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“AN ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION”: ANDREW FULLER’S
RESPONSE TO ANTINOMIANISM

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For Courtney, my partner in the journey of “bringing holiness to completion in the fear of
God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1)

And for my children, Titus, Mercy, Levi, Haven, Autumn, and Shepherd. May you know
that “The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to
them his covenant.” (Psalm 25:14)

To God alone be the glory.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AC</i>	<i>Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures</i>
<i>TCW</i>	<i>The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller</i>
<i>HECB</i>	<i>History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892</i>
<i>TSW</i>	<i>The Select Works of the Late Rev. William Huntington, S.S.</i>
<i>TWF</i>	<i>The Work of Faith, the Labor of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller</i>

PREFACE

A project like this is written by countless people, even if only one gets the credit. My wife, Courtney Stewart, sacrificed so much for me to pursue this goal. Her Christlike example daily encourages me to keep Christ and his honor as my highest goal. My parents, Ray and Anita Stewart, have also been a constant source of encouragement as they lovingly exhorted me to “endeavor to persevere.”

I am indebted to the saints at Christ Community Church in Huntersville, North Carolina, whose sacrificial giving made this project possible. My brother–pastors also played a major role in this endeavor, as they patiently listened while I processed my research with them. And I will be forever grateful to Dr. Ronnie Parrott, my pastor and friend, whose Fullerism encouraged me to pursue this degree and challenges me to make “gospel-centered disciples among all people for the glory of God.”

Finally, I am incredibly grateful to the faculty, staff, and administration of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, for the countless ways they have invested in me and made a challenging process a labor of love. In particular, Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin sparked in me a love of Andrew Fuller and encouraged me to pursue this course of study, and Dr. Joseph C. Harrod made a tremendous investment of his time, experience, and wisdom in serving as my thesis advisor. These men pushed me to grow as a scholar, but more importantly, they encouraged me by their own example to grow as a Christian.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) is often remembered as one of the greatest theologians of his day and as a catalyst to the modern mission movement. While these attributes are correct, Fuller was first and foremost “a most diligent and faithful pastor” with a genuine passion for the spiritual wellbeing of his people.¹ In fact, in a response to one of his church members in January 1792, which John Ryland Jr. referred to as a “Letter to One of his Members, Against Antinomian Delusions,” Fuller warned,

If we indulge in secret sin, or live in the neglect of known duty, or sink into a spirit of conformity to the world, or a spirit of Laodicean lukewarmness, or be careless as to a close walk with God, or attend on ordinances without desire after communion with him;—in either of these cases, we shall, in a great degree, lose our consciousness of love to God, and, consequently, live in fear and bondage.²

As his writings indicate, Fuller labored to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the lost and the assurance of the saved. In doing so, he emphasized both God’s sovereign grace as well as the believer’s responsibility “to work out (his) salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). He did so in obedience to his commission as a pastor and because of the rising tide of Antinomianism among Particular Baptists.

Antinomianism was an issue that was deeply personal for Fuller. In fact, he witnessed the destructive tendencies of both High Calvinism and Antinomianism at a young age.³ Yet, it

¹ John Ryland Jr., *The Work of Faith, the Labor of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 2nd. ed. (London: Button and Son, 1818), 374.

² Ryland, *TWF*, 380.

³ Ian Shaw explains how in High Calvinism, “Salvation is pushed back into the eternal and immanent acts of God: eternal justification, eternal adoption, and eternal sanctification are prominent. Irresistible grace is stressed so that the elect become passive in their regeneration and conversion; assurance is found in the conviction and felt experience that the believer is eternally elected by God. High Calvinists are unable to make the free offer of the gospel: faith is not the duty of unbelievers. As Fuller recognizes, there is also a marked tendency towards

was Antinomianism that concerned Fuller the most. For if High Calvinism was the mother, then Antinomianism was her child, which those of the lower class were more likely to embrace and nurture, causing its destructive ideas and practices to spread further and faster.⁴

Thus, this thesis will argue that the “engine of destruction” known as Antinomianism was the greatest threat to the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth century and their missionary enterprise.⁵ In doing so, it will summarize the rise and fall of Antinomianism from the time of the Reformation to the present day, emphasizing and distilling Fuller’s response to Antinomianism chiefly from his late work *Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures* (1816), and explain both the aftermath of the Antinomian controversy and make application for modern believers.

Antinomianism in the Sixteenth Century

From a biblical standpoint, Antinomianism reaches back to the Garden of Eden, where mankind’s parents rejected God’s prohibition to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.⁶ Among Protestants, however, Antinomianism sprang from the overcorrection of Johann Agricola (c. 1494–1566), a disciple of Martin Luther (1483–1546), who argued that the gospel

doctrinal antinomianism, although the epithet ‘antinomian’ is rejected, as is the suggestion of practical antinomianism.” See Ian J. Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11.

⁴ Andrew Fuller, “Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in The Holy Scriptures,” in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:737-38. “Several circumstances have concurred to render this system but little noticed. One is, its having been embraced not so much by the learned as by the illiterate part of professing Christians. Some of its principles, it is true, are common to every unrenewed mind; but considered as a system, it is especially calculated for the vulgar meridian. On this account it has been treated as beneath the notice of the ablest writers. There is also something so low, foul, and scurrilous in the generality of the advocates of this system, that few have cared to encounter them, lest they should bring upon themselves a torrent of abuse. But though it is far from agreeable to have to do with such adversaries, yet it may be dangerous to treat their opinions with contempt. The Roman empire was overturned by a horde of barbarians. An apostle did not think it beneath him to expose the principles of men who ‘crept in unawares, and turned the grace of God into lasciviousness.’”

⁵ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:737.

⁶ Mark Jones, *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology’s Unwelcome Guest?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2013), 1. “Eve’s own doctrinal antinomianism (Gen. 3:2-3) led to practical antinomianism (3:6). Thus, antinomianism was birthed by our original parents.”

alone produced repentance.⁷ As Agricola argued, under the new covenant, the wrath of God is revealed in the gospel, not the Law. Overlooking the error at first, Luther was eventually convinced that Agricola’s use of such “strange new terminology” could no longer be condoned.⁸ In fact, Luther coined the term “antinomian” to define Agricola and all those who claimed to be his followers but denied the moral law as a rule of life for the believer.⁹ He eventually wrote *Against the Antinomians* (1539) based on his disputations against Antinomianism, which he gave in response to Agricola’s teaching.¹⁰ As Silcock and Brown explain, Luther taught that “the Law is never removed, but remains: unfulfilled before Christ, fulfilled in Christ, and to be fulfilled in Christians imperfectly in this life and perfectly in the life to come.”¹¹

Agricola’s views concerning the moral law were not formed in a vacuum, however. As would be the case with many Antinomians, a combination of political turmoil, social unrest, economic hardship, and spiritual awakening served as the seedbed in which antinomian fervor grew.¹² In light of Luther’s stand against the abuses of the church, as well as the dawning of the Enlightenment, it is not difficult to see how someone as zealous for the truth as Agricola could reject the weight of God’s moral law in favor of the freedom flowing from God’s sovereign grace. Ironically, however, the Antinomian’s insistence on divine grace was negated by their all “too human failings”—failings which they often denied or excused on the premise that God had

⁷ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 3.

⁸ Jeffrey G. Silcock and Christopher Boyd Brown, “Introduction to Martin Luther, ‘The Antinomian Disputations’ (1537-1540),” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 84 (2020): 307.

⁹ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 4.

¹⁰ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 4.

¹¹ Silcock and Brown, “Introduction to Martin Luther, ‘The Antinomian Disputations’ (1537-1540),” 303.

¹² Gertrude Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History* (London: The Cresset Press, 1951), 33-34. Huehns unpacks this maze of influences when she states, “Now Agricola postulated as the basis of his doctrinal edifice, the notion of absolute personal inviolability. He had started, quite in the Lutheran fashion, with the extreme sinfulness of man. . . . But he soon found that such an outlook was not sufficient to allay that combination of fear and hope which the social and religious disturbances had created in men’s minds. Therefore he went on to offer them escape with the help of a ‘doctrine which does not only forcefully condemn, but renders also blessed’. This was his antinomianism, a peculiar state of self-reliant trustfulness in which men could forbid their hearts to be desolate for any faults committed.”

not given them the ability to do otherwise.¹³

Though often cited for his emphasis on God’s sovereign grace, even John Calvin (1509–1564) argued for the believer’s need of the law as a rule of life. Though the believer is no longer condemned by the law because of the mediatorial work of Christ, the Spirit of God works in the heart of the Christian so that “the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law: by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression.”¹⁴ Further, God not only uses the law in the life of the believer to protect him from stumbling, but the Spirit instills him with “a readiness to obey.”¹⁵ The law, after all, reveals God’s holiness—a holiness which he commands his children to pursue (1 Pet. 1:14-16). As believers pursue holiness, they come to see more of what they will one day be when God completes what he began in them. “Therefore,” Calvin concludes, “through Christ the teaching of the law remains inviolable; by teaching, admonishing, reproof, and correcting, it forms us and prepares us for every good work [cf. II Tim. 3:16-17].”¹⁶ Thus, the Reformers were adamant that a true understanding of the gospel in no way precludes the moral law. Rather, the Spirit frees the believer to increasingly obey the law from his heart, and because of his fatherly mercy and grace, the Lord accepts his acts of obedience, imperfect as they are.¹⁷

¹³ Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History*, 15. “There is undoubtedly a certain spiritual beauty in such a confidence and moral self-sufficiency and we would be wrong not recognize it. Nevertheless, there was also a great danger in a theory which raised its assumptions to such presumptuous heights. The antinomians denied their humanity—and yet they were finally rejected for but too human failings. They stressed the point of conduct and they were condemned for their behavior. For they had to pay a heavy price for being ‘the marrow of Christianity.’ They denied the applicability of any legalities to themselves and turned their back on the unredeemed and unbelieving world. Yet the reverse of this fine haughtiness was that they were left alone and defenseless in the world of their own instincts and desires. Given their premises, it was hard to escape the conclusion that everyone of their whims was a divine impulse. For how could they dare to resist the will and the power of the spirit exerted in them?”

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1:360.

¹⁵ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:361.

¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:363.

¹⁷ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 52-53. Referring to the Westminster Confession of Faith and arguments from Thomas Manton and Ezekiel Hopkins, Jones explains that because of justification through faith in the gospel and the Spirit’s indwelling presence and power, believers “may serve God with sincere, albeit imperfect, obedience.” Thus,

Antinomianism in the Seventeenth Century

Though the Reformers were clear on the role of the moral law as the believer's rule of life, Antinomianism continued to spread. English ministers such as John Eaton (1574/5–1630/31), Tobias Crisp (1600–1643), John Saltmarsh (d. 1647), John Traske (c. 1585–1636), and Robert Towne (1592/3? –1664) were labeled Antinomians, though they understood their own theology to be consistent with the Reformed tradition.¹⁸ In part, the rise of Antinomianism in England during this time was a response to what some perceived as puritanical legalism. Somewhat more positively, historian Michael Watts argues, “The chief root of the alleged Antinomianism of the seventeenth-century England lay in the desire of Puritan pastors to allay the fears of members of their congregations who were worried about their election and prospects of salvation.”¹⁹ The reprinting of Tobias Crisp's sermons in *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643) and the Neonomian theology of Richard Baxter (1615–1691) further aggravated the controversy.²⁰ Even when dissenting theologians such as John Goodwin (1600–1680) and John Owen (1616–1683) intervened, confusion resulted as a spectrum of Reformed views concerning the role of the moral law surfaced.²¹

These differing views came to the forefront at the Westminster Assembly (1643–1653), especially as the works of John Eaton and other Antinomian writers were released to the public following the lift of press censorship.²² At the time, Baptists were busy defending

“Christians can answer the legal demands of the law in their justification in and through Christ and also the gospel demands of the law in their sanctification by the Spirit.”

¹⁸ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 7.

¹⁹ Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 179-180.

²⁰ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 11-12.

²¹ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 17. Jones also gives a concise summary of the Marrow Controversy that raged throughout the Church of Scotland during this time. See also Sinclair Ferguson's, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

²² Whitney G. Gamble, *Christ and the Law: Antinomianism at the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), 39. While Gamble's research into the Assembly is extremely helpful, she lumps Baptist Hanserd Knollys in with other “prominent antinomians” in describing the spread of Antinomian fervor, to which the Assembly felt the need to respond. More likely, Knollys' early association with John Wheelwright (related in marriage to Anne Hutchinson) earned him the Antinomian label while in New

themselves from accusations of preaching and teaching Antinomian doctrine. It appears that the Assembly “conflated antinomianism and Baptist theology” in their endeavor to root out the growing problem among their churches and English society.²³ Among those Baptist ministers and writers the Assembly examined were Samuel Richardson (1637–1658), Henry Denne (1605/6–1666), and most notably, Hanserd Knollys (1598–1691). Richardson co-pastored with John Spilsbury (1593–1668) and was one of the signatories of *The First London Confession (1644)*. Henry Denne served as curate at Pirton, Hertfordshire until he became a Baptist in 1644, joining the Bell Alley General Baptist Church in London.²⁴ Knollys, who was accused of espousing Antinomian views while in New England, pastored the offshoot of the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church until his death in 1691.²⁵ The Assembly’s committee for examining charges of Antinomianism found the purported teaching of men like Knollys dangerous. Thus, they arrested Knollys and brought him in for questioning. Knollys himself recollected,

They opened the pulpit door, and I went up and preached from Isaiah Iviii.; and gave them such an account of that sermon (thirty ministers of the Assembly of Divines so called being present) that they could not gainsay, but bade me withdraw, and said nothing to me, nor could my jailor take any charge of me; for the committee had called for him, and threatened to turn him out of his place for keeping me prisoner so many days. So I went away without any blame, or paying my fees.²⁶

However, Knollys was arrested later and brought before the examining committee, along with William Kiffin (c. 1616–1701), suffering the charge of Antinomian preaching once

England. It seems, then, that many have, as Cramp declares, “unaccountably judged him to be an Antinomian.” See J.M. Cramp, *Baptist History: From the Foundation of the Christian Church to the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Elliot Stock, 1868), 416. See also Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity, 3 vols.* (Fearn, SC: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 149-150.

²³ Gamble, *Christ and the Law*, 78. Dewey Wallace confirms this Presbyterian sense of suspicion in speaking of the efforts to form a tighter bond between Presbyterians and Independents during this period, noting, “...but all of these efforts foundered over Presbyterian fears of lurking Antinomianism and Independent fears of creeping Arminianism.” See Dewey D. Wallace Jr., *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, ed. David C. Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

²⁴ Gamble, *Christ and the Law*, 47.

²⁵ Nettles, *The Baptists*, 151-152.

²⁶ Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 4 vols (London: Printed for the Author, 1811-1830), 1:173.

again. Subsequently, Knollys published a set of sermons he preached at Debenham, Stradbroke, and Suffolk under the title *Christ Exalted* (1645), in which he stated, “For my main endeavours there was, to exalt Christ, and to presse my Hearers to Sanctification in heart and life.”²⁷ As a result, the records of the House of Commons would indicate in 1648: “Ordered that Mr. Kiffin and Mr. Knollys be permitted to preach in any part of Suffolk, at the petition of the Ipswich men.”²⁸

While Knollys signed the 1646 edition of *The First London Confession*, he was instrumental in calling the first national assembly of Particular Baptists in 1689, at which time he placed his name as the first signature on *The Second London Confession*.²⁹ Thus, for all the controversy that raged throughout the Reformed community in earlier days, the Particular Baptists, in a spirit of unity with Congregationalists and Presbyterians, clarified their position on the use of the moral law in their own confession:

5. The moral Law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it: Neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation. 6. Although true Believers be not under the Law, as a Covenant of Works, to be thereby Justified or condemned; yet it is of great use to them as well as to others; in that as a Rule of Life, informing them of the Will of God, and their Duty, it directs and binds them, to walk accordingly discovering also the sinful pollutions of their Natures, Hearts and Lives; so as Examining themselves thereby, they may come to further Conviction of, Humiliation for, and Hatred against Sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his Obedience 7. Neither are the forementioned uses of the Law contrary to the Grace of the Gospel; but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the Will of man, to do that freely and cheerfully, which the will of God revealed in the Law, requireth to be done.³⁰

Negatively, the Particular Baptists were clear that the Law continued working in the

²⁷ Hanserd Knollys, *Christ exalted: in a sermon begun to be preached at Debenham in Suffolk, upon the 14. day of Febr. last, upon Coloss. 3. 11* (London: 1645), 1, Early English Books Online.

²⁸ Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 1:174.

²⁹ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Chicago: Judson Press, 1959), 236. As Lumpkin notes, persecution brought the Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians together as never before. Thus, “The Particular Baptists of London and vicinity determined, therefore, to show their agreement with Presbyterians and Congregationalists by making the Westminster Confession the basis of a new confession of their own.”

³⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 276-277.

life of the believer to expose remaining sin. Through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the believer is enabled to continue responding in repentance and faith in Christ, and to mortify the lusts of his flesh. Positively, the Spirit of God subdues and enables the believer's will to "freely and cheerfully" obey God's will as expressed in the moral law. Unlike the Antinomians, then, who bound up sanctification in justification, leading to licentiousness, Particular Baptists argued for the progressive work of the Spirit in making believers holy, as he works in their wills and through their obedience to mold and shape them into the likeness of their Savior.³¹ From their earliest days, then, Particular Baptists spoke in unison regarding the moral law's place in the believer's progressive sanctification.

Antinomianism in the Long Eighteenth-Century

Despite the Particular Baptist's united front, Antinomian views flourished. The growth of Antinomianism among Particular Baptists increased due mainly to the rise of High Calvinism, which stressed the sovereign operations of God in eternity past to the neglect of man's moral responsibility in time. Pastors John Gill (1697–1771) and John Brine (1703–1765) were often labeled as the primary culprits for the rise of High Calvinism among Baptists.³² Though characterized as an Antinomian by some because he held to eternal justification³³ and reprinted

³¹ As Michael Haykin summarizes, "The early Calvinistic Baptists, like the Puritan movement out of which it had sprung, would have regarded such sentiments ["that regeneration need not be followed by sanctification"] as both misguided and unbiblical. Those in whom the Spirit works saving faith, he comes to indwell, and as the indwelling Holy Spirit he never abides without his holy and moral character reshaping the lives of those in whom he dwells." See Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffen, Knollys, and Keach: Rediscovering Our Baptist Heritage* (Petersborough, Canada: H&E Publishing, 2019), 127.

³² Yet, as Ryland notes, "These ministers, however, always abhorred, as the very essence of Antinomianism, the notion, that the law is not binding upon believers as a rule of conduct. Dr. Gill, Mr. Brine, and Mr. Toplady utterly reprobated that pernicious sentiment, into which so many have eagerly run within these last thirty years." See Ryland, *TWF*, 6. Even in 1812, when Fuller was encouraged by Joseph Ivimey to hold Baptist Missionary Society meetings in London, his idea was met with "cool reception... London, after all, had been the home of Gill and Brine for many years, and the influence of their teaching was still felt, even though they had both been dead for more than four decades... 'Nowhere does antinomianism grow more strongly than in London.'" Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1994), 318-319. This would also explain Fuller's reticence about the London pastor, William Huntington.

³³ John Gill, *The Doctrine of Justification, by the Righteousness of Christ, Stated and Maintained, Being the Substance of Several Sermons*, 4th ed. (London: George Keith, 1758), 51-52. "In one word, I apprehend that, as God's eternal decree of election of persons to everlasting life, is the eternal election of them; so God's will, decree,

Tobias Crisp's sermons, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1755),³⁴ Gill's writings suggested otherwise.³⁵ As Robert Oliver argues, "Gill has been accused of doctrinal Antinomianism, but it is evident that his teaching on the believer's duty to keep the moral law is in harmony with both mainstream Puritanism of the seventeenth century and the evangelical Calvinism of men like Abraham Booth in the late eighteenth century."³⁶

Andrew Fuller was familiar with both High Calvinism and Antinomianism from the time of his conversion. In the fall of 1770, a newly converted Fuller confronted fellow Soham Baptist Church member James Levit concerning his excessive drinking. "To Fuller's consternation," as Peter Morden describes, "Levit explained that he could not help his drinking and did not have the power to keep himself from sin."³⁷ Fuller reported the incident to his pastor, John Eve (d. 1782), who, though he was a High Calvinist, rejected Antinomianism. However, following Levit's dismissal from the membership of Soham, a debate ensued within the church regarding the believer's ability to obey the will of God. The membership, instigated by several prominent members, concluded that Eve's High Calvinism was inconsistent, leading Eve to eventually resign.³⁸

or purpose to justify his elect, is the eternal justification of them."

³⁴ Curt Daniel, "Andrew Fuller and Antinomianism," in *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 74. "There were three main 'calvinistic antinomian' controversies in the seventeenth century (1640s and 1690s in England, 1630's in New England). In the eighteenth century, the first controversy centered around John Gill's reprinting the works of Tobias Crisp."

³⁵ John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity; or, a System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures*, vol. 2 (London: George Keith, 1769), 588. "The moral law, which lies chiefly in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, Exod. xx. 3-17. And which our Lord has reduced, even both tables of the law, to two capital ones, love to God, and love to our neighbor, Matt. xxii. 36-40. as the apostle has reduced the commands of the second table to one, that is, love, which he calls the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiii. 9, 10. And this law, to love God and our neighbor, is binding on every man, and is eternal, and remains invariable and unalterable."

³⁶ Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 116.

³⁷ Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 29.

³⁸ Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015), 34-35. "Had Eve seen the damage antinomianism could do at close hand and had this strengthened his determination to resist it at Soham?"

Fuller was disillusioned by the effects of High Calvinism. Yet, the Soham incident and the weight of Fuller's new-found responsibilities as its pastor (1774) set him on a course of discovery that shaped him theologically and prepared him for the work ahead. As Tom Nettles explains, "He compared the works of John Bunyan, John Gill, and John Brine and began forming some preliminary ideas concerning the 'free offer of salvation to sinners without distinction.'"³⁹ His findings eventually led him to write *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785).

This comparison (and Fuller's further inquiries into the theology of the Puritans) also led him to contend "that historic Calvinism was not antinomian, but hyper Calvinism was not historic Calvinism."⁴⁰ This distinction was important, both for the sake of evangelism as well as the health of individual believers. If the members of the Particular Baptist churches were not intentional to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18), then the name of Christ would be blasphemed among unbelievers and the mission of the gospel would suffer. Thus, Antinomianism represented the greatest theological and practical threat to the Particular Baptists of the Long Eighteenth-Century, with the threat manifesting itself in the sensational preaching and writing of the London minister, William Huntington (1745–1813).⁴¹

Born into poverty, William Hunt (who later changed his last name to Huntington to disassociate himself from the immoral character of his youth) claimed to experience a radical conversion in the 1770s, which he explained took place apart from any human intervention.⁴² Though he had little ministerial training, he was eventually ordained as a minister of an

³⁹ Tom J. Nettles, "Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)," in *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, vol. 2 (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 100-101.

⁴⁰ Daniel, "Andrew Fuller and Antinomianism," 75.

⁴¹ Daniel, "Andrew Fuller and Antinomianism," 76. Daniel summarizes the situation nicely by stating, "Gill and Brine were hyper Calvinists, but could be exonerated from the charge of doctrinal antinomianism. On the other hand, Huntington went further than both and explicitly taught doctrinal antinomianism. His views were inextricably associated with his hyper Calvinism. Therefore, Andrew Fuller felt the need to reply, both to defend biblical truth and to remove obstacles among Particular Baptists who would be kept from supporting the missionary movement because of both hyperism and antinomianism."

⁴² Oliver, *HECB*, 119-120.

Independent Church in Woking, Surrey by Torial Joss, a onetime associate of Whitfield.⁴³ In short time, Huntington became well known for his itinerant preaching ministry, so much so that his followers built Providence Chapel on Titchfield Street in 1782, calling him as their pastor.⁴⁴ Though the building burned down in 1810 (with a subsequent one built on Gray's Inn Road), his ministry on the West End of London lasted for thirty years.⁴⁵

Huntington held extreme theological, pastoral, and political views.⁴⁶ Though he was a Dissenter, his fear of revolution made him a devout loyalist.⁴⁷ Once while away from the pulpit of Providence Chapel, a visiting minister preached a sermon that some deemed to be Jacobinism. When Huntington heard of the incident, he rushed back to London from Plymouth, dissolved the church, and then reformed it, being sure to exclude anyone he felt was sympathetic to the visiting preacher's views.⁴⁸

While his political views certainly did not endear him to the Particular Baptists, it was Huntington's theological views they found most concerning. With verbose and sometimes slanderous language, Huntington rejected the moral law as a rule of life for the believer.⁴⁹ In

⁴³ Oliver, *HECB*, 120.

⁴⁴ Oliver, *HECB*, 120.

⁴⁵ Oliver, *HECB*, 120.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: The Baptist Historical Society, 2001), 12. "Those desiring admission to communion needed a token, obtainable only from the pastor, following an interview with him, something notoriously difficult to obtain."

⁴⁷ Oliver, *HECB*, 122-123. As Oliver notes, Huntington was a High Tory who bemoaned and ridiculed Whigs as "Jacobins". "Such sentiments," Oliver states, "were doubtless pleasing to Tory governments, but could not fail to irritate those Dissenters who were chafing at their lack of political liberty. It was galling to see a London minister with a large following supporting the privileged position of the Church of England and refusing to align himself with the political aspirations of the Dissenters."

⁴⁸ Oliver, *HECB*, 123.

⁴⁹ More than once does Huntington refer to those who hold to the doctrines of grace with charity toward their non-reformed brothers and sisters as "Bastard Calvinists." See William Huntington, "The Funeral of Arminianism," in *The Select Works of the Late Rev. William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 5:625, 631, 640. See also William Huntington, "A Riddle and Rule," in *The Select Works of the Late Rev. William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 6:461, where he calls his readers to discern whether he or his opponents preach the true gospel, stating, "And when thou hast satisfied thyself on that head—then compare it with the tracts of those evangelists who make the killing letter the rule of life; and when thou hast compared these together, and tried both by the word of God, then let the name of Antinomian be saddled upon the right ass."

reading Huntington's works, it is clear that "The Coalheaver" was most concerned about the influence of Arminianism, as it drew attention away from God's sovereign grace.⁵⁰ Whether in stating that the prodigal son's problem was his desire "to be an Arminian, to have an independent stock of his own, and to be left to improve himself,"⁵¹ in dissecting the Arminian skeleton,⁵² or in describing Arminianism's funeral,⁵³ Huntington labored in preaching and writing to free the gospel from the hands of the "Hagarenes," who trapped men and women under the bondage of the slave woman.⁵⁴ Whereas he could state that "At Richmond I had both the Arminian and Antinomian errors to cope with,"⁵⁵ he would say of his own wife,

And now, O Lord, I beseech thee to hear me in her behalf. Thou knowest how warmly attached she has ever been to MOSES, and what narrow and vain searches she has made, in order to find out *his grave*; which thou, in infinite wisdom and mercy, hast thought meet to conceal. Let it please thee to carry on the begun divorce—and effectually crucify her to all hope in a *dead husband*, and to all hope in a *killing covenant*; and let her no longer be a *joint-wife* in partnership *with Hagar*. And as for the few wretched remains of self-righteousness which she has ever been doatingly fond of—I beseech thee to spoil, together with all the rest of her own manufactory, that she may *embrace the Rock for the want of shelter*; Job, xxiv. 8. Amen.⁵⁶

Of course, Huntington affirmed the doctrine of sanctification. However, he emphasized the sovereign working of the Spirit to the neglect of the believer's responsibility.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 13. "He was a high Calvinist, he gloried in the sovereignty of God, in God's electing grace, hating anything which even sniffed of Arminianism."

⁵¹ William Huntington, "God the Guardian of the Poor, and the Bank of Faith," in *The Select Works of the Late Rev. William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 1:51.

⁵² William Huntington, "The Arminian Skeleton," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 4:197-347.

⁵³ Huntington, "The Funeral of Arminianism," in *TSW*, 5:601-646.

⁵⁴ William Huntington, "The History of Little Faith," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 1:430.

⁵⁵ William Huntington, "The Kingdom of Heaven Taken by Prayer," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 1:359.

⁵⁶ Huntington, "The Last Will and Testament of William Huntington," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 1:673. See also William Huntington, *Gleanings of the Vintage: Letter XXXV*, in *The Select Works of the Late Rev. William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 5:309.

⁵⁷ Huntington, "The Destruction of Death by the Fountain of Life," *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 2:450. Even when speaking of Paul's exhortation to "be transformed by the renewal of your mind (Rom. 12:2), Huntington explains it as "the Holy

By collapsing sanctification into eternal justification,⁵⁸ Huntington effectively negated the believer's obligation to pursue holiness in obedience to Christ's command; thus, the believer could simply blame the Spirit for his lack of obedience.⁵⁹ Huntington would likely deny this, since he condemned Antinomianism itself on many occasions,⁶⁰ even referring to the adherent as "the unhumbled, unpardoned, unsanctified, and unrenewed Antinomian, who has the word *assurance* on his tongue, evangelical scraps in his head, hardness in his spirit, filthiness in his life, and Satan in his heart."⁶¹

Nevertheless, it seems that any mention of the need to pursue "heart-holiness, family-holiness, life-holiness" is condemned as the sinful desire to be justified by the works of the law.⁶² Huntington taught instead that "as love is the fulfilling of the law, both the first and the second table; yes, and the gospel too, for 'charity believeth all things;' the apostle says that this new man

Spirit's subduing our sin, and bringing under the carnality and enmity that works in the mind, and those fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and writing the law of faith in it, accompanied with that love that is the fulfilling of the law, shedding it abroad in the heart." Thus, Huntington portrays sanctification as a passive act of the Spirit, rather than an active process by which the Spirit works in and through the believer's will and actions.

⁵⁸ See William Huntington, "Light Shining in Darkness: VII-The Unanimity of Paul and James," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 3:66. Huntington explains that "the elect were *decretively* justified from eternity," "justified *federally* in Christ from everlasting," and "justified *representatively* in Christ at his resurrection."

⁵⁹ Huntington, "The Justification of a Sinner, and Satan's Law-Suit with Him," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 2:157. As is the case throughout his works, Huntington stresses the necessity of holiness. However, his tendency to equate progressive sanctification with legalism and false religion revealed his Antinomian convictions, as is the case when he says, "Thus you see the believer is complete in Christ his Head, and sanctified in part by the Holy Ghost, though he be not thereby made perfect in this life: for if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. This is all the holiness that the Bible speaks of; and this is the holiness that every real believer partakes of: and it is called, by way of eminence and distinction, true holiness, in opposition to that which is false and feigned, and only makes a noise, and an outward show in the world."

⁶⁰ See William Huntington, "The Destruction of Death by the Fountain of Life," in *TSW*, 2:410, 466.

⁶¹ William Huntington, "The Foolish Virgins Described," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 2:578. Huntington goes even further when he says, "If God of his infinite mercy keep you from Arminianism, Arianism, and Antinomianism, I shall think you are Christians indeed. I rank the errors of Arminianism at the front, because the others are not so well masked." See William Huntington, *The Arminian Skeleton*, in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 4:202.

⁶² Huntington, "Light Shining in Darkness: VII-The Unanimity of Paul and James," in *TSW*, 3:183. True gospel laborer's, as Huntington explains, "...see their state and feel it, and they also see the suitability and all-sufficiency of Jesus, 'and labour hard to work out their salvation with fear and trembling;' that is, they struggle against sin, conscience, guilt, fear, wrath, torment, *the law of God*, and the fiery darts of Satan; and also against despair, infidelity, carnal enmity, rebellion, and the frowns of an angry God [emphasis mine]."

is created in righteousness; the heart of this new man being love, and love fulfilling both the law and the prophets, love is the righteousness of this new man.”⁶³ For Huntington, then, “the schoolmaster” of the moral law was brought to its end in Christ, who stated that love is the fulfilling of the law.⁶⁴

While love is indeed the fulfilling of the law, sinful man cannot love God or neighbor as he should. Thus, he must undergo a fundamental change from the inside, out. And this is precisely what Yahweh declared would come to pass under the new covenant when he said, “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26-27).” Thus, the Lord gives his children both the desire and the ability by the Spirit to obey his commands.⁶⁵ Standing in the righteousness of Christ, therefore, and having Christ’s active obedience credited to his account, the Spirit of God applies the benefits of salvation and works in and through the believer’s will to bring about obedience and greater conformity to Christ. Indeed, this new love for and desire to please God drives the believer on in the pursuit of holiness. Thus, the truth that love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8-10) does not thereby

⁶³ See William Huntington, *The Destruction of Death by the Fountain of Life*, in *TSW*, 2:422. Huntington goes so far as to say, “I believe, that real morality, according to Paul’s doctrine, is charity—the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” See William Huntington, *The Coalheaver’s Confession*, in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 6:602.

⁶⁴ William Huntington, “Contemplations on the God of Israel,” in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 2:221. Indeed, “All sanctification is by faith, and all glorification is chiefly in love: ‘According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love,’ Eph. i. 4. This is our holiness and our glorification before God in heaven.” See William Huntington, “The Heavenly Workfolks and Their Mystic Pay,” in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 4:599.

⁶⁵ Huntington seems to misunderstand what is meant by the law being the rule of life for the believer when he states, “A rule of divine life, the decalogue can never be; for life comes not by working, or walking; life is the gift of God, a blessing of the covenant of grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, and so before there was any law at all; nor is spiritual life kept up, either by working, or walking, but by believing; nor is it treasured up in the law; for Christ is our life, and we ‘live by the faith of the Son of God; he that believeth, hath everlasting life; he that liveth and believeth, shall never die.’ The decalogue is neither the fountain nor the rule of divine life to a Christian; for the law quickens none; divine life came from another fountain, and is kept up by another rule.” See William Huntington, “The Law Established by the Faith of Christ,” in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 6:641-42. This is not what Fuller, Ryland, or the Particular Baptists in general meant.

negate the obligation to obey new covenant commands—commands based on the revelation of God’s holiness in the moral law (Rom. 13:11-14). In fact, obedience to his commands is the evidence that the believer abides in Christ’s love, or as Jesus stated in John 15:10, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” However, Huntington’s carelessness with the Scriptures led him to create a false dichotomy between the moral law and the gospel.⁶⁶

One of Huntington’s longer treatises on the moral law is his *Every Divine Law in the Heart of Christ*, in which he gives no less than sixteen reasons why he does not set “the law as a rule of life before the children of God.”⁶⁷ Chief among his reasons for not declaring the moral law to believers as a rule of life is that he does not see where in Scripture the moral law is “given forth of God to any of his evangelical servants”⁶⁸ to declare to his people, including Christ in his Great Commission. His reason for writing in the first place, however, is to respond to his opponents who, in his opinion, wrongly label him as an Antinomian. Concerning these “law-men” Huntington states, “But no one, that has put his pen to paper in order to vilify me, ever did, nor ever could describe either the Spirit’s work, the forgiveness of his own sins, genuine faith in Christ, union with him, or the sweet constraints of pardoning love. Every one of them were and are dead in trespasses and sins, and all their performances as dead as themselves.”⁶⁹ Huntington’s description of his opponents is significant for the debate that would unfold between he and the

⁶⁶ Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 14. Regarding Huntington’s interpretation of 2 Sam. 8:2, Dix notes, “Typically, he lifted a scripture out of context, and then pressed it into service to give a personal Biblical validity.”

⁶⁷ William Huntington, “Every Divine Law in the Heart of Christ and His Spiritual Seed,” in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 3:414. Fascinatingly, though Huntington is reticent to cave on his view of the moral law, he seems to give deference to “the learned Dr. Gill” and his adherence to the moral law as the believer’s rule, for, “God knows I have no learning but what he has taught me.” See William Huntington, “Moses Unveiled in the Face of Christ,” in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 5:534-35. Then again, Huntington was not shy about his tendency to distance himself from the learned saints of the past, claiming, “I am open to conviction, my conscience is not seared, nor am I past feeling; and, if I cannot defend it by God’s word, I will fly to no other shifts; and therefore I hope my opponents will not puzzle my brains with St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, Hermon Witsius, and saint nobody knows who.” Huntington, “A Riddle and a Rule,” in *TSW*, 6:499.

⁶⁸ Huntington, “Every Divine Law,” in *TSW*, 3:414.

⁶⁹ Huntington, “Every Divine Law,” in *TSW*, 3:417.

Particular Baptists. In fact, in a published response to an incident involving the excommunication of a disgruntled member of John Ryland Jr.'s church, who housed Huntington when he was invited to preach in Northampton, Huntington claimed,

But you frustrate the grace of God (Gal. iii. 21.) on the one hand, and are partial in the Law (Mal. Iii.9) on the other; for you set the Law before the believer, as his only rule of life and conduct; and the Gospel is set before the unconverted, as their only rule of duty. The carnal man has got an evangelical rule, and the heir of promise has got a legal one; the life-giving commandment is palmed upon the congregation of the dead, and the ministration of death is saddled on the children of the resurrection; the believers are all sent to Moses, and the unconverted are sent to Jesus; Moses is to have the legitimate sons, and Christ is to have the bastards. This turning things upside down is esteemed as potters clay. Should any person bring a company of vagrants into Mr. Ryland's house, and leave them there to claim his affection, and all the privilege of his own children; and at the same time carry his own offspring into the East Indian plantations, and put them under the rigorous rules of a negro-driver, who accuses and whips them all day long; I question not by Mr. Ryland would be greatly incensed at the application of his own doctrine! The parallel holds good: the distinction is not so great between Mr. Ryland and the taskmaster, the vagrants and his children, as between Christ and Moses, saints and sinners.⁷⁰

Based upon his response, Huntington understood Ryland and his colleagues to believe that the law not only guides the believer in sanctification, but also establishes their right standing with God. In other words, Huntington was convinced that their watered-down Calvinism led to a legalistic system of works-righteousness. The law and the gospel were completely divorced from each other, and any insinuation to the contrary was seen as doctrinal compromise. He makes this point clear near the end of his response when he declares,

“As Mr. Ryland, Mr. Fuller, and Mr. Rippon, have made a decree—That the Gospel is the rule of an unconverted man's duty; and as they have admitted Moses chief ruler in the synagogue, and that the Law is the saint's rule of the life of faith; that God ministereth the Spirit, works miracles, yea, that he works in his people both to will and to do by the rule of the Law; that the Law is the rule of a good conversation in Christ; that the letter of the Law is the only rule of service in the newness of the Spirit—they are doubtless, all three of them, entitled to all the benefits of the aforesaid Law of Excommunication; having proved themselves, by ocular demonstration, to be the true and genuine disciples of Moses: and such they must be; for I defy either of them to prove their conversion to the faith of Christ.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ William Huntington, *Excommunication, and the Duty of All Men to Believe, Weighed in the Balance. In a Letter to Mr. Ryland, Junior. Occasioned by a Letter of Excommunication, Sent to Mr. Adams, Mine Host, at Northampton* (London: G. Terry, 1791), 32-33.

⁷¹ Huntington, *Excommunication, and the Duty of All Men to Believe, Weighed in the Balance*, 68-69. It is both ironic and curious that Ella claims, “Although Fuller was vitriolic in his condemnation of Huntington,

This sort of tone is typical of Huntington's works, especially in his correspondence with his opponents. Even when he is not responding to his opponents, a subtle and spiritualized narcissism pervades Huntington's writing.⁷² Though he does not claim infallibility, Huntington almost always lays the blame for theological disagreements at the feet of his detractors, even going so far as to ridicule and intimidate anyone who would disagree with him publicly.⁷³ Indeed, the "peculiar state of self-reliant trustfulness" Huehns ascribes to Agricola appears to be true of Huntington as well. Unfortunately, whatever positive contributions Huntington made to the church in his day were overshadowed by his own personality and his overcorrection to Arminianism, which led to a High Calvinism that omitted the believer's responsibility to actively pursue holiness in the power of the Spirit.⁷⁴ This, combined with his powerful oratorical skills and his ready pen, made him a threat to the health of the church and the mission of the gospel. More specifically, the growing movement of Baptist churches throughout England were positioned to receive the brunt of his influence.⁷⁵ Thus, the Particular Baptists, with their newly birthed missionary society, were drawn into controversy with Huntington. A response was required, and Fuller was prepared to give it.

nothing of this dirt-smearing vocabulary came from Huntington's pen concerning him." George M. Ella, *Huntington: Pastor of Providence* (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 242.

⁷² See for example his epitaph, which he wrote himself. William Huntington, "Gleanings of the Vintage: A Concise Account of the Last Illness and Death of the Rev. W. Huntington," in *TSW*, 5:9. See also Huntington's account of the judgements that befell his opponents in William Huntington, "The Naked Bow of God," in *The Select Works of William Huntington, S.S.*, 6 vols. (London: W.H. Collingridge, City Press, 1856), 1:365-94.

⁷³ See William Huntington, S.S., *An Answer to Fools; and A Word to the Wise*, (London: G. Terry, 1792), 1-103, Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

⁷⁴ Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, 16. "[High Calvinism's] continuance owes much to the work of William Huntington (1754–1813), a bridge between the cautious high Calvinism of John Gill and the robust high Calvinism of William Gadsby. . . . Huntington rejected progressive sanctification, taught eternal sanctification and imputed holiness, and offered little practical teaching in his sermons. Although accused of antinomianism, Huntington repudiated the charge, and abhorred evidence of practical antinomianism in others."

⁷⁵ Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 21.

CHAPTER 2

FULLER'S RESPONSE TO ANTINOMIANISM

While Fuller spoke to the role of the law throughout his life, five of his published works addressed Antinomianism head on. In *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, Fuller most specifically addressed High Calvinism. Nevertheless, Antinomianism, either explicitly mentioned or implied, consumed much of Fuller's attention because it was the natural outworking of the logic of High Calvinism. Thus, Fuller explained,

It is allowed by all, except the grossest Antinomians, that every man is obliged to love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength; and this notwithstanding the depravity of his nature. But to love God with all the heart is to love him in every character in which he has made himself known; and more especially in those wherein his moral excellences appear with the brightest lustre. The same law that obliged Adam in innocence to love God in all his perfections, as displayed in the works of creation, obliged Moses and Israel to love him in all the glorious displays of himself in his wonderful works of providence, of which they were witnesses. And the same law that obliged them to love him in those discoveries of himself obliges us to love him in other discoveries, by which he has since more gloriously appeared, as saving sinners through the death of his Son.¹

Though Fuller rarely mentioned Huntington and his "Huntingtonians" by name,² he referred to them generally, especially in *A Picture of An Antinomian* (1826).³ Rather than

¹ Andrew Fuller, "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:351.

² Daniel, "Andrew Fuller and Antinomianism," 76-77. When Fuller did mention Huntington by name, he was reserved and respectful in his remarks. See Andrew Fuller, "Reviews: The Voice of Years," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:762-64.

³ Andrew Fuller, "A Picture of An Antinomian," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:829-31. J. W. Morris noted in his compilation of "miscellaneous pieces" that "The materials which compose the present volume are chiefly derived from a monthly miscellany, published about five and twenty years ago, and of which I was the editor and proprietor." See Andrew Fuller and J. W. Morris, *Miscellaneous Pieces on Various Religious Subjects, Being the Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1826), x. The reader is given a fascinating look into Fuller's reason for writing his *Picture of An Antinomian* in a letter written to John Ryland Jr. on December 21, 1801, stating why he felt more fit to write on Antinomianism than Sandemanianism. Fuller stated, "But I feel myself much more capable of depicting *Antinomian* pride, than the other. For this purpose I have procured Huntington's works. But, in reading them, I am stopped for a time. I have eight or nine volumes! I never read any thing more void of true religion. I do not think of naming him, or his works, or those of any other person; but merely to draw pictures, and let the reader judge who they are like." See Ryland, *TWF*, 238.

focusing explicitly on their doctrine, Fuller drew attention to the outcome of their lives to reveal the natural effects of doctrinal Antinomianism.⁴ More specifically, Fuller recounted listening to an Antinomian preacher the locals raved about. He remembered,

(The preacher) asserted with the highest tone of confidence I ever heard in any place, much less in a pulpit, his own saintship; loudly and repeatedly declaiming to this effect—‘I must go to glory—I cannot be lost—I am as safe as Christ—all devils, all sins cannot hurt me!’ In short, he preached himself, not Christ Jesus the Lord. He was his own theme, I believe, throughout one half at least of his sermon. He went over what he called his experience, but seemed to shun the dark part of it; and the whole tended to proclaim what a wonderful man he was. Little of Christ could be seen: he himself stood before him: and when his name did occur, I was shocked at the dishonor which appeared to be cast upon him.⁵

Fuller further articulated his position on the issue in “Dialogue VII: Antinomianism (1806),” in which he stated, “if (any religious system) be unfriendly to the moral law, it is not of God, but proceedeth from the father of lies.”⁶ This series of conversations between “Crispus” and “Gaius” were intended to teach sound doctrine in a somewhat catechetical manner. Naturally, his dialogue on Antinomianism was preceded by “Dialogue VI: The Goodness of the Moral Law (1806)”⁷ and followed by “Dialogue VIII: Human Depravity (1806)”⁸ to show God’s provision for the sinfulness of mankind as well as the way in which the human mind and heart twist God’s Word for selfish gain, or as “Gaius” explains,

All these, as well as that species of false religion which has more generally gone by the name of *Antinomianism*, you see, are agreed in this particular. This last, which expressly disowns the moral law as a rule of life, sets up the gospel in opposition to it, and substitutes

⁴ Fuller, “A Picture of An Antinomian,” in *The Complete Works*, 3:831. He concluded, “Need I ask, Can this be true religion? The effects which it produces, both on individuals and on societies, sufficiently ascertain its nature. It was and is affecting to me to think what a state the world is in; so few making any profession of serious religion, and so few of those that do who have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. To think of Christian congregations who have heard the word of truth for a number of years being carried away with such preaching as this, is humiliating and distressing to a reflecting mind. Alas, how easily men are imposed upon in their eternal concerns! It is not so with them in other things; but here the grossest imposture will go down with applause. Yet why do I thus speak? ‘There must needs be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest.’”

⁵ Fuller, “A Picture of An Antinomian,” in *The Complete Works*, 3:830.

⁶ Andrew Fuller, “Dialogue VII: Antinomianism,” in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:661.

⁷ Andrew Fuller, “Dialogue VI: The Goodness of the Moral Law,” in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:658-60.

⁸ Andrew Fuller, “Dialogue VIII: Human Depravity,” in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:662-64.

visionary enjoyments as the evidence of an interest in gospel blessings, in place of a conformity to its precepts.⁹

Fuller also addressed Antinomianism, though not by name, in his review of a biography on the life of William Huntington, *The Voice of Years* (1815).¹⁰ In it, Fuller both respectfully and unequivocally dealt with the author's description of Huntington's character and theology. He noted, "To allege that there are things in the precepts of the New Testament which are not *specifically* required by the decalogue is mere evasion. This was not the question between Mr. Huntington and 'other ministers;' but whether the Divine law, as summed up by our Lord in love to God and our neighbour, does not comprehend all duty, and be not binding on all men, believers and unbelievers."¹¹

However, Fuller's most direct response to Antinomianism was his unfinished work *Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures* (1816). Though it is unknown when Fuller began his treatise, Ryland notes that Fuller "commenced, long ago, a very important work, against Antinomianism."¹² In the preface to the second edition (1817), Ryland explained, "Among these [loaned manuscripts], it was proposed to include the following unfinished piece, against Antinomianism; which the author mentioned to me several years ago, and of which he lent me the manuscript to look over, one of these last times I was at his house."¹³ Fortunately, the surviving manuscript contained Fuller's substantive introduction and two of the three parts he proposed to cover. What follows, then, is a distillation

⁹ Fuller, "Dialogue VII: Antinomianism," in *The Complete Works*, 2:661.

¹⁰ Andrew Fuller, "Reviews: The Voice of Years," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Springle Publications, 1988), 3:762-64.

¹¹ Fuller, "Reviews: The Voice of Years," in *The Complete Works*, 3:764. Fuller concludes, "It was not the *defectiveness* of the decalogue, in comparison with the precepts of Christ, that led Mr. Huntington to degrade it. Had this been the case, the subject of 'Christian duty,' as inculcated in the New Testament, would have occupied a place in his ministry; but Mr. Huntington, it seems, '*never said any thing of that kind!*'"

¹² Ryland, *TWF*, 146. Ryland mentioned in his footnote, "A small edition of this manuscript was printed, in 1816, at the urgent request of some judicious friends, of different denominations, who considered it too important to be suppressed, and peculiarly suited to the present times. A second edition has recently been printed."

¹³ John Ryland Jr., preface to *Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures*, by Rev. Andrew Fuller (Bristol, UK: J.G. Fuller, 1817), iv, Google Books.

of his response to Antinomianism in this work.

Antinomianism's Distinguishing Feature: Selfishness

In the introduction, Fuller began his response by clarifying that “Irreligion is not so dangerous as false religion; the one is an enemy at a distance, the other at home.”¹⁴ Antinomianism, with its roots spread throughout the denomination and often misunderstood as sound doctrine, presented a looming danger. In fact, “It is one of the arts of the wily serpent,” Fuller warned, “when he cannot prevent the introduction of the gospel into a place, to get it corrupted, by which means it is not only deprived of its wonted efficacy, but converted into an engine of destruction.”¹⁵ In essence, then, Fuller argued that Antinomianism was a twisting of God’s Word, just as Satan had done with God’s command to Adam and Eve in the beginning. Thus, “The distinguishing feature of this species of religion is selfishness.”¹⁶ That is, Fuller believed the Antinomian twisted God’s Word regarding the moral law in order to satisfy his sinful cravings. Just as the convictions of the Antinomians were against the gospel, so the selfish desires from which their convictions arose were against the Spirit, leading Fuller to the observation, “Here nothing is to be met with that resembles love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, or temperance; on the contrary, the fruits of this spirit are selfishness, pride, spleen, and bitterness, which, like the bowels of Vesuvius, are ever collecting or issuing in streams of death.”¹⁷ At his core, then, the Antinomian had no real concern for others or even for God himself because he was bent on justifying self and quieting his conscience.

Antinomianism's Origin: False Conversion

With this inward focus, the Antinomian saw himself as God’s prized child and boasted

¹⁴ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:737.

¹⁵ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:737.

¹⁶ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:738.

¹⁷ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:739.

of his privileged position based on feelings and impressions.¹⁸ In Fuller's mind, such blind arrogance could only be the result of one thing: false conversion. "The bottom line," states Paul Brewster, "was that Fuller thought antinomians were only pretenders, not true Christians."¹⁹ Thus, Fuller concluded, "The origin of this species of religion in individuals will commonly I fear be found in a radical defect in their supposed conversion. True Scriptural conversion consists in 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' But in many of these conversions there is no appearance of one or the other."²⁰ As Huntington's own conversion evidenced, the Antinomian stressed private religion, by which he could silence the condemning voice of God's Word.²¹ In doing so, however, he cut himself off from the true source of salvation. Not only did this hubris produce a self-delusion concerning the true condition of the soul, but it also resulted in boasting of sin. "When old sins are related with new gust," Fuller notes, "they are reacted, and, lightly as it may be thought of, recommitted. I know of nothing that bears so striking a resemblance to such conversions as the case of the demoniac described by Matthew."²²

¹⁸ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:741. "Moreover, I call those impressions delusive in which it is not any part of revealed truth which is impressed upon the mind, but a persuasion of our being the favourites of Heaven."

¹⁹ Paul Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor and Theologian*, Studies in Baptist Life and Thought (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 156.

²⁰ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:739.

²¹ Interestingly, Fuller invokes imagery and characters from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* to describe the Antinomian, "Longing for ease to his troubled spirit, he is in the most imminent danger of taking up his rest in any thing that will afford him a present relief; and if in such a state of mind he receive an impression that God has forgiven and accepted him, or read a book or hear a sermon favorable to such a mode of obtaining comfort, he will very probably imbibe it, and become inebriated with the delicious draught. And now he thinks he has discovered the light of life, and feels to have lost his *burden*. Being treated also as one of the dear children of God by others of the same mind, he is attached to his *flatterers*, and despises those as *graceless* who would wish to undeceive him! Let us pause a minute, and reflect upon this deplorable case. There is no situation, perhaps, more perilous than that of an awakened sinner prior to his having closed with Christ. He is walking as upon *enchanted ground*, and is in the utmost danger of *falling asleep in one or other of its arbours*. Nor is there any case in which it is of greater importance to administer right counsel. To go about to comfort such persons on the ground of the present distress, telling them, as some do, that the Lord first wounds, and then, heals, and that their feeling the former is a sign that in due time they will experience the latter, is to be aiding and abetting them in what may prove their eternal ruin. . . . Our business is to point to the gospel refuge; teaching, entreating, and warning him *to flee thither from the wrath to come*." (Emphasis Mine) See Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:740.

²² Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:742.

Antinomianism's Chief Principle: Pharisaism

Perhaps the greatest irony of Antinomianism, and one of Fuller's most keen observations, is the way in which it mirrors the attitude of the Pharisees. "The sum is," Fuller explains, "that whatever goes to disown or weaken the authority of the law, goes to overturn the gospel and all true religion. It has been said that every unregenerate sinner has the heart of a Pharisee. This is true; and it is equally true that every unregenerate sinner has the heart of an Antinomian."²³ Like the Pharisee, the Antinomian obscured the law of God by justifying his actions, opting to make his way of life a law in and of itself. Of course, when he observed others living contrary to his own way of life, he scolded them. Fuller observed,

Here, too, we see how the Antinomian can occasionally unite with the self-righteous Pharisee. The latter will insist upon the goodness of his *heart*; and the former tells you he *wishes*, he *desires*, he *means* well; but he cannot do it of himself, and God it seems will not help him: but what do all these pretended good wishes and desires amount to short of a good heart? The thing is the same, only expressed in somewhat different language.²⁴

However, the Antinomian went a step further by disregarding the moral law altogether. Yet, Jesus himself came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). Unlike Huntington, however, who affirmed love as the fulfilling of the law to the neglect of the believer's obligation to follow the moral law, Fuller stressed that love is the fulfillment of the law and that this love is evidenced in obedience to Christ's commands and the manifestation of the Spirit's fruit.²⁵ Thus, Fuller made six brief points to show Antinomianism's irrationality.

First, Fuller stated that if believers were not under the moral law as a rule of life, then "we are not obliged to love either God or man, and it is no sin to be destitute of love to both."²⁶

²³ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:744.

²⁴ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:746.

²⁵ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:746. Fuller argues, "To show the perfection, then, as well as the authority of the ten commandments, let it suffice to have recourse to our Saviour's exposition of them. If that exposition be faithful, they are reducible to two, answering to the tables of the stone on which they were written, and consisting in 'love to God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to our neighbour as ourselves. . . . All the graces of the Spirit, as repentance, faith, hope, charity, patience, temperance, goodness, &c., are but so many modifications of love.'"

²⁶ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:748.

Second, Fuller explained that Scripture taught that Christians sin, and if judged as committing sin, then they must be under a law. Third, Jesus' sermon on the mount was designed to "vindicate the precepts of the moral law from the false glosses of Jewish rabbis, and to show that in their most spiritual meaning they were binding upon his followers."²⁷ Fourth, believers were commanded in the New Testament to love one another "as a requirement of the moral law."²⁸ Fifth, "believers are either under the law (in the sense in which we plead for it) or 'without law,'"²⁹ by which Fuller meant the moral law as written on the human heart (Rom 2:15). In rejecting the moral law as the believer's rule of life, then, the Antinomian was rejecting a fundamental aspect of what it means to be created in the image of God. Sixth and finally, Fuller revealed the hypocrisy of the Antinomian, who rejected the moral law as a rule for himself but insisted upon it (albeit subconsciously) when he felt mistreated by others.³⁰ Having exposed the hypocrisy of the Antinomian, Fuller shifted to articulate the theological error of Antinomianism as a religious system.

Antinomianism's Doctrinal Influence: Denial of the Gospel

In part 2, Fuller begins by explaining that there must be harmony between the law and the gospel if the Author of both is one and the same. "But if the law and the gospel be in harmony," Fuller argues, "they that fall out with the one must fall out with the other. A scheme that sets out with rejecting all obligation to the love of God and man cannot be friendly to either, nor to that gospel whose tendency is to promote them."³¹ Therefore, by rejecting the moral law as a rule of life for the believer, the Antinomian also rejected the very gospel he proclaimed to his parishioners. Yet, his denial of the gospel was robed in orthodox language, so that the

²⁷ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:748-49.

²⁸ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:749.

²⁹ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:750.

³⁰ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:750.

³¹ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:751.

unsuspecting hearer could not easily detect its true nature.

For example, though the Antinomian affirmed the doctrine of election, his manner of life evidenced an unorthodox understanding that based election on God's prior knowledge of his excellency, persuading God to choose him.³² Again, the Antinomian accepted the doctrine of the atonement; nevertheless, his rejection of the moral law as a rule of life exposed his true belief that he did not need atonement for breaking the law.³³ For Fuller, however, the atonement both humbled the sinner, who came to recognize his lawlessness (1 Tim. 1:9), and assured the believer that his sins had been dealt with once and for all. As a result, the believer's will was delivered from its bondage to sin in order to freely obey God's law.³⁴

The Antinomian also proposed to believe in "the mediation and intercession of Christ."³⁵ However, "Deliverance by the interposition of a mediator," Fuller explained, "though it may answer the great ends of justice, and so be consistent with it, yet can never be required by it, nor be any other than an act of grace. This truth, while it repels the objections of Socinianism, corrects the abuses of Antinomianism."³⁶ In other words, though the Antinomian claimed that the gospel was of grace, he insisted that God was obligated as a matter of justice to save those whom he chose. In doing so, he diminished "the grace of forgiveness" and rendered "the deliverance of a sinner a matter of claim."³⁷ The Antinomian also insisted on the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.³⁸ Once again, however, his insistence on eternal justification excluded the

³² Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:752.

³³ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:754-55. Fuller concluded, "It is easy to see, from hence, that in proportion as the law is depreciated, the gospel is undermined, and the necessity, glory, and grace of the atonement rendered void."

³⁴ Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 129. "The modern foreign-mission movement was founded upon thoroughgoing commitment to the absolute sovereignty of God, coupled with uncompromising insistence upon the full responsibility of man."

³⁵ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:755.

³⁶ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:757.

³⁷ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:757.

³⁸ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:757.

necessity of sinners calling out to him in faith. However, God’s sovereign prerogative in eternity past in no way precludes the necessity of sinners repenting of their sins and believing on the name of Christ in space and time (Acts 2:37-40). As Fuller showed,

But neither is it true that justification consists in the purpose of God not to impute sin, but the righteousness of Christ, to an elect sinner. It does not belong to the secret, but to the revealed will of God. It is for a believing sinner to be exempted from the curse of the law, and entitled to the blessings of the gospel, not in the Divine purpose, but according to the will of God as revealed in Scriptures. . . . I say, a revealed interest; for as the sentence of condemnation stood against us in the Scriptures, so that of justification must there stand for us. It is not the purpose which may exist in the Divine mind, nor the impulse, impression, or persuasion which may have place in our minds, but the voice of God in his word concerning us, that determines our state, or denominates us justified or condemned.³⁹

Finally, Fuller explained that the Antinomian alleged to believe in the “doctrines of efficacious grace and the final perseverance of believers.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the Antinomian was neither humbled by the grace of God toward him, a sinner, nor was he moved to persevere in obedience to God’s Word. Using the lives of the “primitive Christians” as an example, Fuller explained,

But when they speak of ‘holding fast the beginning of their confidence to the end,’ their meaning is not that they are to maintain a good opinion of their own state, but an unshaken attachment to the gospel, in the declarations and promises of which they had from the beginning confided. The most unshaken persuasion of the goodness of our own state may be mere self-confidence; and if it operate in a way of religious vaunting, there is every reason for concluding it will be found nothing better. Such was that of the Pharisees, who boasted that God was their Father, and so trusted that they were righteous, and despised others. The soul of such a man is ‘lifted up,’ and therefore ‘is not upright in him.’ Instead of living by faith, his life is that to which a life of faith is directly opposed.⁴¹

Like a surgeon cutting with precision to expose the cancer that lies below the surface, Fuller skillfully revealed Antinomianism’s destructive lies and calculated omissions. “Such doctrine,” Fuller concluded, “has a bewitching influence upon the minds of a certain cast. . . . Like intoxicating liquors to a drunkard, its tendency is to destroy; but yet it seems necessary to

³⁹ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:759-60.

⁴⁰ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:761.

⁴¹ Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:762.

their existence; so much so, that for the sake of it they despise the bread of life.”⁴²

Fuller gave the last days of his life, not only to promoting the cause of the Baptist Missionary Society throughout Great Britain, but to defending the gospel from false doctrine and calling believers to be about the Christ-purchased, Spirit-enabled, God-glorifying, and grace-filled work of sanctification to which they had been called (1 Thess. 4:3-8). Whether at home or abroad, the believer’s responsible pursuit of holiness in accordance with the moral law, as opposed to the apathy of Antinomianism, was to adorn the gospel they preached, leading the heathen to not only hear the good news, but to see it as well.⁴³

⁴² Fuller, *AC*, in *TCW*, 2:762.

⁴³ Peter Morden, “Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions,” in *‘At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word’: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 6, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 239.

CHAPTER 3

AFTERMATH AND APPLICATION

Both William Huntington and Andrew Fuller’s arguments would have important ramifications for the nineteenth century. On the one hand, Huntington’s High Calvinism and rejection of the law as a rule of life for the believer would play a crucial role in the founding of an off-shoot denomination from the Particular Baptists. On the other hand, “Fullerism” would encourage Particular Baptists to new heights in their missional endeavors, especially regarding the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society. However, Antinomianism continues to influence churches of both Reformed and non-Reformed persuasions. Though more subtle, “the engine of destruction” is nevertheless just as harmful.

William Gadsby and the Strict Baptists

While Huntington presented a threat from the outside, William Gadsby’s (1773–1844) views of the moral law created the most acute danger within the Particular Baptist community. Like Huntington, Gadsby was born into poverty and experienced a dramatic conversion experience.¹ Also like Huntington, Gadsby formed his convictions and established his own authority apart from the accountability of the church or the influence of the academy.² He exercised a powerful preaching ability, one which would lead him eventually to become the pastor of the Particular Baptist church in Back Lane of Manchester from 1805 until his passing in 1844. His oratorical gifts also earned him countless invitations to preach throughout England, disseminating his Huntingtonian views as he went, including his rejection of the moral law.

¹ Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 33; 42. Gadsby never met Huntington, but he almost certainly interacted with Huntingtonians in his early days. See also Oliver, *HECB*, 176.

² Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, 116.

“Gadsby followed William Huntington,” states Shaw, “in believing that the law is fulfilled in the Christian, not by him.”³ In fact, much like Huntington himself, Gadsby understood Andrew Fuller’s works to be the proverbial poison in the water amongst Particular Baptists.⁴ Dix states,

In the manner of Huntington, Gadsby sought to expose the sinner to the awfulness of his sin, but then left him in his helpless and hopeless condition, with no word of direction or exhortation. The sinner could only wait for a felt sense of conviction brought about by a cutting application of the law of God. Any word of exhortation implied ‘creature power’, or an ability to respond. In his attempt to safeguard the Calvinistic doctrine of man’s total inability, Gadsby failed to do justice to the fact that in scripture God always dealt with man as a responsible agent.⁵

As a result of his preaching ministry and the churches which formed out of Manchester, Antinomian views grew more pervasive.⁶ In conjunction with the communion debate, the High Calvinism and resulting Antinomianism of many Particular Baptist churches led eventually to the rise of a new denomination of churches “variously known as Gadsbyite, Strict Baptist, or Strict and Particular Baptist.”⁷ Born out of controversy and factions,⁸ Strict Baptists

³ Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, 118. To be sure, Fuller and similarly minded Particular Baptists also believed that Christ fulfilled the law in their place for righteousness’ sake. Nevertheless, the Spirit enables the believer to obey the law as he progresses in godliness. See Gadsby’s response to Fuller in *The Gospel the Believer’s Rule of Conduct* (1804).

⁴ Oliver, *HECB*, 178. “Gadsby was soon known as a convinced Particular Baptist who rejected the free offer of the gospel and taught that the gospel, not the law, was the believer’s rule of conduct. Although called an Antinomian, he always repudiated any suggestion that a Christian was free to live in sin. On the other hand, during his first visit to Manchester, he told his host, ‘I am not a Fullerite.’”

⁵ Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 37-38.

⁶ This can be seen in the founding articles of faith of the Strict Baptist church in Accrington, Zion, which reads in part, “Believing that all Christians are Redeemed from under the curse of the Law by the death of Christ, and brought from under the Law as a Rule by the holy Ghost, when introduced into Gospel liberty by realizing pardon and peace through the blood & Righteousness of Jesus Christ so that they are no more under the Law, but under grace, and serve him not in the oldness of the letter but in newness of spirit, so the Gospel becomes their food, clothing, health, Element of delight and rule of life.” See Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 41. It should be noted of Gadsby, however, that he was known as a holy and devout man, and for his deep social concerns and benevolence. See Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, 145-151. See also A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1956), 185-87. While Underwood agrees that Gadsby was “the patriarch of the present-day Strict and Particular Baptists,” he did not consider him to teach Antinomian theology.

⁷ Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 58. See Dix’s overview for the rise of Strict Baptist churches during this time, 51-58. As Bebbington notes, “Naturally, they declined to associate with the Baptist Union, and instead rallied around a series of periodicals, the *Gospel Standard*, the *Earthen Vessel*, and the *Gospel Herald*. They eventually secured the support of as many as a third of the Baptist churches in England, but their proportion of the overall Baptist church membership was much lower.” See David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People*, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 91.

⁸ Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, 114.

would become a largely isolated denomination that rejected the view that all men have a duty to believe the gospel.⁹ As such, they rejected the theology of Andrew Fuller, claiming it paved the way for Arminianism, much as Willian Huntington had, who believed Fuller’s view of the atonement was heretical. Nevertheless, as Dix concludes, “Andrew Fuller was no more responsible for any shift from orthodox Calvinism in the nineteenth century than the men who framed the 1677 Confession could be held responsible for the path taken by some of their descendants into the chilling winds of high-Calvinism.”¹⁰

As history shows, the consistent result of Antinomianism’s emphasis on the experience of God’s electing and effectual grace, to the neglect of man’s responsibility to believe in the gospel and pursue holiness in the power of the Spirit, is a lack of loving community, growth in godliness, assurance of salvation, and evangelistic zeal. Such theology may draw a crowd, as was the case for Huntington, but it cannot make disciples.

Fuller, Missions, and Enduring Holiness

Fuller’s *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* left an indelible mark on the Northhamptonshire Association. In its wake, Particular Baptists wrestled with the implications of High Calvinism within the wider Baptist movement regarding the duty of all men to believe the gospel and of all believers to preach the gospel. While the launch of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 was aided by Fuller’s willingness to address the issue of High Calvinism,¹¹ it was sustained, in part, by Fuller taking up the responsibility of answering the Antinomian crises, which had spread across the country, tempering the zeal of churches to spread the gospel, and

⁹ As Oliver points out, Gadsby’s establishment of the *Gospel Standard* magazine in 1835 would “form a bond of union amongst his followers.” See Oliver, *HECB*, 198.

¹⁰ Dix, *Strict and Particular*, 270.

¹¹ “It is observable that, five years after the institution of the Missionary Society, the claims of home began to be deeply felt. Christians saw that, if one thing was ‘done,’ the other was not to be ‘left undone.’ The Baptist Home Missionary Society was founded in 1797. The denomination had been gathering strength for several years. In 1763 the number of churches was 200. In 1790 there were 326 churches in England and 56 in Wales, besides the church of the General Baptists, the number of which is not given.” See J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History: From the Foundation of the Christian Church to the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Elliot Stock, 1868), 481.

cooling their passion to pursue holiness.¹² This he did while serving as a pastor and as the Society's secretary from 1792 until his death in 1815. As he traveled throughout Great Britain to draw attention to the Great Commission and raise support for the BMS, Fuller was confronted by the lingering effects of Antinomian apathy.¹³ His love for Christ, growth in holiness, and passion to reach the heathen with the good news incited him to address the growing theological error before it caused any more damage among the Particular Baptists.¹⁴ This holy discontentedness was evident early on when he addressed his fellow Baptists in his moving circular letter of 1785:

Another thing which we apprehend to be a great cause of declension is, a contentedness with present attainments, without aspiring after eminence in grace and holiness. If we may judge of people's thoughts and aim by the general tenor of their conduct, there seems to be much of a contentment with about so much religion as is thought necessary to constitute them good men, and that will just suffice to carry them to heaven; without aiming by a course of more than ordinary services to glorify God in their day and generation. . . . 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. If we were in a proper spirit, the question would not be so much, What *must* I do for God? As, What *can* I do for God? A servant that heartily loves his master counts it a *privilege* to be employed by him, yea, and *honour* to be intrusted with any of his concerns.¹⁵

Fuller's theological vision, then, was to see the heathen reached with the gospel by

¹² In a journal entry dated October 2, 1799, Fuller noted of several northern towns and villages of England, "Most of this part of the country is nearly destitute of evangelical preaching: what they have, which goes by that name, is generally tinged either with Arminianism, or with Antinomianism; which systems paralyze practical godliness. In this, I refer chiefly to the state of things among the Dissenters..." See Ryland, *TWF*, 165.

¹³ "Many, who lean towards Antinomianism, do *not half* believe human depravity: they do not think the will of man is perverse enough to insure his destruction, if all other impediments were removed . . . if God were to assure an unrenewed man of his election, his redemption, and certain glorification, without changing the spirit of his mind; though, if he had been previously much alarmed, he might be glad to get rid of his terror, and feel, for a little while, such a natural gratitude as the Israelites did at the Red Sea; yet he would soon forget all, and go on seeking his present happiness in the world, and in the indulgence of his sinful inclinations." Ryland, *TWF*, 142.

¹⁴ Fuller's urgency to expose Antinomianism can be seen as early as August 26, 1783, in a paper that Ryland asked Fuller to write on "corresponding *commands, petitions, and promises*." Fuller concluded, "And now, reader, judge whether, in this view of things, the preceptive and promissory parts of Scripture, do not gloriously harmonize. Here, in *one* part, you see the divine *authority* of the lawgiver; in *another*, the moral *insufficiency* of the creature; and, in the *other*, the *all-sufficiency* of the God of GRACE. The Lord grant you may have grace to understand and digest every truth! Then will you cease from *self-sufficiency*, on the one hand, and *self-justification*, on the other. You will happily escape *Arminian* pride and *Antinomian presumption*. You will own your obligations, feel and mourn your defects, pray for what you want, praise for what has been granted, and trust Jehovah for what he has promised." See Ryland, *TWF*, 220-21.

¹⁵ Andrew Fuller, "Causes of Declension in Religion, and Means of Revival," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:320.

Christians who loved Christ preeminently and pursued Christlikeness consistently. However, while the “rope holders” needed to be renewed in their zeal for godliness, so the missionaries themselves needed to take responsibility for their character and actions, something of which Fuller was sure to remind them of both in word and by example¹⁶ through a life nourished by the Scriptures, bathed in prayer, and aided by the wisdom of eminent saints.¹⁷

As a result of men like Fuller leading the Particular Baptists to pursue sanctification and reach sinners with the hope of the gospel, other denominations were encouraged to take their place in the mission as well. “The example of the Particular Baptists was followed in 1795,” states Watts, “by a group of paedobaptist Calvinists—Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Calvinistic Methodists, and Evangelical Anglicans—who came together to form the London Mission Society.”¹⁸ However, the impact of Fuller’s life and thought would endure beyond his generation, even shaping men like C. H. Spurgeon (1834–1892), who, after reading his biography, wrote to Fuller’s son, “I have long considered your father to be the greatest theologian of the century, and I do not know that your pages have made me think more highly of him as a divine than I had thought before. But I now see him within doors far more accurately, and see about the Christian man a soft radiance of tender love which had never been revealed to me either by former biographies or by his writings.”¹⁹

¹⁶ E. F. Clipsham, “Andrew Fuller and the Baptist Mission,” *Foundations* 10, no. 1 (Jan–Mar 1967): 7.

¹⁷ Fuller was greatly influenced by Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Grace Abounding*. Both John Owen’s *The Mortification of Sin* and Jonathan Edward’s *Treatise on Religious Affections*, *Life of David Brainerd*, and *The Freedom of the Will* left an indelible mark on his life, encouraging him in his pursuit of godliness. See Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 164. Edwards also had a profound effect on John Sutcliff, who called for the Northamptonshire Association to pray for revival on the first Monday of every month. As Watts puts it, “Eight years later their prayers were answered with the founding of the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen. Thus did the writings of the Congregational pastor of Northampton, Massachusetts, lead to religious revival among the Particular Baptists of Northamptonshire, England, and set in train the dispersion of the principles of English Dissent to the four corners of the world.” See Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 461.

¹⁸ Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14.

¹⁹ Gilbert S. Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: Carey Press, 1942), 127, quoted in Michael A. G. Haykin and Brian Croft, *Being a Pastor: A Conversation with Andrew Fuller* (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 2019), 20. See also Brewster’s overview of Fuller’s impact on both British and American Baptists in Brewster, *Andrew Fuller*, 97-108.

Application

While this study has addressed issues Particular Baptists faced regarding “lawlessness” during the Long Eighteenth-Century, Antinomianism is a threat to the life and mission of the Church in every generation. During the end of the nineteenth century, Antinomianism appeared in the Keswick movement, with its focus on faith and yielding to the Spirit. This “Let go and let God” mentality failed to consider how the finished work of Christ, applied to the believer, is worked out through active obedience to God’s law by the Spirit.²⁰ Antinomianism also appeared in the “health and wealth gospel” that flourished throughout the twentieth century, with its emphasis on God’s favor and bestowal of blessing to the neglect of actively pursuing Christlikeness.

Among modern churches, however, there has been a resurgence in the language of grace. While there is much to be grateful for with this renewed emphasis, there is much to be concerned about as well. In some sectors of Christianity, the resurgence of Reformed doctrine has resulted in an overcorrection towards licentiousness, as the ministry of Tullian Tchividjian sadly revealed.²¹ While there will always be those who knowingly teach contrary to Scripture, Antinomian views flourish by means of theological laziness, which fails to consider the ramifications of “biblical” concepts carelessly stated on social media, blog posts, or even in sermons.²² Though such errors may be unintentional, they are nevertheless harmful for the life of faith and the spread of the gospel. As Kevin DeYoung explains,

²⁰ J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 128. For an argument in favor of Keswick theology, see J. Robertson McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” in *Five Views of Sanctification*, Counterpoint Series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 149-95.

²¹ Jones, *Antinomianism*, 128. “There is no short and easy way to define antinomianism, unless one regards the phenomenon as a rejection of the third use of the law. But that definition tends to miss the more subtle ways in which antinomians expressed themselves in the past and still do today. From what I have been able to read and hear from Tullian Tchividjian, whether in his books, blogs, conferences, or sermons, he would find himself far more comfortable among the likes of Eaton, Traske, Crisp, and Towne than among the Westminster divines! But he is only one example of many; there are others today who have serious leanings in the direction of the seventeenth-century antinomians.”

²² A good example of this comes from a sermon preached in 2016 by pastor Steven Furtick of Elevation Church. See Tim Challies, “Did God Break the Law for Love?” Challies.com (Blog), April 7, 2016, <https://www.challies.com/articles/did-god-break-the-law-for-love/>.

Among conservative Christians there is sometimes the mistaken notion that if we are truly gospel-centered we won't talk about rules or imperatives or moral exertion. We are so eager not to confuse indicatives (what God has done) and imperatives (what we should do) that we get leery of letting biblical commands lead uncomfortably to conviction of sin. We're scared of words like diligence, effort, and duty. Pastors don't know how to preach the good news in their sermons and still strongly exhort churchgoers to cleanse themselves from every defilement of body and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). We know legalism (salvation by law keeping) and antinomianism (salvation without the need for law keeping) are both wrong, but antinomianism feels like a much safer danger.²³

God has not changed, and his Word remains the same.²⁴ If Christians are to avoid shipwrecking their faith and shepherds are to avoid pastoral malpractice, they must be willing to embrace the whole counsel of God for all of life, irrespective of current theological trends. This means Christians must grow in their confidence of the sufficiency of Scripture and in their understanding of the person and work of Christ. In doing so, they will learn to rejoice in the fact that they have been declared holy through faith in Christ, and to pursue holiness, as revealed through God's moral law, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the rise and fall of Antinomianism from the time of the Reformation to its modern-day manifestations, with an emphasis on the role Andrew Fuller's works played in slowing "the engine of destruction" during the Long Eighteenth-Century. There is still work to be done to understand how Particular Baptists responded to Antinomianism throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the role the issue played in the formulation of *The Second London Confession*. Further research is also needed to understand how Fuller's colleagues responded to the issue, and how their response impacted later Baptists in

²³ Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 19.

²⁴ Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 93. "The word *law* in Scripture means several different things, but here I use it in its basic sense of God's requirements in human lives. These requirements are embodied in the precepts and prohibitions of the Decalogue; expounded and applied by the prophets, the apostles, and Christ himself; and displayed in the biblical biographies of men and women who pleased God, with Christ himself, whose life from this standpoint could be described as the law incarnate, standing at the head of the list. As Paul tells us, the law in this sense is holy, just, good, and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14). Its requirements express and reflect the Creator's own character, and conformity to it is that aspect of God's image in man—that is to say, of Godlikeness—which was lost through the Fall and is now being restored in us by grace. The standards that the law sets do not change, anymore than does God himself, and the height of holiness was, is, and always will be the fulfilling of this given rule of righteousness."

both Great Britain and America. The author's hope is that the current study has helped to advance the discussion in both Fuller and Baptist studies, with the aim of helping believers live to the glory of God and spread a passion for his name among the nations.

Though Fuller died before he could complete his manuscript of *Antinomianism Contrasted*, his work exposed the heart of Antinomianism and provided Particular Baptists with a theological framework for responding to the ongoing debate. As Ryland noted, "These things account for his mind having been so early engaged in theological disquisitions; whereby God was preparing him to be an instrument of checking the progress of False Calvinism, and bringing back many from the very borders of Antinomianism."²⁵ Fuller's passion for declaring the gospel remained alive until the very end. In a letter he dictated to Ryland on April 28, 1815, just days before his death, he stated, "I am a poor, guilty creature; but Christ is an almighty Saviour. I have preached and written much against the abuse of the doctrine of grace; but that doctrine is all my salvation and all my desire."²⁶ May the true doctrine of grace be all our desire in life and ministry as well.

²⁵ Ryland, *TWF*, 7.

²⁶ Ryland, *TWF*, 355.

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ABSTRACT

“AN ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION”: ANDREW FULLER’S RESPONSE TO ANTINOMIANISM

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Andrew Fuller was arguably one of the most important theological figures of the Long Eighteenth-Century. While his written responses to High Calvinism, Socinianism, Sandemanianism, and Deism are well known, Fuller’s response to Antinomianism has not received as much attention. Thus, this thesis will argue that the “engine of destruction” known as Antinomianism was the greatest threat to the Particular Baptists and their missionary enterprise. In doing so, it will summarize the rise and fall of Antinomianism from the time of the Reformation to the present day, emphasizing and distilling Fuller’s response to Antinomianism, chiefly from his late work *Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures* (1816), and explain both the aftermath of the Antinomian controversy and make application for modern believers.

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