to freely "hazard the loss of earthly enjoyment."<sup>26</sup> This Christian benevolence, in service and submission to Christ, drove Fuller to promote the welfare of men by "speaking the truth concerning them,"<sup>27</sup> even if it required bringing "heavy tidings."<sup>28</sup> With the scriptural examples of Christ and the apostles as evidence of true Christian benevolence, Socinian benevolence made little sense. Again, Fuller said it was not benevolence nor candour, but "indifference to all religious principle."<sup>29</sup> The program of affirming of all principles undid the very things Christian benevolence sought to do. Caring for man's body to the neglect of his soul, is a far too superficial love. Though caring for man's body was important, that love only lasted for the duration of the earthly life lived. On the other hand, caring for the soul displayed a love aimed at bringing an eternity of good to the sinner. Real benevolence must reflect the priorities of Christ according to his word.

Benevolence is good-will to men; but good-will to men is very distinct from a good opinion of their principles of their practices—so distinct that the former may exist in all its force without the least degree of the later. Our Lord though very ill of the principles and practices of the people of Jerusalem, yet he "beheld the city and wept over it." This was genuine benevolence.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:164.

<sup>27</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:164.

<sup>28</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:162. Fuller makes the point that Jeremiah was a model of benevolence to men, yet he "generally came with heavy tidings."

<sup>29</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:163.

<sup>30</sup> Fuller, "Letter VIII. Candour and Benevolence," 2:163.

Writing on “Love to Enemies” (a sermon on a portion of the Sermon on the Mount), Fuller states in no uncertain terms that Christians are to love their enemies, while abhorring them for being enemies of the Lord.<sup>31</sup> But this abhorrence is nothing less than the Christian’s abhorrence of himself; it finds a parallel in the way a Christian who loves his own soul ought to consistently abhor himself as a sinner.<sup>32</sup> “All that is required” by the Law is that “we love others as we love ourselves.”<sup>33</sup> Promoting the compatibilism of such love and abhorrence, Fuller again points readers to the example of Jesus Christ.

In denouncing the damnation of hell against the scribes and Pharisees, you would think him void of every feeling but that of inflexible justice; yet looking upon the same people in reference to their approaching miseries, he burst into a flood of tears.<sup>34</sup>

Fuller, determined to equip readers with the ability to identify false loves from the real, argued that such Christ-like abhorrence of wickedness was absolutely necessary to benevolence. Fuller concludes, “The compassion that is void of this is not benevolence, but the working of disaffection to God, and of criminal partiality towards his enemies.”<sup>35</sup>

Christian benevolence had an aim and hope. If the manner of benevolence was to function in service and submission to Christ and his truth, the ultimate goal of benevolence was that its recipients would be saved. “Benevolence has not . . . an immediate respect to character; yet it considers its objects within the limits of hope, in

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<sup>31</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Love to Enemies,” in *Works*, 1:574.

<sup>32</sup> Fuller, “Love to Enemies,” 1:574.

<sup>33</sup> Fuller, “Love to Enemies,” 1:574.

<sup>34</sup> Fuller, “Love to Enemies,” 1:574.

<sup>35</sup> Fuller, “Love to Enemies,” 1:574.

respect to their becoming the friends of God.”<sup>36</sup> Writing of the Apostles Christianity, Fuller explains,

The religion of the apostles was full of benevolence. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, they persuaded men, and even besought them to be reconciled to God....These things are written," said they, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name." Jesus wept over the most wicked city in the world; and Paul . . . said . . . that "his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they *might be saved*."<sup>37</sup> (italics mine)

Paul's heart, like Jesus', wept in "great sorrow and unceasing anguish"<sup>38</sup> over his fellow Jews, but their salvation was always an object of hope.<sup>39</sup> Holding out another example, though from his own time, Fuller wrote that his good friend Samuel Pearce was full of "good-will to all mankind,"<sup>40</sup> and "it was from the principle [of benevolence] that he so ardently desired to go and preach the gospel among the heathen."<sup>41</sup> Pearce simply walked the path of Jesus and his disciples.

Let the most inveterate enemy of revelation have witnessed the disinterested benevolence of a Paul, a Peter, or a John, and, whether he would own it or not, his conscience must have borne testimony that this is true religion. The same may be said of Samuel Pearce whether the doctrine he preached found a place in the hearts of his hearers, or not, his spirit and life must have approved themselves to their consciences.<sup>42</sup>

The Socinians on the other hand had gotten it all wrong. Their benevolence risked

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<sup>36</sup> Fuller, "Love to Enemies," 1:574.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures," in *Works*, 2:738.

<sup>38</sup> Rom 9:2.

<sup>39</sup> Fuller, "Antinomianism Contrasted," 2:738.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, M.A.," in *Works*, 3:433.

<sup>41</sup> Fuller, "Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, M.A.," 3:433.

<sup>42</sup> Fuller, "Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, M.A.," 3:444.

nothing ultimate and gave nothing ultimate. So Fuller wrote,

Let a single instance be produced of a Socinian teacher having so much virtue or benevolence in him as to make the attempt,—so much virtue or benevolence as to venture among a race of barbarism, merely with a view to their conversion.<sup>43</sup>

Socinian counterfeit benevolence was in service and submission to their man's own will and whim, and had its eye on self-love.

Christians though were to be marked by true biblical benevolence. In fact Christians were not only to be marked by this benevolence, but were bound to benevolence by God's command—"love thy neighbor as thyself." In a culture where Socinian love was gaining ground, Fuller pointed listeners to God's word. Christian benevolence, if it is to live up to that name at all, required it to be in service and submission to Jesus Christ and his truth. Also, if the true temper of Christian love is to be reached, benevolence must not only address the temporal needs of people but be concerned with their ultimate need—the salvation of their souls.

### **The Christian Love of Charity**

#### **What Is Christian Charity?**

"This new commandment is the most extensive of any that could be given. Love is a most comprehensive principle; it is the fulfilling of the whole law; it is the grand cement that unites the spiritual building. Without this, any wind will blow it down."<sup>44</sup> This new commandment that Fuller references is that of Jesus Christ who said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you,

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<sup>43</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Letter III. Conversion of Professed Unbelievers," in *Works*, 2:128.

<sup>44</sup> Fuller, "The Nature and Importance of Christian Love," 1:523.

you also are to love one another” (John 13:34). Fuller thought the call to benevolence summarized by the second greatest command to be different than the call to love found in the new command. Christian love, or charity, is “love to a Christian” whereas benevolence is “love to our neighbor.”<sup>45</sup> Benevolence is “love for his own sake,” by which Fuller meant love for man’s sake (as opposed to self-love).<sup>46</sup> Christian charity is “love for Christ’s sake.”<sup>47</sup>

**The main difference between charity and benevolence: love’s object.**

Readers are helped to understand the distinction between benevolence and charity in Fuller’s sermon, entitled “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians” (see Phil 3:9–11).<sup>48</sup> In this sermon Fuller says Christian love is set apart from all other loves because of its object, namely God himself. Asking the question “What distinguishes Christian love from every thing else that bears the name?” Fuller answers,

I know of no better criterion than this: *The object of it is holy*: for it is the love of that in the Divine character, or in the human character, or in things, which is holy. It is the love of the holy God—it is the love of holy ways—it is the love of holy men—it is the love of a holy gospel—it is the love of a holy religion—it is that distinguishing quality in all objects, persons, or things which attracts; and it is this which distinguishes Christian love from all other; and it is this which the apostle prays the Philippians might abound in yet more and more.<sup>49</sup> (italics mine)

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<sup>45</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Christian Charity,” in *Works*, 3:783.

<sup>46</sup> Fuller, “Christian Charity,” 3:783.

<sup>47</sup> Fuller, “Christian Charity,” 3:783. Fuller gives his take on the the newness of the new commandment: “It rather seems that Christian charity, or love, is called “a new commandment” because of its being a love to Christians as such, which, though virtually contained in the second great command, yet was not specifically required by it. The church of God was now no longer to be national, but should be formed of Christians individually, amongst whom there should be no other bond of union than that of pure Christianity. Hence it is that this “new commandment” is suited to a new dispensation.”

<sup>48</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:357.

<sup>49</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:357.

This idea of loving the holy wherever the holy can be found is addressed by Fuller in his sermon on the “Nature and Importance of Christian Love” (John 13:34–35). With similar logic found in his sermon on Paul’s prayer for the Philippians, Fuller asks and answers, “What is Christian love?” After stating what it is not—not mere good neighborhood, not mere friendship, not mere party attachment, not excessive and mistaken attachment, and not mere benevolence—he finally and positively answers, “*It is complacency in the Divine image.*”<sup>50</sup> This answer is penetrating, and upon further investigation readers see Fuller’s intricacy of thought and his ability to draw theological connections between different doctrines. Love “is complacency in the *Divine image*.—It is union of heart.”<sup>51</sup>

This union of heart is key to understanding Fuller’s conception of Christian charity. Fuller argued that union takes place both to Christ and his people, and is the mechanism that produces such satisfaction or complacency. Fuller explained that in union with Christ, “our principles, affections, and pursuits will, in a measure, be the same as his; his cause will be our cause, his people our people, his service our delight, and the gospel of salvation through his death our daily bread.”<sup>52</sup> A Christian’s union of heart with Christ is evidenced in embracing and cherishing all that Christ is and stands for. In loving Christ one finds satisfaction in the person and work of Christ, and in turn, a similar satisfaction in Christ’s people.

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<sup>50</sup> Fuller, “Nature and Importance of Christian Love,” 1:523.

<sup>51</sup> Fuller, “Nature and Importance of Christian Love,” 1:523.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Blessedness of the Dead Who Die in the Lord,” in *Works*, 1:152.

To grasp fully Fuller's definition of Christian love, a couple issues need explaining. The first issue concerns Fuller's use of the term complacency. Today, the word complacency is generally associated with satisfaction marked by smugness; however, Fuller's use of the word conveys only satisfaction. Christian love therefore is deep satisfaction and pleasure in God—his person and character— whose image is fully revealed to man in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Col 1:5; 2:9). Thus, Christian love is complacency in all that Jesus is.

Second, an introduction to Fuller's understanding of the *imago dei* is required. Fuller understood that all men possess the divine image. In his sermon "The Last Five Days' Creation," Fuller writes, "Man was honoured in being made after his Creator's image . . . was fitted for communion with his Creator . . . he knew and loved his Creator, living in fellowship with him."<sup>53</sup> Being made in the image of God meant that God designed man for communion and fellowship with him. While all men are made in the image of God, Christian charity focused more narrowly on those who bear Christ's image.

The two strands of complacency and the image of God are intertwined in Fuller's sermon, "Nature and Importance of Christian Love." Fuller states, "This new commandment . . . is complacency in Christ's image," and then adds further definition, "*or the love of Christians as such*" (italics mine).<sup>54</sup> Christian satisfaction is ultimately found in Christ, the very image of God, but that was not all; Christian satisfaction was

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<sup>53</sup> Fuller, "Last Five Days' Creation," in *Works*, 3:6.

<sup>54</sup> Fuller, "Nature and Importance of Christian Love," 1:523.

also to be found in Christ's brothers made in the same image.<sup>55</sup> Complacency was to be experienced “in each other as brethren in Christ.”<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere Fuller concluded, “He that loveth God cannot but love his image wherever it is seen.”<sup>57</sup> Thus brotherly love is ultimately “*love for Christ’s sake*”<sup>58</sup> (Fuller’s italics). With the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ fixed center in their gaze, “the bond of [the church’s] union is holy love, which is the sweetest of all sweets to a holy mind.”<sup>59</sup>

If loving, cherishing, and welcoming Christ leads to doing the same to those Christ conforms more into his image, so dishonoring and rejecting people made in Christ’s image renders a heart guilty of doing the same to Christ. Hating those made in Christ’s image by implication, is hatred to Christ. Here, too, in the ill treatment of men in general and Christians more specifically, the relationship between loving God and those made in his image is displayed. The relationship is well captured in Fuller’s sermon on God’s covenant with Noah (Gen 9:5–6).<sup>60</sup> Though the biblical text addresses murder in

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<sup>55</sup> Fuller uses this logic in a number of places. For example, Fuller writes, “The love that we bear to our fellow Christians, to the law, to the gospel, and even to Christ himself, is the *love of God*. We see in our brethren the image of God, *and love it*; in the law of God, a glorious transcript of his mind, *and love it*; in the gospel, a more glorious transcript of his mind, *and love it more*; and in the person and work of Christ, the very image of the invisible God, *and our hearts are united to him*. In loving each of these objects, *we love God*” (italics mine). Fuller, “The Nature and Importance of Love to God,” 1:306.

<sup>56</sup> Fuller, “The Nature and Importance of Love to God,” 1:306.

<sup>57</sup> Fuller, “Antinomianism Contrasted,” 3:747.

<sup>58</sup> Fuller, “Nature and Importance of Christian Love,” 1:523.

<sup>59</sup> Fuller, “The Choice of Moses,” in *Works*, 1:428.

<sup>60</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Discourse XIV, God’s Covenant with Noah,” in *Works*, 3:38–40. Gen 9:5–6 reads, “And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”

society at large, Fuller's point can still certainly be applied within the church.

The image of God [in man] . . . renders it peculiarly criminal to abuse him. To deface the king's image is a sort of treason among men, implying a hatred against him, and that if he himself were within reach, he would be served in the same manner; how much more treasonable must it be to destroy, curse, oppress, or in any way abuse the image of the King of kings! James iii. 9.<sup>61</sup>

While both benevolence and charity are rooted in God's love to man, Christian charity is distinguished from benevolence because the objects of such holy love were holy in the Lord.

As I have addressed the nature of Fuller's theology of Christian love, I turn now to note two distinguishing marks of charity.

### **Distinguishing Marks of Charity**

**Love—the governor of all holy intelligences.** “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). One reason why love is the greatest, Fuller wrote, was because it is “that by which God proposes to govern all holy intelligences.”<sup>62</sup>

Using the language of the state, Fuller evokes images of love reigning over all Christian resources, dispatching the battalions of faith, hope, and all God's attributes endowed to the Christian by his Father. Fuller knew from Scripture that God's call to exercise these attributes was best answered through love. In fact, it was not only best answered but intended to be answered through love. No call of the divine was ever

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<sup>61</sup> Fuller, “Discourse XIV, God's Covenant with Noah,” 3:38.

<sup>62</sup> Fuller, “Paul's Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:357. As love is the governor of all holy intelligences, it is fitting that Fuller repeatedly called new ministers to excel in love. For one of a number of examples of Fuller underscoring the urgency of ministerial love, see Andrew Fuller, “Character and Success of a Faithful Minister,” in *Works*, 1:135–44.

intended to bypass love as governor. “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13).

Describing love as governor of all holy intelligences is a magnificent summary of the Apostle Paul’s teachings on Christian love from 1 Corinthians 13 and the other relevant biblical data. A heart cultivated by the Spirit and governed by love, possesses wisdom to know how and when to speak the truth in love, encourage or rebuke, forebear and endure, discipline and restore, all the while laboring to encourage the church of Christ for the glory of God.

One wishes Fuller expanded at length on how love was to govern all holy intelligences, though I believe the idea undergirds much of his writings on love—particularly those in his encouragements to pastors. Thankfully, readers possess a treasure trove of love in Fuller’s ordination sermons, especially knowing that Fuller was a man known and “accustomed to enter into [his friends’] circumstances” and was “deeply . . . concerned to promote their best interests.”<sup>63</sup> This body of material to be considered in the next chapter will show what Fuller thought would move the pastor toward success. This will be taken up in the next chapter.

**Reason—the governor of love.** As love was the governor of all holy intelligences, it was knowledge of the truth that reigned over love. Just as Christian benevolence was to be in service and submission to Jesus and his truths, so Christian

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<sup>63</sup> John Ryland Jr. though, notes some troubles with the Western Association. See John Ryland Jr., *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society from its Commencement, in 1792* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Button and Son, 1818), 88.

charity was to be as well.

Christian love “has reason for its governor.”<sup>64</sup> Fuller did not have in mind humanistic reason that sits in judgment over the Bible. Rather, Christian reason was informed by God and his word. Christian charity, like benevolence, was love in service and submission to God’s revelation found in Jesus and his word. Fuller, in his sermon, *It Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians* champions a knowledge driven love. Love is fed “by the knowledge of God . . . by the knowledge of Divine truth . . . by drinking deeply into the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>65</sup> Just as “food is to the body,” so is “divine truth to the mind.”<sup>66</sup> “It nourishes it and keeps it alive.”<sup>67</sup> The converse is true as well; evacuate the truth from the gospel and love eventually dies. Withhold truth from Christian love and love “is in danger of running into innumerable improprieties and irregularities,” even coming to bear the shape of the demonic.<sup>68</sup> This marked Peter’s love at one point in time, when he “[declared] that his Master should never die. There was love; but it was without knowledge, and the Lord Jesus rebuked him for it . . . ‘Get behind me Satan!’”<sup>69</sup> Completely starve Christian love of truth, and man is left with Socinian deformities.

Exhorting others to enter into the spirit of the gospel,<sup>70</sup> and wanting his hearers

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<sup>64</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:358.

<sup>65</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:358.

<sup>66</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:358.

<sup>67</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:358.

<sup>68</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:358.

<sup>69</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:358. Matt 16:23 quoted.

<sup>70</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:318. Recall Fuller’s assessment of the causes of spiritual decline.

to be affected in “the heart and life,”<sup>71</sup> Fuller says,

The more our minds are expanded, and we drink deeply into evangelical truth, the more our hearts will burn with holy affections towards him. "I pray, therefore," says the apostle, " that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Christian love is not a blind attachment; it is not that commotion of the affections which tumultuates towards some object, we know not why or wherefore : *but solid Christian love is accompanied with knowledge; it has reason for its governor; it is truly rational in all its operations.*<sup>72</sup> (italics mine)

What feeds, sustains, beautifies, and even protects Christian love is the knowledge of Jesus and his gospel. It is by pursuing these and living according to its realities that readers grow in eminence of grace and holiness.<sup>73</sup>

**Love brings unity to the church.** Given Christian love finds its pattern in the gospel, where God moves towards sinners in love, it is fitting that Fuller knew this love is what preserved unity in the church.

This new commandment is the most extensive of any that could be given. Love is a most comprehensive principle; it is the fulfilling of the whole law; it is the grand cement that unites the spiritual building. Without this, any wind will blow it down.<sup>74</sup>

Wanting to unite Christians embarking on a mission to take the gospel to the heathen land of India (1806), the BMS forefather encouraged them to fulfill Christ’s command. What would bring and preserve unity in the new venture, no matter the situation?

Next to communion with your God and Saviour, cherish love to one another . . . The apostolic precept which is so often repeated includes more than an abstinence from discord, or the routine of civility. You must know one another, and love each other

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<sup>71</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>72</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:319.

<sup>73</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension,” 3:317.

<sup>74</sup> Fuller, “Nature and Importance of Christian Love,” 1:523.

in the Lord.<sup>75</sup>

The advice is to the point—love God and love one another. This command of love was the “law of our creation.”<sup>76</sup> In order to do this and therefore succeed in the Christian missionary endeavor, Fuller said, “You must often think of the dying love of Christ towards you.”<sup>77</sup> Just as God gave His Son for others, so the Christians were to give themselves for each other—in love. It was this that would compel, sustain, and unite the church—continually knowing Christ’s dying love toward them, and loving in return.

Perhaps recalling the challenges that threatened to blow the Christian church down during the era of the apostles (such as those of the Corinthian church—temptation towards factions and divisions, a one-upmanship mentality, a lack of loving church discipline, a craving to possess and exercise the gifts of the Spirit divorced from their divinely instituted function of building of the church etc.) Fuller candidly offers a personal and precious example of how the gospel provoked him to greater love in the church.

When I have sometimes surveyed the church of which I am a pastor, individually, my mind has revolted from this member for this fault, and from another for that ; but when I have met them at the table of the Lord, one thought has dissipated all these hard things: ‘Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood !’ Oh, (thought I,) *if my Saviour could find in his heart to lay down his life for them, who am I that I should withhold the tenderest regards from them? If he can forgive them, shall I be unforgiving? Nay more . . . If he could lay down his life for me, and forgive me, who am I that I should cherish a hard and unforgiving heart towards my brethren?*<sup>78</sup> (italics mine)

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<sup>75</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 207–10.

<sup>76</sup> Fuller, “The Gospel as the Means of Universal Peace,” 1:256.

<sup>77</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 208.

<sup>78</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 208–9.

Nothing on earth could ever produce or surpass the binding powers of love found in the gospel. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). If the righteous God, through sending Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of everyone who would repent and believe, is able to bind depraved sinners to himself through uniting them to Christ, through justifying them, and adopting and sanctifying them, surely that same divine love could bind Christians together in charity.

Just as the Christian is obligated to exercise benevolence so the Christian is obligated to practice charity; love of the brethren was Christ’s new command (John 13:34–35). One major difference between benevolence and charity is that the object of charity, according Fuller, it is ultimately God and his character. Therefore, Fuller happily defines Christian love as “complacency in the divine image.”<sup>79</sup> This love, similar to benevolence, is to be exercised in service and submission to God and his revelation in Jesus and his word. It is natural then that love is the leading virtue in the Christian life and is to play the leading role in church-revitalization.

### **Conclusion**

“The doctrine of the cross is the Christian doctrine.”<sup>80</sup> It is the basis of the Christian life, and more specifically Christian love. Fuller’s deep conviction of the centrality of the cross is one reason why he was such an effective leader in the late eighteenth-century English revival. Ultimately, though Fuller was at times blunt and

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<sup>79</sup> Fuller, “Nature and Importance of Christian Love,” 1:523.

<sup>80</sup> Fuller, “Conformity to the Death of Christ,” 1:310.

stern in behavior, it was his distinctly Christian characteristics that dwarfed the others. Reading about them leaves readers convinced that Christ was certainly at work conforming him into his own image.<sup>81</sup> His second wife, fully aware of the challenges of living with a driven man, nevertheless wrote of his capacity for love, "He had a heart formed for the warmest and sincerest friendship with those whose minds were congenial with his own, and who were engaged in similar pursuits; and I never knew him to be weary of their company."<sup>82</sup>

Having touched on Fuller's thoughts and convictions about the Christian's love toward his fellow man and fellow Christian, we turn now to examine Fuller's practical encouragements to pastors on revitalizing the local church through love.

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<sup>81</sup> John Ryland Jr., *The Work of Faith*, 297. His bluntness though, as clarified by John Ryland Jr. "did not arise from an unsociable or churlish disposition, but from an impatience of interruption in the grand object of his pursuit."

<sup>82</sup> Ryland Jr., *The Work of Faith*, 297.

## CHAPTER 4

### A PASTOR'S LOVE: A DISPENSATION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

As discussed in previous chapters, Fuller thought that if local churches were to see revival, love needed to lead. But who was to lead in loving? And what did this love look like practically in the local church?

This chapter answers these questions by examining Fuller's ordination sermons. To Fuller, the pastor was to lead in love, dispensing the very love of Christ to Christ's people. In order to accomplish this, Christ's priorities needed to be the pastor's priorities. Only then could the pastor love the church for Christ's sake.

#### **Fuller's Ordination Sermons**

When formalizing a church's call of a new pastor, Particular Baptist churches would hold an ordination service where congregants and others would attend. The service included not one public address but four.<sup>1</sup> The first address, the Introductory Discourse, aimed to address the nature and purpose of ordination ceremonies. The second address was given by the ordinand himself, and was his Statement of Faith. Here,

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<sup>1</sup> For this section I rely on Nigel Wheeler's descriptions of ordination services. For a helpful history of the ordination service in Baptist tradition, see Nigel David Wheeler, "Dynamics of Particular Baptist Ordination Sermons," in "Eminent Spirituality and Eminent Usefulness: Andrew Fuller's (1754–1815) Pastoral Theology in His Ordination Sermons" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2009), 76–117, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-09252009-000732/unrestricted/02chapters3-4.pdf>. For a summary description, see Nigel Wheeler, "Andrew Fuller's Ordination Sermons," *Eusebia*, no. 9 (Spring 2008): 167–182.

the ordinand provided his statement of faith for others to interact over the ordinand's beliefs in effort to protect a church's orthodoxy. The third address was the Charge, given by another pastor to the ordinand whereby the newly called pastor was reminded of the nature and task of pastor. The fourth and final address was the Address to the Church. In this sermon a pastor would remind congregants of their biblical obligations towards their new pastor.

Of these four addresses the Charge, the third address was the most important.<sup>2</sup>

Nigel Wheeler writes about the Charge,

It represented an admonition from one pastor to another pastor on how the office of elder should function effectively. These sermons embody a uniquely practical exposition of the goals, purposes, encouragements, challenges, and execution of the pastoral office.<sup>3</sup>

“What makes this corpus of material so valuable,” Wheeler states, is that

these sermons embody a uniquely personal and practical exposition of the execution of the pastoral office, for beyond just a systematic exposition of a Particular Baptist pastoral theology, they contain an elucidation of pastoral theology purified in the crucible of practiced ministry.<sup>4</sup>

Given the importance of the Charge to the life and ministry of both the ordinand and the church calling him, it is a unique blessing for readers today to have access to over thirty of such sermons by Andrew Fuller, a man so obviously influential in the lives of other pastors.<sup>5</sup> Overflowing from the treasure trove that is Fuller's

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<sup>2</sup> Wheeler, “Andrew Fuller's Ordination Sermons,” 170.

<sup>3</sup> Wheeler, “Andrew Fuller's Ordination Sermons,” 170.

<sup>4</sup> Wheeler, “Andrew Fuller's Ordination Sermons,” 170.

<sup>5</sup> In his work, Wheeler lists 31 extant ordination sermons given by Fuller. 13 are charges to an ordinand, 5 are addresses to churches, 5 are single sermons which both address the church and charge the new pastor, 2 are charges to students, and the last 2 represent charges to missionaries for India sent through

ordination sermons comes a wealth of practical wisdom addressing the application of theology in the life of the church.

### **Pastor: Servant and Steward in the House of God**

Before looking at how the pastor is to dispense Christ's love to Christ's people, it is important to understand what Fuller conceived the nature of the pastorate to be.

According to Fuller the pastor is servant of Christ and a steward entrusted with Christ's things. With this in mind, the pastor does not dispense Christ's love as the owner of it but rather as one who stewards it.

### **The Pastor: Servant in the House of God**

In "The Work and Encouragements of the Minister,"<sup>6</sup> an ordination sermon on Matthew 25:21,<sup>7</sup> Fuller underscores the fact that Jesus calls the pastor a servant—not just

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the Baptist Missionary Society. See Nigel David Wheeler, "The Pastoral Theology of Andrew Fuller," in "Eminent Spirituality and Eminent Usefulness," 167–68, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-09252009-000732/unrestricted/04chapters6-7.pdf>.

For the purposes of this paper, emphasis is placed on but not limited to Fuller's thirteen sermons preached directly to the ordinand. They are the following: (1) "Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry" (478–82); (2) "An Intimate and Practical Acquaintance with the Word of God" (483–86); (3) "Ministers appointed to root out Evil and to cultivate Good" (486–89); (4) "Ministers should be concerned not to be Despised" (491–94); (5) "Ministers Fellow Labourers with God" (491–94); (6) "The nature of the Gospel, and the Manner in which it ought to be Preached" (494–96); (7) "The Work and Encouragements of the Christian Minister" (496–501); (8) "Preaching Christ" (501–4); (9) "The Influence of the Presence of Christ on a Minister" (504–5); (10) "Habitual Devotedness to the Ministry" (506–8); (11) "Affectionate Concern of a Minister for the Salvation of his Hearers" (508–10); (12) "The Nature and Encouragements of Ministry Work" (510–12); (13) "The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Ministers Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas" (135–44). All sermons listed above can be found in volume 1 of Andrew Fuller, *Works*. Though these thirteen sermons are used as the basis of this chapter, other sermons containing pertinent content are referred to as well.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Fuller, "The Work and Encouragements of the Minister," in *Works*, 1:496–501.

<sup>7</sup> "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master'" (Matt 25:21).

a servant to anyone but a “servant of God.”<sup>8</sup> Thus it is to God that pastors must give an account.<sup>9</sup> In a sermon to students training for ministry at Stepney Academical Institution, Fuller takes time to weed out corrupted views of the ministry. He writes, “The work itself to which you are devoted” is a work of “service.”<sup>10</sup> Helping students “forever bear in mind” their God-given job description, Fuller writes, “The leading character of a minister is that of servant” of God.<sup>11</sup> All labor is expended for God. Recognizing the students were about to embark on leading God’s people, Fuller reminded them that just as it was Moses’ job to lead the people to God, so it was theirs as well. Quoting Exodus 18:19, Fuller encouraged the soon-to-be pastors, “Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Pastor: Steward of the Things of God**

The pastor is not only servant in the house of God, but steward of it as well, as God entrusts his things to men qualified to lead. Fuller lists the two main pieces of God’s

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<sup>8</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Minister,” 1:497.

<sup>9</sup> Fuller references Heb 13:17, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” This accounting theme is present in some of Fuller’s other ordination sermons. See Andrew Fuller, “Preaching Christ,” in *Works*, 1:501–4; also Andrew Fuller, “Pastor’s Required to Feed the Flock of Christ,” in *Works*, 1:477–78. In one ordination service, Fuller had the opportunity to preach what seems to be the final address of the service, the Address to Church. Fuller’s text was Heb 13:17. A unique view of Fuller’s pastoral theology is offered as he addresses the church’s responsibility to the pastor. In the sermon, Fuller emphasizes what the church can do to assist him, as one who must give an account. See Andrew Fuller, “The Obedience of Churches to Their Pastors Explained and Enforced,” in *Works*, 1:196–202.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Young Minister Exhorted to Make Full Proof of His Ministry,” in *Works*, 1:518.

<sup>11</sup> Fuller, “The Young Minister Exhorted,” 1:518.

<sup>12</sup> Fuller, “The Young Minister Exhorted,” 1:519.

property entrusted to the pastor in “The Work and Encouragements of the Minister.” The first main piece of property the pastor must care for is the gospel of Christ.<sup>13</sup> “The gospel is a most sacred trust” and therefore the pastor must “not keep it back, but keep it safe; hold it fast in [his] mind and in . . . ministry.”<sup>14</sup>

The second portion of the Lord’s estate entrusted to ministers is “the souls of the people.”<sup>15</sup> While more will be said below on the method encouraged by Fuller in caring for souls, it suffices to state here that Fuller reminded these stewards-in-training that God calls pastors to “watch for *souls* as those that must given an account” (italics mine).<sup>16</sup> God had placed his people into the care of pastors, and so it was to God that the pastor had to give an account. The pastor was simply a servant in the house of God, entrusted with the things of God—his gospel, and his people.

No wonder Fuller warned Stepney’s students against “an abuse of their office,” ruling in power, and “the exercise of dominion over their brethren.”<sup>17</sup> To do these things was to belittle God by reversing the roles—making God servant to the pastor-lord. Wanting the students to stand against such thinking and behavior, Fuller directed them to that which God had called them.

It has always grated in my ears to hear such language as this:—My church, my deacons, &c., *as if churches were made for them, rather than they for churches*. Do not emulate this empty swell. True greatness will revolt at it. He that will be great,

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<sup>13</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Minister,” 1:498.

<sup>14</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Minister,” 1:498.

<sup>15</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Minister,” 1:498.

<sup>16</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Minister,” 1:498.

<sup>17</sup> Fuller, “The Young Minister Exhorted,” 1:519.

let him be the servant of all.<sup>18</sup> (italics mine)

The pastor's post in the church is not that of lord but of servant. If the pastor is to fulfill his God-given task responsibly and faithfully, he must "act as a faithful steward towards his lord's family; who renders service to them all, but is accountable to his lord only."<sup>19</sup> Fuller's concludes, "Serve the church of Christ for his sake."<sup>20</sup>

### **Loving the Church for Christ's Sake**

"A servant that heartily loves his master counts it a privilege to be employed by him, yea, an honour to be entrusted with any of his concerns."<sup>21</sup>

Being entrusted with God's gospel and his people, means pastors are also entrusted with and ought to take on all of God's concerns towards his sheep. As God loves and wants for the church so God's stewards are charged to love and want for them in parallel. Biblical redemptive history shows that God loved the church by giving Christ to be her foundation, her end, and her sustenance. Keenly aware of the ways God manifested his love to the church, Fuller charged pastors to serve their Master by loving the church in similar ways.

### **Grounding the Church on Christ**

God loved the church by giving Christ to be her foundation. If the pastor was

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<sup>18</sup> Fuller, "The Young Minister Exhorted," 1:519.

<sup>19</sup> Fuller, "The Young Minister Exhorted," 1:519.

<sup>20</sup> Fuller, "The Young Minister Exhorted," 1:519.

<sup>21</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 97.

to love God's people, he was to ensure Christ was her foundation. Thus, Fuller instructed one pastor in "Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,"<sup>22</sup> "Be sure that you lay [the] right foundation" of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Christ is the foundation of God's laying, the foundation of the apostles and prophets; and you must lay him, as the foundation of faith and holiness. All true holiness is built upon faith in Christ.<sup>24</sup>

The minister's responsibility is not to determine whether Christ is the right foundation or not; rather the minister's is to embrace what God already determined to be so, and do what God has called him to do. In building the church on Christ, the pastor loves the church with God's love by building the church on what alone saves, and so establish the church in faith and holiness.

### **Readying the Church for Christ**

God loved the church by not only giving Christ to be her ground but also her end. Christ the groom has been provided for the church and so her servant's task is to ready her for her groom. Christ's desires for the bride must necessarily be the pastor's. In the same sermon Fuller uses the biblical analogy of a church as a building and calls pastors to "frame the" church "that it may be a fit habitation *for God*" (italics mine).<sup>25</sup> While the pastor is "builder" and co-laborer with God, the pastor ought never conceive of the church as his own dwelling, where he is the master and the people his serfs. For any

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good," in *Works*, 1:486–89.

<sup>23</sup> Fuller, "Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good," 1:488.

<sup>24</sup> Fuller, "Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good," 1:488.

<sup>25</sup> Fuller, "Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good," 1:488.

with an over-lording posture Fuller brings them low.

It must be God's house, not yours. Beware that you go not about it as Nebuchadnezzar went about Babylon—"This is the house which *I* have built"—this is *my* house! I trust you have no greater desire than that God would take up his abode with you. Well—build you but upon his foundation, and by his rule, and he *will* dwell with you. All buildings are with a view to habitation.<sup>26</sup> (Fuller's italics)

The threatenings of a Nebuchadnezzar-like insanity serve as a timely warning to any pastor desiring to claim what is rightfully God's. If God owns the church and is preparing her for Christ, naturally God requires his plan for the church be embraced by any under-shepherd called to care for his people. The plan is God's plan, the building God's habitation, and the sheep the Great Shepherd's.

According to Fuller, any pastoral interest towards the sheep needed to be Christ's interests towards his sheep. Every pastor was to know that the flock belonged to Christ, and loving them required loving Christ and embracing his purposes for his sheep. Fuller judged this to be clear from Jesus' reinstatement of Peter where Christ commands him three times, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). In this conversation Jesus refocuses Peter's love by preceding each command to feed his sheep with the question, "Peter, Do you love me?" (John 21:17). It may seem more natural for Christ to have asked, Peter do you love my sheep? The reason for Christ's question is clear; if Peter is to love Christ's sheep, he must love their Shepherd. A love for the Christ will produce a love for his people, as Christ reminded hearers that they are "*My* sheep" — "my lambs" (Fuller's italics).<sup>27</sup> Given the sheep "are [Christ's] as given him by the Father, John 10:29 . . . are

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<sup>26</sup> Fuller, "Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good," 1:488.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Pastors Required to Feed the Flock of Christ," in *Works*, 1:477. The words in quotations comes from John 20:16–17. Fuller's line of reasoning shows up in another ordination sermon

[Christ's] as having purchased them with his blood, Acts 20:28 . . . and . . . are [Christ's] as being the travail of his soul, the reward of his death, which 'satisfied' [God],” God requires that those who tend to his flock “love *him*.”<sup>28</sup>

The qualification he requires in their shepherd – Love! He would not trust them with one who did not love him. One who did not love him, a hireling, would starve them, or poison them, and flee in a time of danger John 10:12 . . . But *if we love Christ, we shall love his people for his sake*. We shall feel a subordinate interest in them . . . Love will inspire vigilance and boldness in feeding the flock, and defending them from danger.<sup>29</sup> (italics mine)

As steward of the things of God and servant in God's household, the pastor was to love Christ's sheep in the way God wanted them loved, by grounding the church's existence on Christ who saves and by preparing them to meet the Master of the house. The only way that was going to happen is if the pastor loved Christ enough to embrace his will and work towards fulfilling God's very plan for God's people. To use the scriptural analogy of a marriage, which Fuller also utilizes, the pastor needed to know that Christ was the church's only true bridegroom, and so ready the church for her lover.

### **Feeding the Church with Christ**

**Feeding by preaching.** How though was the foundation of Christ to be laid and the church to be readied for her groom? This chapter now turns to address the

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entitled “Preaching Christ.” Fuller writes, “This was the motive addressed to Peter. “Lovest thou me?—Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs.”—“Feed the church of God, *which he hath purchased with his own blood*.” . . . Let Christ be not only the theme of my remaining ministry, but the exaltation of him and the enlargement of his kingdom the great end of my life! If I forget thee, O my Saviour, let my right hand forget; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof my mouth!” See Fuller, “Preaching Christ,” 1:504.

<sup>28</sup> Fuller, “Pastors Required to Feed the Flock of Christ,” 1:477.

<sup>29</sup> Fuller, “Pastors Required to Feed the Flock of Christ,” 1:477–78

primary means pastors were to employ to ensure the sheep received love. Without doubt Fuller ranked feeding God's sheep God's word the primary corporate task of the pastor. Faithfully stewarding the gospel of God was the only way to ground the church on Christ, and ready the church for Christ.

This is the reason Fuller insisted the pastor be familiar with and thoroughly preach the Scriptures. In his first point in "Ministerial Attention to the Scriptures,"<sup>30</sup> Fuller exhorted hearers to "Seek the Law, or Will, of God."<sup>31</sup> His sub-points showcase a dogged evangelical understanding of Scripture: (a) "*seek* the law," (b) "seek it *at the fountain-head*," (c) "seek the will of God *in every part of the Bible*," and (d) "seek it *perseveringly*" (Fuller's italics).<sup>32</sup> It is telling that while Fuller had an "intimate friendship" with the pastor he preached to, he did not assume his "dear brother's" evangelical stance toward the Scriptures leaving it unaddressed. Writing in another sermon, Fuller felt the need to remind the minister that "becoming acquainted with the mind of God in his word," was the "leading part" of a minister's work.<sup>33</sup>

Being "conversant with the gospel" in the Scriptures was directly tied to dispensing the love of Christ to the sheep.<sup>34</sup> The gospel was the God-given food that ensured health. Fuller wrote,

Under-shepherds cannot furnish the pasture; the utmost we can do is to lead you into

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<sup>30</sup>Andrew Fuller, "Ministerial Attention to the Scriptures," in *Works*, 1:483–86.

<sup>31</sup> Fuller, "Ministerial Attention to the Scriptures," 1:483

<sup>32</sup> Fuller, "Ministerial Attention to the Scriptures," 1:483–84.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Ministers Fellow Labourers with God," in *Works*, 1:491.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry," in *Works*, 1:478.

it. But Christ does more. He not only provides shepherds, *but pasture—the gospel, of which he is the subject.*<sup>35</sup> (italics mine)

Typically found in Fuller’s ordination sermons were examinations of the native plants found in the pasture of God’s gospel. Like a master chef to the new hires, Fuller regularly laid out the God-given staples of sustenance. “If you preach not the great doctrines of the gospel, such as the entire depravity of our nature, the atonement of Christ, the work of the Spirit, &c., the people of God will be famished.”<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere Fuller gave a sampling of these doctrines by naming the following: (1) the holy character of God, (2) knowledge of Christ, the Mediator, (3) human nature as created, (4) depravity, and (5) sanctification by the Spirit. These were the “searching and convincing doctrines” that nourished the people of God, as well as prepared the soil for a bountiful harvest of holiness.<sup>37</sup>

If the pastor was to love Christ’s sheep with the love of Christ, then the pastor needed protect and guard them for Christ. This required pastors to “root out evil, and to cultivate good.”<sup>38</sup> Calling a pastor to neutralize and demolish the church’s threats, Fuller implored, “By your public ministry root out errors in doctrine.”<sup>39</sup> The pastor’s motivation for such a posture ought not stem from a lack of charity towards others but

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<sup>35</sup> Fuller, “Pastors Required to Feed the Flock of Christ,” 1:478.

<sup>36</sup> Fuller, “Ministerial Attention to the Scriptures,” 1:485.

<sup>37</sup> Fuller, “Ministerial Attention to the Scriptures,” 1:488

<sup>38</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” 1:486–89. The sermon text is Jer 1:10, “I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant.”

<sup>39</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” 1:486.

from the “pure love of the Christian pastor” towards Christ’s sheep.<sup>40</sup> It was the pastor’s God-given duty to “preserve his charge from things that tend to the ruin of their souls.”<sup>41</sup> Faithful stewards, Fuller directed, were to “discourage evil . . . pull down, and destroy . . . throw down the rubbish, and then to build upon a new and good foundation . . . root out the weeds . . . inquire what are the evils against which you must contend, and the methods you are to adopt in this opposition,” and even through “the exercise of faithful discipline, root out evil-doers.”<sup>42</sup>

While Fuller, in the sermon mentioned above, does not name the evils that were killing the garden, he does name them in another. In “Spiritual Knowledge and Light Required for the Ministry,” Fuller names Socinianism, Arianism, and Antinomianism as “errors” born out of “ignorance of the true character of God.”<sup>43</sup> Readers familiar with the controversies Fuller was involved in know he played a large part in rooting out these and other errors that led to the ruination of Christ’s people.<sup>44</sup> Seeing the need to equip pastors with the tools for weeding with the church, he wrote,

You will have to point out the true character of God, that the sinner may see his own deformity, and not have the enmity of his heart concealed from his eyes. A just view of the holy character of God will also be one of the best preservatives against error in other respects. Almost all the errors in the world proceed from ignorance of the true character of God. To what else can be attributed the errors of Socinianism, Arianism, and Antinomianism? From degraded views of God’s character arise diminutive notions of the evil of sin—of its just demerit—of our lost condition—of

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<sup>40</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” 1:487.

<sup>41</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” 1:487.

<sup>42</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” 1:486–87.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Light Required for the Ministry,” 1:479.

<sup>44</sup> See Haykin, “*At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word.*”

our need of a great Saviour—and of the work of the Spirit.<sup>45</sup>

The pastor's protective stance over the church was not to spring from enmity against others, but from a heart of love and zeal for God. In the quotes that follow readers see the intertwining of the pastor's supreme love to God and what ought to be the pastor's "subordinate" love of the church.

Particularly, if you love *God*, you will be concerned to root up every thing that opposes the glory of his character and moral government. Vindicate the ways of God to men against all their hard thoughts and speeches. Vindicate his law, both in its precepts and penalty. You have observed, I doubt not, that this is the foundation for the grace of the gospel. If you love *Christ*, you will root up those principles which degrade his dignity and set aside his atonement. If you love *your people*, you will root up those principles which endanger the salvation of their souls; such as self-righteousness and presumptuous hope. There is plenty of work to remove the covering and to pull down the vain expectations of sinners.... You have seen, and will see, many whose habitual deportment proves them enemies to the cross, who yet entertain hopes of heaven: try and find out the delusive ground of their hope, and expose it.<sup>46</sup> (Fuller's italics)

Readers find consistency in conviction in Fuller's belief that if a shepherd is to love God's flock, he must desire what Christ himself desires for his sheep. Feeding the church with the gospel of Christ is how Christ desires they live. They are his sheep and they are to feed on him. According to the Scriptures, it is evident that

there is a close connection between his having died for them and his desire to have them fed; which is afterward recognized by the apostle Paul, in his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus; 'Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.'<sup>47</sup>

The steward of God is to work with his Lord's charge ever before him, "Occupy till I

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<sup>45</sup> Fuller, "Spiritual Knowledge and Light Required for the Ministry," 1:479.

<sup>46</sup> Fuller, "Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good," 1:487

<sup>47</sup> Fuller, "Pastors Required to Feed the Flock of Christ," 1:477.

come.”<sup>48</sup> The pastor who loves and labors like this will see himself as God’s steward, charged with caring for Christ’s sheep by feeding them God’s gospel of which Christ is the subject.<sup>49</sup>

**Preaching in love.** In his writings Fuller stresses not only the fact that the pastor must feed the flock, but also the manner in which the pastor ought to feed it. As mentioned above, “love” inspires “vigilance and boldness in feeding the flock, and defending them from danger.”<sup>50</sup> This heart of love was to drive the preaching ministry of the pastor. So Fuller warned against preaching “*at* people” and encouraged a preaching “*to* them” (italics Fuller’s).<sup>51</sup> Preaching at them was preaching that merely sought to expose. Preaching to heal aimed to see souls saved from condemnation.

Of Fuller’s ordination sermons, “The Work and Encouragements of the Christian Minister” has the most to say about preaching and teaching in love. In this sermon Fuller uniquely assists the pastor by placing him under the weight of the ministerial office, as one who “watches for souls as [one] that must give an account.”<sup>52</sup>

Hoping the pastor would fulfill his new responsibilities for God’s sake and not his own, Fuller helps clarify what this pastoral accounting might entail. In anticipating both God’s method of accountability as well as the pastor’s accounting, Fuller says,

You may say, perhaps, There’s such a one, and such a one—they have attended my

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<sup>48</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Ministry,” 1:497.

<sup>49</sup> Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry,” 1:478.

<sup>50</sup> Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry,” 1:477–78.

<sup>51</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Ministry,” 1:498.

<sup>52</sup> Fuller, “The Work and Encouragements of the Ministry,” 1:498.

ministry; but I have never been able to discover any thing in them friendly to the cause of Christ. But the question which may be addressed to you is, Did you warn them? Did you deal faithfully with them? In a word, Did you discharge your trust?<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore,

You may have to allege, with regard to others, They would not receive the doctrine I taught; they were always opposing it, always cavilling at it, and have often caused my heart to ache.—But the question for your consideration is, *Did you teach them in love?* Did you bear and forbear with them? If they have gone astray like lost sheep, have you searched after them with a desire to restore them?<sup>54</sup> (italics mine)

That Fuller's questions climax with the theme of pastoral love involved in teaching, caring, seeking out and restoring is telling. If a pastor is to be faithful in caring for God's sheep he must love them with the same love of God. God acted in love to save sinners in Christ, so naturally God demands his ministers act in the same.

If the pastor is to love Christ's people for Christ's sake, he will feed the church God's word, guard the church from things that ruin their souls, and will strive to do so in a manner fit for God who is love.

**Feeding in visiting.** Fuller was not only a minister of the gospel in his public pulpit ministry but in his private ministry in visiting members as well. Fuller judged "visiting the people" to be "a considerable part of the pastoral office."<sup>55</sup>

Given the Apostle Paul taught publicly and "from house to house," Fuller's logical conclusion was that pastors were to do the same.<sup>56</sup> Fuller found visitations to be

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<sup>53</sup> Fuller, "The Work and Encouragements of the Ministry," 1:498.

<sup>54</sup> Fuller, "The Work and Encouragements of the Ministry," 1:498.

<sup>55</sup> Fuller, "Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry," 1:481.

of great pastoral use as they allowed pastors to “become acquainted with the circumstances . . . [and the] spiritual necessities of [the] people.”<sup>57</sup> These home visits afforded opportunities for congregants to “impart their feelings freely and unreservedly,” as well as opportunities for the pastor to “be able to administer the appropriate counsel to much better purpose” and more “particularity than would be becoming in a public address.”<sup>58</sup>

Though in the comfort of a home where feelings could be spoken freely and counsel given purposefully, Fuller nevertheless recognized these visits to be “hard work.”<sup>59</sup> While experiencing the hospitality of fellow Christians, the pastor must “tell persons their faults.”<sup>60</sup> Forewarning the pastor of potential difficulties involved in visitation, Fuller noted that if the “minister tell the truth, there is great danger of his being counted the enemy, and treated as such.”<sup>61</sup> This ministry of “faithful reproof,” though “painful and laborious to a feeling mind,” is necessary to pastoral duty.<sup>62</sup>

**Visiting in love.** No Christ-like pastor though desires to offend the sheep unnecessarily. Recognizing both the challenging task and the potentially awkward

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<sup>56</sup> Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry,” 1:481. Fuller quotes from Acts 20:20 which reads, “. . . I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house.”

<sup>57</sup> Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry,” 1:481.

<sup>58</sup> Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry,” 1:481.

<sup>59</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Fellow Labourers with God,” 1:492.

<sup>60</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Fellow Labourers with God,” 1:492.

<sup>61</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Fellow Labourers with God,” 1:492.

<sup>62</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Fellow Labourers with God,” 1:492.

situation, Fuller offered the solution of successful interpersonal ministry. “The grand secret is to love the souls of the people, and to do every thing from pure good-will, and with a view to their advantage—“speaking the truth in love.”<sup>63</sup> Pastoral reproof then has its eyes on reclaiming men and not merely exposing them.<sup>64</sup> Success in ministerial visits is birthed in the “[mingling of] love with . . . fidelity.”<sup>65</sup> Fuller knew the Christ-like pastor, governed by love, and “affectionate [in] conduct,” could “say almost any thing, in a way of just reproof, without giving offence [sic].”<sup>66</sup>

While first-hand witness of Fuller’s pastoral posture in visitation is not vast, readers are still able to observe his affectionate pastoral care by looking at his personal correspondence. Even a cursory reading shows Fuller to be an exemplar in mingling love and faithfulness while holding forth hope in Christ.

On one occasion in August 1784, Fuller corresponded with two relatives about the unexpected death of a mutual friend. Being “much affected” by the event, Fuller penned his thoughts about death as well as other related themes in effort to encourage his readers to think and meditate biblically on the same.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Fellow Labourers with God,” 1:492. Fuller quotes from Eph 4:15, “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”

<sup>64</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Fellow Labourers with God,” 1:492.

<sup>65</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” 1:487.

<sup>66</sup> Fuller, “Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry,” 1:481.

<sup>67</sup> Fuller’s diary, as edited by Andrew Gunton Fuller, does not mention who died. The last death mentioned prior to the letter is that of a child and takes place the month before. Fuller first visits a sick child on June 21 and writes, “Much affected to-day in visiting some poor friends; especially in going to see a little boy, of seven or eight years old, in a decline, not likely to continue long. My heart felt for his everlasting state. Conversed with him a little on divine subjects.” The child survives through the middle of July. The day after the child passes, Fuller writes for his July 18 entry, “Found my heart go out for the

The letter shows Fuller firm in the truths of the gospel and competent in speaking about them in love. Aiming to minister the gospel to their souls Fuller writes,

I often long to know how your minds are affected about that great event, and whether you have indeed been brought with lamentation and bitter weeping to the Saviour's feet. O my dear —, great sinners as we have been, there is mercy and merit sufficient to save us.<sup>68</sup>

After offering them hope in the mercies of Christ and sufficiency of his person and work, Fuller holds out a present hope.

The Lord Jesus *still* says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And is he not worth coming to? Is not his mercy worth asking for? Surely it will appear so when we come to die, or when we stand before God in the day of judgment!<sup>69</sup>  
(italics mine)

Having mentioned the depravity of their hearts, and having directed their eyes to Christ's work on the cross and his promises to the penitent, Fuller then turns to God's judgment.

"We may be sure of this, for the Lord hath spoken it—that the wrath of God will be poured out on the families who call not on his name; while the door of mercy will be opened to all who knock at it."<sup>70</sup>

Without doubt, speaking forthrightly about God's judgment and death can be off-putting in the twenty-first century; but the late eighteenth-century theologian found himself in a similar situation and even asked for pardon for his bluntness. "I hope you will excuse my freedom. It is on some accounts with reluctance that I thus write, as it

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children and youth of the congregation; owing, perhaps, to my having spoken last night at the grave of the little boy mentioned June 21. Poor child! he seemed to like that I should talk with him before he died." Andrew Gunton Fuller, "Memoir of Andrew Fuller," 1:36–37.

<sup>68</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 87.

<sup>69</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 87.

<sup>70</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 88–89.

goes against me to make you unhappy.”<sup>71</sup> Though he knew he might experience ill will from those he sought to minister to, Fuller determined their genuine spiritual advantage worth more than their temporary happiness, or his hard earned reputation he had won with them, or the rupture of their friendship.<sup>72</sup> He concludes, “What is present happiness compared with the happiness of a good hope in a dying hour?”<sup>73</sup> This hope of course is hope found only in Christ.

Further down in the letter Fuller counsels the children of the recipients.

Speaking truth in love with an aim to reconciliation he wrote,

My heart longs for you and the dear children. Give my love to them, and tell them to seek after the salvation of their souls; for they must soon die, as well as we. Let them not think that to be religious is to be melancholy; for surely to live in the fear of God is the happiest life in the world; and to die in his favor how desirable! May this be the case with us all. I long that none of the family may be left behind.<sup>74</sup>

This letter would have been difficult to read for any who received it; the thought of losing a child would move any feeling man, and indeed would move Fuller significantly when he would lose his daughter just two years after he wrote this letter.<sup>75</sup> But in love, Fuller made it clear that the salvation of his hearers was the goal.

In this letter we see the mingling of love for souls and faithfulness to God.

While stating blunt words, he still maintains an affectionate conduct. His affection and

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<sup>71</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 89.

<sup>72</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Fellow Labourers with God,” 1:492.

<sup>73</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 89.

<sup>74</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 89.

<sup>75</sup> For more on Fuller’s sufferings in his personal life, see “Suffering and Service: The Journey to the Founding of the BMS,” in Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*, 97–123.

love for his letter's recipients is seen in many ways. It is seen as Fuller seeks to identify with his readers, as Fuller holds out the mercy of Christ, as he warns them of the wrath to come, as he asks them to excuse his straightforwardness, as he gives his love to the children, and as he holds out the happy life in God. One imagines that while the recipients of the letter might have been taken aback by Fuller's forwardness in speaking truth, nonetheless felt loved by the man. Even through the letter's salutary goodbye Fuller strives to maintain genuine affection.

I am,  
Yours, bound by every tie of duty,  
gratitude, and affection,  
A. Fuller<sup>76</sup>

Other letters that came from Fuller's pen show similar ability and consistency in speaking the truth in love. As a steward of God who loved Christ and the souls of men, he sought to minister the great doctrines of the faith in a more personal manner and tone, and with the goal of reclaiming men as opposed to merely exposing them.<sup>77</sup> Fuller was a model of what he encouraged in other pastors—loving Christ, loving others for Christ's sake, and doing so with great affection for the salvation of their souls.

### Conclusion

O! if ever we do any good in our work, it must be the effect of love to God and love to men—love to the souls of men, while we detest, and expose, and denounce their sins. How could Paul have pursued his work with the ardor and intensesness which

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<sup>76</sup> Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 89.

<sup>77</sup> Another example comes from a letter to an old friend's ill son. In the letter he addresses the son's "state as a lost sinner," the "degeneracy and dreadful corruption of [his] nature," that "Christ will be precious to [his] heart should "[he] embrace the refuge set before in the gospel," that "the invitations of the gospel are universal," that the "door of mercy shall be opened" to those who knock, that he ought to "repent of [his] sin", and that "worthiness can be found only the Christ alone," who "taketh away the sin of the world." See Haykin, *Armies of the Lamb*, 167–69.

he manifested, if his heart had not been burned with holy love.<sup>78</sup>

As servant of the house of God and steward of God's gospel and people, the pastor was to give himself to loving others as God desired them loved. God had loved the church by giving Christ to be her Savior—her ground, her end, and her very food. So the pastor, as an instrument of God, was to love in parallel—grounding the church on Christ, readying the church for Christ, and feeding the church with Christ, all the while ministering to souls with a Christ-like love. From the quote above, it is clear that Fuller thought pastoral success—helping others grow in faith and holiness—stemmed from the pastor's love for Christ himself.

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<sup>78</sup> Fuller, "Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry," 1:481.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS

Having examined Fuller's convictions first that love must lead local-church revival, second that Christian love means an exercise of biblical benevolence and charity, and third that pastors must dispense the love of Christ as their first priority, this chapter turns to applying Fuller's insights to churches of our day.

While not plagued with the theological maladies of Hyper-Calvinism, many churches today have nevertheless slouched in their position toward God and neglected their true mission. This chapter argues—just as Fuller did over two hundred years ago—that if the church is to return to health, it must first recover love to God and man. The fact that the diagnosis and solution remains the same today as it did then ought not surprise. Depraved man has always possessed a fallen nature and transgressed the eternal Law of God—summarized in the two commands to love God and neighbor (Mark 12:30–31). If God is to fellowship with sinners, something needs to overcome man's sin. Thank God for his grace through Christ who fulfills the law and atones for man's sins through Christ's blood, and furthermore gives his Spirit to his church in order that it might love like he loves—in object, method and manner.

What then does it look like for the twenty-first century evangelical church to love discerningly and so be the church benevolent and charitable? In short, the church must make Christ's priorities its priorities. In an effort to move the modern church

towards revival, this chapter takes Fuller’s teachings on the priority of Christian love—the love of benevolence and charity—and applies it to modern day Christianity.

### **On Being the Church Benevolent**

As mentioned in chapter 2, biblical benevolence required Christians to promote the welfare of fellow man. This good-will evidenced itself in Christ and his apostles, in caring for man’s body but especially man’s soul. For the church to concern itself with the temporal concerns of men to the exclusion of eternal concerns was nothing less than “the working of disaffection to God, and of criminal partiality towards his enemies.”<sup>1</sup> True Christian benevolence had the aim to see sinners become friends of God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

### **Recovering Benevolence in the Church**

**The relation between mission and message.** The relationship between a church’s mission and message is a reciprocal one. As the church’s mission goes, so follows its gospel. Likewise, a church’s gospel sets the course for its mission. Thus, if churches are to embrace their true mission of benevolence, they must know and cling to the biblical truths of the gospel.

Man’s biggest problem is his sin against God, earning for himself the just judgment of God. Adam and Eve’s sin, as stated in Genesis 3, was rejecting God’s authority, working against his rule, and opting to live for themselves. Insulting and assaulting the King, Adam and Eve revolted and set up a rival throne. God pronounced

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<sup>1</sup> Fuller, “Love to Enemies,” 1:574.

on man a physical and spiritual death sentence and banished them from the garden of bounty (Gen 3:17–24).

Questions arise from the rebellion found in Genesis 3 which the rest of Scripture answers. How can sinful man get back into relationship with a holy God (Gen 3:24)? When will the one from Adam’s line destroy the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15)? While man’s fallen morality is a terrible problem, it is not man’s ultimate problem. To say the gravest problem of man is a loss of morality naturally leads to the mission of recovering morality. In this situation, truths of God’s gospel are subjected to revision in order to suit the mission. The gospel becomes a gospel of morality and legalism.

Regardless of what one conceives man’s greatest problem to be, it is obligatory upon those who believe the biblical gospel to speak the truth, even if hearers judge Christians to be “gloomy,” “bigoted,” “licentious,” “averse to the love of both God and man”, as Priestley did.<sup>2</sup> To love as Christ did requires risking offense.

Today, risking offense out of love seems counterintuitive. The reasoning is that Christians ought to love, therefore we ought not offend. But this is not a biblical understanding of love. It is true the church ought not unnecessarily offend through its own sin and folly, but nowhere in Scripture is Christian love said to be free from offense. In fact, just the opposite is the case. Jesus Christ himself was an offense to the Jews who crucified him. His message was insulting to the Pharisees as he called them a self-righteous brood of vipers (Matt 23:33). Jesus even called people evil (Matt 12:41) and

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<sup>2</sup> Nettles, “Christianity Pure and Simple,” 147.

did so with no apparent concern for hurting their feelings. The Apostle Peter did not back down from proclaiming the truth about his hearers' sinfulness being participants in the crucifixion; instead he laid the weight of responsibility of the crucifixion directly on their shoulders (Acts 2:38). Paul of Tarsus, the great missionary, had no problem labeling the entire human race as sinners who had fallen short of the glory of God, nor did he hesitate in saying that the "the wages of sin are death" (Rom 6:23). Later writing to the Corinthian Church, he noted clearly that God's gospel is utter foolishness to the world (1 Cor 1:18–30), and even functions to shame those who do not believe (1 Cor 1:27–28). If Jesus and his Apostles are models for the church today, then it is loving to address rebels about their sinful state. Naturally so. If salvation requires repentance and faith, one needs to know what to repent of. As Fuller wrote,

Benevolence in Christ and his apostles extended not merely, nor mainly, to the bodies of men, *but to their souls*; nor did they think so favourably of mankind as to desist from warning and alarming them, but the reverse. They viewed the whole world as "lying in wickedness,—in a perishing condition ; and hazarded the loss of every earthly enjoyment to rescue them from it, as from the jaws of destruction."<sup>3</sup> (italics mine)

Churches and Christians today would do best to go with Jesus' definition of love and his method of loving sinners; if not they end up hating men's souls, as opposed to loving them. God forbid that the very ones who claim the name of the Lord Jesus turn out to be those who "displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering [the church] from speaking [the gospel] that [people] might be saved" (1 Thess 2:15–16). Since God intended to address and deal with sin through Christ, then for any church to conceal the truth of man's sin is not only unloving to God and man but criminal to them both.

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<sup>3</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 164.

Given the changing morality of American culture, recovering the church's mission is of great urgency.<sup>4</sup> In the face of new challenges and increasing pressure on Christians to give up holding to, and practicing their beliefs in the public square, the benevolence of Christ must lead the church. How else will the church learn to speak holding firmly to the gospel, and not revile when reviled? How else will the church know how to entrust itself to God the Father while facing threats of persecution? Apart from the loving benevolence of Christ, the church, if it would stand at all, would sinfully rage against the culture with a spirit of vengeance and fear. But with the benevolence of Christ leading the way, Christians can love men by warning them, and seeking their salvation through the gospel, even at the risk of their own safety. With Christ's promise to build his church despite all the roarings of hell, the church of Jesus Christ need only be faithful to its God-given mission—take the gospel the world, compelled by the love of Christ.

### **On Being the Church Charitable**

If Christian benevolence is marked by desire to see souls saved to Christ, charity is loving those who already bear the character of Christ. Just like benevolence, charity is modeled after Christ. Jesus gave himself as a propitiation for his people's sins (1 John 4:10), and now his church is to walk in his love. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This sacrificial godward love, by God's design, is to have an evangelistic effect in the world such that

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<sup>4</sup> Evidence of America's changing cultural landscape can be seen in the June 26, 2015 Supreme Court of the United States ruling in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage across the fifty states of America.

Jesus says, “By this [love] the world will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:35).

Christians are helped to recover Christian love by returning to Fuller’s definition of charity. Fuller said Christian charity, or love to fellow Christians, “is complacency in the *Divine image*. — It is union of heart.”<sup>5</sup> Being united in heart to Jesus Christ, the supreme object of love becomes the holy; “It is the love of the holy God—it is the love of holy ways—it is the love of holy men—it is the love of a holy gospel—it is the love of a holy religion.”<sup>6</sup> The sine qua non of Christian Charity, Fuller conceived, was the uniqueness of love’s object. God is holy, and thus Christian charity is defined by its love of the holy and its “holy love.”<sup>7</sup> Union with Christ produces love for the source of the holy and all its derivatives, particularly Christ’s church.

Unfortunately in some churches today there is little that differentiates the Christian’s love from the world’s; they have adopted not only the world’s method of love, but its objects as well. This has had devastating consequences. If the church loves wrong ideas of God, it will love and cultivate those wrong ideas in the body. What the church then learns to appreciate, even if anti-Christian, it will cultivate in its own body, and come to expect it from its own body; if the source is contaminated, so goes its derivatives.

The church has fallen in love with the therapeutic. British theologian and

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<sup>5</sup> Fuller, “Nature and Importance of Christian Love,” 1:523.

<sup>6</sup> Fuller, “Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:357.

<sup>7</sup> Fuller, “The Choice of Moses,” 1:428. For a modern-day treatment of holy-love, see Jonathan D. Leeman superb work, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). While the entire book concerns love, chap. 2 touches particularly on the nature of God’s holy-love. See also David F. Wells, *God in the Whirlwind: How the Holy-Love of God Reorients Our World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2014).

author J. I. Packer wrote that the modern church sells a gospel of self help, “a substitute product” instead of the original gospel.<sup>8</sup> Though the new one compared to the old “looks similar enough in points of detail,” it “is as a whole a decidedly different thing.”<sup>9</sup> Whereas the “old gospel” aimed at “making men God-centered in their thoughts and God-fearing in their hearts,” the new gospel fails to “produce deep reverence, deep repentance, deep humility, a spirit of worship, [and] a concern for the church.”<sup>10</sup> Because of this new gospel, the church has lost its love for the holy. Packer says. It “is too exclusively concerned to be ‘helpful’ to man—to bring peace, comfort, happiness, satisfaction—and too little concerned to glorify God.”<sup>11</sup> No longer are God and his divine sovereignty in mercy and judgment the subject the proclamation; no longer are men taught to worship God.<sup>12</sup> The aim of many preachers in recent times is to make men feel better in the “interests of helpfulness.”<sup>13</sup> “We depict the Father and the Son, not as sovereignly active in drawing sinners to themselves, but as waiting in quiet impotence ‘at the door of our hearts’ for us to let him in.”<sup>14</sup>

Theologian David Wells argues that Christians being so steeped in their culture, have let their culture’s norms determine their vision of God instead of God’s own

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<sup>8</sup> J. I. Packer, “Introductory Essay,” in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, by John Owen (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Packer, “Introductory Essay,” 1.

<sup>10</sup> Packer, “Introductory Essay,” 1.

<sup>11</sup> Packer, “Introductory Essay,” 2.

<sup>12</sup> Packer, “Introductory Essay,” 2.

<sup>13</sup> Packer, “Introductory Essay,” 2.

<sup>14</sup> Packer, “Introductory Essay,” 2.

revelation. Instead of the church proclaiming God as both transcendent and immanent, the church now recommends God as the immanent therapist.<sup>15</sup>

The church's lockstep-march with the culture has resulted in a bulimic theology that has been, as D. A. Carson notes, "purged of anything the culture finds uncomfortable" leaving God and his gospel "sanitized, democratized, and above all sentimentalized."<sup>16</sup> With this therapeutic worship of the sentimental, it is not surprising to see churches skimming on the surface of both doctrine and lives of other Christians. Christians have come to love their therapeutic nostrums, and so they succumb to repeating them to each other, in the name of love.

A large part of why the American church loves God as therapist is because it loves material wealth. Wells writes that the "experience of great abundance, of seemingly unlimited options, of opportunity, of ever-rising levels of affluence" in the culture has led to an "attitude of entitlement."<sup>17</sup> With this attitude left unchecked and then brought into the church and transferred to God, it is

what leads us to think of him as a cheerleader who only wants our success. He is a booster, an inspiring coach, a source of endless prosperity for us. He would never interfere with us in our pursuit of the good life (by which we mean the pursuit of the good things in life. We see him as a never-ending fountain of these blessings. He is our Concierge.<sup>18</sup>

With a love for a trial-free life of abundance leading the way, the church has lost its

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<sup>15</sup> Wells, *God in the Whirlwind*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Wells, *God in the Whirlwind*, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Wells, *God in the Whirlwind*, 23.

vision of the holy, its message of salvation given to them by the holy, and its worship of the holy.

Carl Trueman's essay entitled "What Can Miserable Christians Sing?" provides evidence supporting the claim that as the source goes, so goes its derivatives.<sup>19</sup> Trueman writes that the "health, wealth, and happiness teachings of American Televangelists" have "seeped into evangelical life in an imperceptible yet devastating way" such that our theology and the very nature of Christian worship has changed. "The Western Church . . . has drunk so deeply at the well of modern Western materialism" that it simply does not know what to do with cries for salvation found in Scripture.<sup>20</sup>

If God is a god primarily concerned with boosting our self-esteem, and aims to make us feel more comfortable, then his children will both appreciate these purposes in others, and take up these same purposes towards other. Losing the holy means losing a love for the holy.

### **Recovering Charity in the Church**

If the church is to be the church charitable, it is imperative to recover the holy, and a love for it. In this area, many churches put the cart before the horse—churches discuss and encourage love for other believers, but more needs to be said about God who defines and is worthy of this love.

Christians do well to heed Fuller's wisdom, "If we love Christ, we shall love

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<sup>19</sup> Carl Trueman, "What Can Miserable Christian's Sing?" in *The Wages of Spin: Critical Writings on Historic and Contemporary Evangelicalism* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 156–63.

<sup>20</sup> Trueman, "What Can Miserable Christians Sing?" 159.

his people for his sake.”<sup>21</sup> If we love the holy one, we will love his holy ones. Thus the church needs its love reoriented to the church’s founder. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is what Fuller taught because this is what he understood Jesus to teach. Before he charged the man to love his sheep, Jesus wanted to know if the man loved their Shepherd. “Peter do you *love me*?” (John 21:15–17). The essential requirement for any who would love Christ’s sheep, and so be charitable, is that they love the Shepherd.

Love of the Great Shepherd is the love that Paul the Apostle possessed. Paul’s singular goal was to know and love God; this he did, as he counted all earthly gain as “loss.” “Knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,” Paul said, surpassed any materialistic gain, or earthly status and privilege (Phil 3:8). Paul lived to know Christ, gain Christ, and be found in Christ (Phil 3:8–9); and the reason for this singular pursuit of loving Christ, Paul said, was “because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Phil 3:12).

Note that Paul’s language is that of union with Christ. Union with Christ produced in Paul’s life, an obvious joy and delight in pursuing, knowing, and loving his Savior. In the most blessed union to Christ, complacency gave birth to an attending desire to press deeper into the substance of God and his gospel.

For Paul, satisfaction in God not only led to a concern over one’s own joy in God, but also for the joy of others in God (2 Cor 1:24). Love for a holy God produced a love for God’s holy children. To use the biblical illustration of the church as a body, what Christ the head desires of his hands, the arm will desire as well. It is nonsensical for the head to tell the hand to grab and to have a revolting elbow. Those who are united to

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<sup>21</sup> Fuller, “Pastors Required to Feed the Flock of Christ,” 1:477.

Christ's body take on Christ's purposes, desires, and loves. The Christian comes to love and labor for the same things Christ labors for and loves. Given God delights over his people (Ps 149:4), so the Christian will, too (1 Thess 2:19–20). Given that God longs for and even demands holiness of his people (Lev 20:26), so the Christian will, too (1 Pet 1:16). Given that God loves his people to the death (1 John 4:10), so the Christian is called to the same (1 John 4:11). Given God desires to see his people comforted, knowing and experiencing the forgiveness of sins (Isa 40:1–2), so the Christian will fight for the church's knowledge and experience of its redemption in Christ (Col 1:13–14). The very experiences a Christian has, being united to Christ, the Christian will long for the same to take place amongst the other members of Christ's body.

Paul, for example, was astounded by God's love for him in Christ (Gal 2:20), and therefore wanted other Christians to “comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 1:18-19). Here too, Paul uses union language—the fullness of God, filled up in the Christian. As a member of the body under the head of Christ, the Christian will want for the body what Christ wants for his body.

As Fuller described life in union with Christ, he wrote, “We, with all we have, are Christ's, and Christ, with all he has, is ours.”<sup>22</sup> Christ's holy love, becomes our holy love. Where Christ can be found, the Christian loves. Where Christ ought to be seen, we encourage. Where Christ may be seen, we anticipate.

Without a love for Christ, the church will never be marked by Christ's charity.

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<sup>22</sup> Fuller, “The Blessedness of the Dead Who Die in the Lord,” 1:152.

This is the stark reality that much of the modern church experiences: if one cares not for Christ's character, he will not labor, nor care to see the church display it. If one cares not for Christ's word, he will not care to see the church formed and sanctified by it. If one does not care to ascribe worship to Christ, he will not help other Christians worship. Without love for God, Christian charity fails. One cannot love the body, when it does not love its head.

### **Questions for Pastors**

Thus far I have dealt with applying Fuller's teachings in concept. I turn now to the more practical. In effort to help Christians, especially pastors, examine their labors of love, three questions are posed to help determine if love of the holy determines and drives the minister's love of the church.

*Are Christ's purposes for the church your purposes for the church?* Christ purposed that he himself would be the church's ground and end.<sup>23</sup> The church is grounded on the confession that Jesus is the Christ, and the church comes into existence only through his atoning blood; thus the Apostles were to build the church on Christ (Eph 2:20), and could do no other (Gal 1:6-9). Christ not only gathers the church but readies the church for himself (Eph 5:27). He is its end or goal.

Leaders in the church must ask themselves whether they love Christ such that his purposes dictate their service? As Fuller reminds readers, pastors are nothing but stewards in the house of God serving at the pleasure of the Lord. To these stewards, God entrusts his people and gospel. Who better to entrust his house to than to stewards who

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<sup>23</sup> See Fuller, "Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good," 1:486-89.

love him? The steward who loves the Lord will also love his house, his people, his rules, his instruction, and he will love serving anyone and everyone the Lord tells him to. No wonder the essential requirement for the Lord's steward is that he be controlled by the Lord's love.

The temptation though, for the pastor to conceive of himself as Master, and not steward exists. One example can be found in as church-planters describe themselves as architects of the church. While such a title is not inherently wrong it may reveal subtle shifts towards a role reversal that reassigning God's responsibilities to man. Given today's church-growth culture, where churches are encouraged to adopt secular business practices as methods for ministry, where church plants often have "preview services" which lead up to "hard" or "soft" launches—it is no surprise to hear Christians speak of their shepherds as masterminds or architects of the church.

But no church is a pastor's church. The church is God's church, and Christ in his glory serves as the church's ground and end. Any church that builds and readies itself for someone or something else, is in grave danger; it is possible this type of church has been united to a lover that is not Christ. While possessing all appearances of being alive, these Christians may actually be spiritually dead. To this church, Jesus Christ proclaims, "Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you." in judgment (Rev 3:3). While expecting a house-call from a malnourished, sentimentalized Freudian-god of this age, the church will find itself visited by Yahweh over all, who certainly is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity

and transgression and sin,” but who is also a God “who will by no means clear the guilty,” and who “[visits] the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6–7). God’s purposes are to rule the church, so a church’s leaders would be wise to be ruled by them as well.

*Are Christ’s determined means to build the church your means used in laboring to see the church built?* Given Christ purposes his church be grounded on and readied for him, the church must return to the fact that God has determined these things be accomplished by the means of his word (Isa 55:10–11). God’s Word that not only builds the church but also sanctifies her (Eph 5:26). Stewards, therefore, must understand how the Master of the House intends his starving guests be fed. So the the Apostle Paul writes, “Guard the deposit entrusted to you” (2 Tim 1:14), and “Preach the word” in every season (2 Tim 4:2).

What do we make of those who keep back the word? At best such stewards are negligent and careless; at worst they are rebels against the Lord seeking to subvert his rule by issuing a supposedly new and better law. What else are we to make of the steward who discards, either on accident or on purpose, the instructions of the King? God expects all who serve as caretakers of his people to cherish and live by his Word, while helping their brothers and sisters do the same.

What can pastors do to love his people for his sake using his appointed means? Preach the word. If we know the Master Chef has already prepared for his people the best life-giving food ever, all a steward need do is serve it up. If we know its goodness and power, and that sinners can be saved through the hearing and receiving of it (1 Thess 1:4–10) then we must faithfully serve it.

To not preach the gospel from the whole counsel of God, by withholding certain truths is absurd. Why are pastors tempted to neglect the very means by which the Lord has determined to accomplish his plans? Certain pastors judge it wise to hold back certain truths in favor of winning over those passing by the gates of the kingdom. Instead of heralding salvation from the judgment of God through repentance and faith in Christ's atoning work on the cross, they feel the need to market the kingdom, playing the role of club-promoter. But where this takes place, the neglecting of God's chosen method of building his kingdom equates to the re-drafting of new Kingdom plans. These actions might appear wise for the steward, but God the Father, from the beginning of time, had his Kingdom plans drawn, his contract printed, and the ledger signed in blood by his Son. If God's word of the gospel is what is necessary to sustain sheep, then making it optional or putting other things on the same level of it does nothing less than harm the sheep. Charity calls for the steward to stand at his post, carving up the Lord's word simply and faithfully. As Fuller noted, Christ has already provided the pasture of the gospel; it is the pastor's responsibility to lead Christ's sheep into it.<sup>24</sup>

*Are Christ's methods of loving the church, your methods of loving the church?*

If true Christian charity is to flourish, Christ's manner of love must become ours. Jesus said in John 10:11, "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." Indeed the Apostle Paul, who followed in the footsteps of Christ, pledged himself for the church, "I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well" (2 Cor 12:15). What is clear is that Christ gave himself to see the church established and built up in love. Christians are called to build up the body. They are called to "admonish the

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<sup>24</sup> Fuller, "Pastors Required to Feed the Flock of Christ," 1:478.

idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all” (1 Thess 5:14). They are to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn” (Rom 12:15), bearing each other’s burdens (Gal 6:2), while encouraging one another to live for the fame of Jesus name (Phil 1:27).

However, the modern consumeristic frenzy that pastors themselves sometimes encourage has made a mess of gospel community. Pastors have come to see themselves as servants needing to entertain guests, feeling the need to put on a show of at least equal entertainment value found in the venues outside the Kingdom. Eager to retain visitors pastors roll out the red carpet and serve the hors d’oeuvres. Or perhaps the effect of the therapeutic has left pastors inadvertently coddling people in their sin. “Clients” may attend, even while feeling a sense of guilt or shame, and though the pastor is called of God to speak truth in love, he plays the role of therapeutic-counselor—only ever listening (Eph 4:15).

Charity though, while it ought to be quick to listen and slow to speak (Jas 1:19), needs also rebuke professors of Christ who reject biblical truth (Titus 1:9), or walk in ways that contradict biblical truth (Gal 2:14), or do not accord with biblical truth (1 Cor 5:1–13). Christian love does not always listen or suggest. It calls and even commands people to forsake their sinful ways. If the steward is to be faithful, he must heed God’s call to speak to people on behalf of God. Essential to the pastor’s task of is speaking the truth, as though “God [himself were] making his appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:20). Thus Christ and his word is the pastor’s proclamation; “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:28). Though the task at times may be challenging and risky,

encouragement is offered through divine empowerment. Thus Paul says, “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Col 1:29).

Faithfully pastoring Christ’s sheep while utilizing Christ’s appointed methods requires pastors do the long and hard work of getting to know not market trends, but Christ and his sheep. Christ is our example. He went to great lengths taking on flesh in order to minister to flesh. In knowing us he is able to empathize with us (Heb 2:17; 4:15). As Christ’s under-shepherds, pastors ought to give ourselves to loving his sheep, knowing their wounds and how they got them, knowing the contours of their scars and observing how they wear them, learning what makes them limp and what makes them bound, what makes them despair and what makes their hearts hopeful. Developing this Christ-like awareness enables us to love them with both precision in means (the Scriptures) and precision in manner—exhorting or warning, encouraging or rebuking, pleading or teaching.

When God’s stewards seek to know and love their fellow brothers and sisters, as God would, the steward reminds God’s people of God’s great love for them. This is the task of the pastor: to love Christ’s sheep, not ultimately in the way they think sheep should be loved; not even in the way sheep think sheep should be loved, but in a way sheep know is love, because it is Christ-like. This is true Christian charity.

To do that, the church must see Christ’s love, and be astounded by his grace—as Christ took on flesh for the church, lived a perfect life for the church, died on the cross as a wrath bearing substitute for the church, and then was raised for the church, and even now lives to intercede for the church. Christians need to know Christ’s love, and love him supremely, finding deep complacency and satisfaction in such a blessed union.

What an opportunity pastors have, charged by the Master of the house to lead the church by example, standing at God's door welcoming God's adopted children; as the church fulfills its mission of benevolence, it has the opportunity to see more people find satisfaction in Christ through the means of his word.

### **Conclusion**

“So much as we have the love of God, so much we have of true religion”,<sup>25</sup> it is “the principle . . . characterizing the whole of our religion”<sup>26</sup> and the very “essence” of it.<sup>27</sup> If churches are to move towards greater health and vitality, they must labor to recover Christian love. This was Fuller's solution, because as he understood the Scriptures, this was God's solution. Jesus summarized the law, “Love your God,” and “love your neighbor,” “there is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31).

With many things competing for the church's vision and mission, the church would benefit from hearing Fuller's biblical exhortations in this area. The energy that the modern church pours into pioneering mission is to be commended, but a corresponding energy must also be put into understanding and embracing its nature as the body of Christ. Having been united to Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection, the church embodies Christ the head here on earth. His heavenly purposes are to be our earthly purposes, his loves our loves, and his commands our law. When the church understands

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<sup>25</sup> Fuller, “The Nature and Importance of Love to God,” 1:305.

<sup>26</sup> Fuller, “The Nature and Importance of Love to God,” 1:305.

<sup>27</sup> Fuller, “Paul's Prayer for the Philippians,” 1:357.

its union with him, and experiences the complacency that attends it, then the church will be an embassy of heavenly love here in our host nation.<sup>28</sup> With Christian love of benevolence and charity driving the ministry of local churches, the world will know that they are Christ's disciples (John 13:34–35). How crucial it is then to hear Fuller's words again, "O! if ever we do any good in our work, it must be the effect of love to God and love to men."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Leeman, as well as Bobby Jamieson provide helpful understanding of this concept in their respective books. Leeman describes the church as an outpost of embassy of the kingdom. See Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). See Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Fuller, "Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry," 1:481.

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## ABSTRACT

### TENDING TO LOVE—“THE PLANT OF PARADISE”: ANDREW FULLER ON LOVE AND ITS ROLE IN LOCAL CHURCH REVIVAL

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This thesis introduces Andrew Fuller as a theologian of love by presenting his theology of love, and discussing why Fuller assigned love the leading role in local-church revitalization. Chapter 1 addresses the need for greater study on Andrew Fuller, the churchman. Reviewing the relevant literature reveals little has been written on the issue, and even less, on Fuller’s theology of Christian love.

Chapter 2 considers the cause of the Particular Baptist’s spiritual decline (Fuller’s denomination), and examines Fuller’s solution out of it—the retrieval of Christian love.

Chapter 3 lays out Fuller’s theology of Christian love, its types, and its importance as as governor over the Christian’s faculties.

Chapter 4 explains how pastors are to lead in love’s retrieval, by dispensing the very love of Christ, loving the church for Christ’s sake.

Chapter 5 offers modern day solutions as today’s churches aim to be the church benevolent and charitable.

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