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“EMINENT SPIRITUALITY AND EMINENT USEFULNESS”:  
ANDREW FULLER’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE  
REVITALIZATION OF THE PARTICULAR  
BAPTISTS IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY

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Stephen Roy Auld  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

“EMINENT SPIRITUALITY AND EMINENT USEFULNESS”:

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For the glory of God

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CWAF*      *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*. 5 vols. Edited by Michael A. G. Haykin. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016–2023
- LCL          Loeb Classical Library
- WAF*        *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*. 3 vols. Edited by Joseph Belcher. 1845. Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1988

## PREFACE

I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Michael Haykin, for introducing me to Andrew Fuller. When Dr. Haykin asked me to read a series of Fuller's ordination sermons for his book with Brian Croft, *Being a Pastor*, little did I know the impact Fuller would have on me and my thinking about pastoral ministry.

I am so thankful to those who, along with Fuller, have contributed to shaping my thinking about the importance of pastoral character. The pastoral theology course I participated in at Crossway Community Church under Mike Bullmore's supervision was foundational. My time serving as an assistant pastor to Julian Hardyman at Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge, gave me exposure to a senior pastor who pursued eminent spirituality in a way similar to Fuller. Finally, the wonderful people in my church family, Great Victoria Street Baptist Church in Belfast, have given me countless examples of those striving to reflect Christlike character in their everyday lives. It is an honor to serve as their pastor.

I am also so thankful to my wife Lynsey and our three children Hudson, Elliot, and Grace. Their sacrifice and support are inestimable, and they spur me on to be a more godly pastor, both at home and in the church.

Stephen Auld

Belfast, Northern Ireland

May 2023



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“Hundreds of ministers have been ruined by indulging a thirst for the character of the great man, while they have neglected the far superior character of the good man.”<sup>1</sup> This challenging admonition came from one of the eighteenth century’s most influential pastors, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), who was instrumental in the revitalization of the waning English Particular Baptist cause at the close of the long eighteenth century. Fuller observed that pastoral spirituality and godliness had waned in many of the local churches around him, and one of his great passions was to see renewal and revitalization in his day. This thesis explores how God used Fuller as a catalyst for and instrument of renewal at this time and identifies the undergirding convictions that drove him and made him an effective minister of the gospel. By distilling these deep-level convictions, I hope to unearth some timeless principles to fuel faithful and effective ministry today.

#### **Thesis Statement**

Andrew Fuller was convinced that “eminent spirituality is usually attended with eminent usefulness.”<sup>2</sup> The phrase “eminent spirituality” is what we today call pastoral character: a pastor’s pursuit of God and his effort to see his whole life characterized by the gospel he proclaims. Fuller used “eminent usefulness” to describe a truly effective and practically helpful ministry. He continually stressed that all ministry

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas,” in *Memoirs, Sermons, Etc.*, *WAF*, 1:138.

<sup>2</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:143.

must flow from godly character and that the pastor must be intentional in cultivating this character.

This thesis argues that this axiom was the foundational conviction that drove Fuller and made him so effective as an instrument in the renewal of the Particular Baptist cause in the long eighteenth century. Fuller's emphasis on pastoral character must be recovered in our day of celebrity pastors and the professionalization of church services. May this thesis contribute to that end.

### **Thesis Outline**

As a work of historical theology, this thesis proceeds from the general to the specific and quotes Fuller extensively. Chapter 2 establishes the context and outlines the decline experienced by Particular Baptists in England in the eighteenth century. The text then moves from the general reasons suggested for the decline and then more specifically to how Fuller assessed the factors leading to the declension of spirituality in the local churches at this time.

Chapter 3 probes how the same declining local churches experienced a renewal during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. This chapter describes Fuller's instrumental role in motivating this renewal and details the steps Fuller took that made him an extraordinary catalyst for renewal during this time. Chapter 4 examines in greater detail the undergirding conviction that made Fuller so effective: "Eminent spirituality is usually attended with eminent usefulness." Drawing on some of Fuller's ordination sermons, this thesis explores what Fuller meant by eminent spirituality and eminent usefulness and illustrates how this was the driving conviction that influenced his spirituality and effectiveness.

Chapter 5 presents concluding lessons, addresses the relevance of this study for today, and recapitulates why Fuller's axiom needs to be heard again today.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PARTICULAR BAPTIST DECLINE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In a letter to Archibald McLean (1733–1812) in 1796, Andrew Fuller reflected on the state of decline in the Particular Baptist churches twenty years earlier, bluntly stating, “Had matters gone on but a few years longer, the Baptists would have become a perfect dunghill in society.”<sup>1</sup> These words reflect Andrew Fuller’s assessment of the religious decline experienced among English Particular Baptists in the first half of the eighteenth century. This chapter presents the story of the Particular Baptist decline and its chief reasons, including doctrinal deficiencies, character deficiencies, and a general lack of communication.

#### **Promising Particular Baptist Beginnings**

We can identify the first designated Particular Baptist cause in England, in 1638.<sup>2</sup> The group was led by John Spilsbury (1593–1668) and met on Broad Street, Wapping, London.<sup>3</sup> The Particular Baptists descended from the Puritan nonconformists of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, sharing their Calvinist soteriology but differing in their practice of believer’s baptism. Concerned that the Reformation had not gone far enough with respect to the teaching of Scripture on baptism, they sought to

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Discipline of the English and Scottish Baptist Churches,” in *Expositions, Miscellaneous*, *WAF*, 3:478.

<sup>2</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach: Rediscovering Our English Baptist Heritage* (Leeds: Reformation Today Trust, 1996), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Spilsbury was a signatory to the landmark Particular Baptist First London Confession of Faith (1644) and is considered by some to have been its principal author. See James Renihan, “John Spilsbury,” in *The British Particular Baptists, 1638–1910*, vol. 1, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Terry Wolever, rev. ed. (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 21-38.

retrieve the mode of baptism that most reflected the teaching of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> This combination of Calvinistic soteriology and believer's baptism resonated with many believers, and the Particular Baptists enjoyed an early period of fruitful growth and expansion.

By 1660, some 130 congregations of like-minded churches were established across Great Britain and Ireland, and by 1689, there may have been as many as 300 congregations.<sup>5</sup> During this period of growth, the Particular Baptists articulated their doctrinal convictions in the form of two confessions, known as the First and Second London Confessions of 1644 and 1677/1688. One of the striking features of this growth is that it occurred amidst a backdrop of extreme political turmoil in Great Britain when churches that had broken away from the Church of England experienced very real repression. Under Oliver Cromwell's rule from 1649 to 1660, the Particular Baptist churches enjoyed relative religious freedom; however, their situation quickly changed when the monarchy was re-established in 1660 under Charles II. A series of laws were passed that came to be known as the Clarendon Code. The Code reasserted the supremacy of the Anglican Church and made it illegal for churches outside the Anglican communion to gather for worship or practice evangelism.<sup>6</sup> Though such conditions put the Particular Baptists under great pressure, the pressure brought forth amazing growth in the form of new churches during these years.

Circumstances improved with the accession of William III to the English throne in 1688. In 1689, he passed the Act of Toleration, which gave the Particular

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on the origins of the Particular Baptists, see Gordon L. Belyea, "Origins of the Particular Baptists," *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (May 2007). This article was also published by The Gospel Coalition on their blog: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/origins-of-the-particular-baptists/>.

<sup>5</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, "To Wrestle with God for the Effusion of His Holy Spirit: The Revitalization of the Particular Baptists in the Long Eighteenth Century" (paper presented at the Irish Baptist College Conference, Moira, Northern Ireland, January 14, 2021), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends, and His Times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994), 15.

Baptists and other non-conforming groups more religious freedom.<sup>7</sup> Churches outside the Anglican communion (such as Particular Baptists) could now freely assemble for worship and expand their congregations. The prospects for growth and development in the Particular Baptist cause looked better than ever. Benjamin Keach (1640–1704), one of the foundational members of the movement, stated that “the granting of toleration opened a great door for the gospel and sent us blessed harvest weather.”<sup>8</sup> Though the political situation was improving for English Particular Baptists at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the movement entered a period of stagnation and decline.

### **Evidence of Decline**

English Baptist historian W. T. Whitley (1861–1947) estimated from his research that around the year 1715, there were roughly 220 Particular Baptist congregations in England and Wales.<sup>9</sup> By the midway point of the same century, evidence from John C. Ryland’s survey (1723–1792) shows that the number of Particular Baptist Churches had dropped to around 150. Michael Haykin comments that “while these figures are only estimates, they do reveal a pattern of decline in the Calvinistic Baptist community during the early decades of the century.”<sup>10</sup>

These statistics are supported by the recorded testimonies of those who served the Particular Baptist cause in the middle of the eighteenth century. Their testimonies are quite illuminating because they demonstrate that the numeric decline was the fruit of a

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<sup>7</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Keach, *The Gospel Minister’s Maintenance Vindicated* (London, 1689), 102, quoted in Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> For these figures, Haykin, in *One Heart and One Soul*, 25, refers to W. T. Whitley, “The Baptist Interest under George I,” *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 2 (1911): 95–109; Arthur Swainson Langley, “Baptist Ministers in England about 1750 A.D.,” *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 6, no. 2 (1918): 138–57; Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740–1914* (London: Longman Group, 1976), 35, 37; Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 1, *From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 267–71, 491–510.

<sup>10</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 25.

deeper-level, spiritual decline. In a circular letter to the churches of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, Andrew Fuller mentioned the many pastors who complained of religious declension in their churches.<sup>11</sup> In a funeral sermon for his friend and pastor Samuel Wilson (1702–1750) of the Prescott Street Baptist Church, John Gill (1697–1771) commented on the poor quality of ministers: “There are scarcely any that care for the souls of men, and who are heartily concerned for their welfare. . . . Blessed be God, there is here and there one that promises usefulness, or otherwise, the sorrow and grief at the loss of gospel ministers would be insupportable.”<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Wallin (1711–1782), who became pastor of Maze Pond Particular Baptist Church in London in 1741, wrote of “the universal complaints of the decay of practical and vital godliness.”<sup>13</sup> These complaints emanated from faithful gospel ministers, including Fuller. Daniel Turner (1710–1798), pastor of Abingdon Baptist Church, wrote to his friend, Samuel Stennett (1727–1795), a Baptist pastor in London, in 1769, “The Baptist Denomination, in my opinion, is upon the decline. Useful solid ministers are taken away, and few likely to fill up their places.”<sup>14</sup> By “taken away” Turner was referring to the death of a generation of faithful ministers who were not being replaced by a younger generation of faithful ministers. This cloud of witnesses all agree: the churches were experiencing a marked dearth in spiritual life and were in a state of decline.

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<sup>11</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller*, Classics of Reformed Spirituality (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2001), 93.

<sup>12</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *Ardent Love to Jesus: English Baptists and the Experience of Revival in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press, 2013), 16.

<sup>13</sup> Haykin, *Ardent Love to Jesus*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Olin C. Robison, “The Particular Baptists in England, 1760–1820” (PhD thesis, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, 1963), 173–74.

## General Reasons for the Decline

Historians Michael Haykin and Peter Morden have analyzed the decline of the Particular Baptist cause and suggested several contributing factors.<sup>15</sup> They categorize their findings under four main headings: (1) the influence of High Calvinism, (2) the reality of ongoing legal and social discrimination, (3) the problem of general doctrinal controversies within the churches, and (4) a lack of communication.

High Calvinism was a form of Calvinism that emphasised the sovereignty of God in the salvation of a sinner and downplayed human responsibility and the sinner's need to repent and call on the name of the Lord. High Calvinists held that preaching repentance to all people in a general way could give the idea that repentance is in the power of man's will. In light of the theological influence of High Calvinism in the eighteenth century, influential pastor-theologians including John Gill and John Brine (1703–1765) were reticent to offer a general call to call men to repent and turn to Christ out of fear of interfering with God's work in the salvation of sinners. In 1816, John Ryland (1753–1825), principal of Bristol Baptist Academy and pastor of Broadmead Church in Bristol, wrote about the influence of Gill and Brine's theological convictions on other pastors: "This opinion spread pretty much among the ministers of the Baptist denomination," leading to the ministers being "too much restrained from imitating our Lord and his apostles, in calling on sinners to repent and believe the gospel."<sup>16</sup> As Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) later wrote, "Gill's writings promoted a system of theology which chilled many churches to their very soul, for it . . . led them to omit the free invitations of the gospel, and to deny that it is the duty of sinners to believe in

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<sup>15</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 17–24. See also Peter Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth-Century Particular Baptist Life*, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* 8 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), 10–17.

<sup>16</sup> John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 2nd ed. (Miami, FL: HardPress, 2017), 5.

Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> Though Gill’s contribution can be exaggerated, the influence of such high theological systems and their emphasis on scriptural impressions for assurance of salvation took the urgency out of evangelism and calling sinners to repentance.<sup>18</sup>

Although the 1689 Act of Toleration gave Baptists significantly more freedom, they were still a marginalized minority in eighteenth-century England and endured ongoing legal and social discrimination. Dissenters faced barriers in many areas of civil life in English society. For example, it was nearly impossible to find a place to study at Cambridge or Oxford Universities or hold any government office. This position of social inferiority may have stymied Particular Baptist zeal when the social pinch began to be felt. The sense of inferiority that grew during the difficult Clarendon Code years was sustained by the struggle to obtain equal legal and social standing after the Toleration Act, and this insecurity contributed to a fatigue that hindered evangelistic vitality.

In addition to the significant theological issues of High Calvinism, local churches were affected by general doctrinal controversies. For example, congregations debated the place of hymn singing in the church, the pre-existence of Christ’s human soul, and other offshoots of the High Calvinism position, such as the place of scriptural impressions in the assurance of conversion. The secondary theological issues that were dividing churches signalled a loss of vision and an unhealthy inward focus.

There was also the practical issue of local churches spread over a wide geographical area. Churches were often located in rural areas, making communication, cooperation, and mutual edification difficult. The occasional over-emphasis on local church independence and autonomy caused some fellowships to be a bit unsure or standoffish when it came to corporate endeavors. The development of regional

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<sup>17</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography*, vol. 1, 1834–1854, ed. Susannah Thompson Spurgeon and Joseph Harrald (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1899), 310.

<sup>18</sup> For a helpful assessment of Gill’s soteriology, see David Mark Rathel, “John Gill and the Charge of Hyper-Calvinism: Assessing Contemporary Arguments in Defense of Gill in Light of Gill’s Doctrine of Eternal Justification,” *Journal of Andrew Fuller Studies* 1, no. 1 (September 2020): 11–29.



associations was promising, but as they developed, there was no central leadership in the denomination. Deryck Lovegrove notes that “the very strength of independency, the internal cohesion of the gathered church, became its weakness as geographical remoteness conspired with autonomy and lack of common purpose to foster numerical decline.”<sup>19</sup>

Though it is helpful to analyze the impact of geographical location, church polity, the political climate, and doctrinal issues on the decline of the Particular Baptist cause, it is fair to acknowledge that these factors are not without exception. For example, the legal and social discrimination was much harsher during the early years of Baptist growth from the 1660s to the 1680s while the Clarendon Code was in effect, yet the church flourished during this period. Similarly, the isolation and lack of communication of the early eighteenth century were no different than in the preceding late seventeenth century, when religious life was flourishing. If these factors had not caused previous periods of decline, it is essential to consider what else may have contributed to the decline and, in conjunction with these other factors, affected the growth of the cause at the beginning of the eighteenth century. One factor not fully considered in the four main heads is the relaxing of the repression that opened the door for a kind of spiritual complacency to creep into the church. The history of Christianity demonstrates that times of repression and persecution often sharpen Christian spirituality and focus. The second-century church father Tertullian said, “The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; *the blood of Christians is seed.*”<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, comfort often breeds spiritual complacency. Might it just be that the relaxing of pressure led to a kind of spiritual lethargy in Fuller’s day? Certainly, when Fuller gave reasons for the decline

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<sup>19</sup> Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 7, quoted in Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Tertullian, *Apology* 50.13–14 (Glover, LCL).

in the churches around him, he focused on a lack of urgency and spiritual complacency as contributing factors.

### **Reasons for Decline According to Andrew Fuller**

In 1785, Fuller wrote a circular letter to the churches of the Northampton Baptist Association as a response to the discouraging reports he heard while attending the annual association assembly of pastors. In his introductory paragraphs, he stated:

The letters from the several churches, which were attended to the first evening of our meeting together, afforded us matter for pain and pleasure. Two of the associate churches continue destitute of the stated means of grace, others are tried with things of an uncomfortable nature, and most complain of the want of a spirit of fervour and constancy in the ways of God.<sup>21</sup>

In the letter, he articulated four reasons why he believed the churches were experiencing this “want of fervour and constancy.”<sup>22</sup> First, Fuller described a “contentedness with a mere superficial acquaintance with the gospel.”<sup>23</sup> He expressed grief over those who merely assented to the truths of the gospel without thinking more about them. Fuller writes, “We avow the doctrines of free, sovereign and efficacious grace; but do we generally feel the grace therein discovered?” He continues:

We may give a sort of idle assent to the truths of God, which amounts to little more than taking it for granted that they are true, and thinking no more about them, unless somebody opposes us; but this will not influence the heart and life, and yet it seems to be nearly the whole of what many attain to, or seek after. We maintain the doctrine of one infinitely glorious God; but do we realize the amiableness of his character? If we did, we could not avoid loving him with our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. . . . We hold the doctrine of a trinity of Persons in the Godhead; but do we cordially enter into the glorious economy of redemption, wherein the conduct of the sacred Three is most gloriously displayed? Surely if we did, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost would be with us more than it is. . . . O brethren, may it be our and your concern not to float upon the surface of Christianity, but to enter into the spirit of it!<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion, and Means of Revival,” in *WAF*, 3:318.

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

<sup>23</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:318.

<sup>24</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:319.

The second reason Fuller gave for the declension experienced was a lack of personal zeal to pursue personal holiness. He referred to this problem as “a contentedness with present attainments, without aspiring after eminence in grace and holiness.”<sup>25</sup> Fuller lamented the spiritual lethargy that led to people seeking to perform the bare minimum of religious duties, or just enough to get them to heaven. Fuller lamented, “Few seem to aim, pray and strive after eminent love to God and one another.” He asked:

Have we been sufficiently earnest and constant in private prayer? Are there none of us that have opportunities to set apart particular times to pray for the effusion of the Holy Spirit? Can we do no more than we have done in instructing our families? Are there none of our dependents, workmen, or neighbours that we might speak to, at least so far as to ask them to go and hear the gospel? Can we rectify nothing in our tempers and behaviour in the world, so as better to recommend religion? Cannot we watch more? Cannot we save a little more of our substance to give to the poor? In a word, is there no room or possibility left for our being more meek, loving, and resembling the blessed Jesus than we have been?<sup>26</sup>

Fuller also observed a certain mindset that made the religion of others the standard instead of the Word of God. Fuller challenged the common conversation he was hearing that assumed if “such and such good men do so; surely therefore there can be no great harm in it!”<sup>27</sup> He lamented a spirituality that accepted the lowest common denominator, saying:

Many ill effects appear evidently to arise from this quarter. Hence it is that, for the want of bringing our religion and religious life to the test of God’s holy word, we are in general so wretchedly deficient in a sense of our vast and constant defects, have no spirit to press forward, but go on and on, without repentance for them, or so much as a thought of doing otherwise.—Hence also there is so much vanity and spiritual pride among us. While we content ourselves with barely keeping pace with one another, we may all become wretched idlers, and loose walkers; and yet, as one is about as good as another, each may think highly of himself; whereas, bring him and his companions with him to the glass of God’s holy word, and if they have any sensibility left, they must see their odious picture, abhor themselves, and feel their

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<sup>25</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:320.

<sup>26</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:320.

<sup>27</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:321.

former conduct as but too much resembling that of a company of evil conspirators who keep each other in countenance.<sup>28</sup>

Fuller cited a fourth cause of declension in religion: the unwillingness of people to take personal responsibility to live a life of good Christian character. He likened the church of his day to an army full of individuals who did not think their efforts counted for much:

It is common for people on many occasions to think within themselves in some such manner as this, “What signify *my* faults, or *my* efforts? They can weigh but little for or against the public good. What will *my* prayers avail? and what great loss will be sustained by an individual occasionally omitting the duty of prayer, or attendance at a church meeting, or it may be the public worship and ordinances of God?”<sup>29</sup>

He met this lack of spiritual responsibility with a clear exhortation:

If an army would hope to obtain the victory, every man should act as if the whole issue of the battle depended upon *his* conduct: so, if ever things go well in a religious view, it will be when everyone is concerned to act as if he were the only one that remained on God’s side. We may think the *efforts* of an individual to be trifling; but, dear brethren, let not this atheistical spirit prevail over us.<sup>30</sup>

Fuller wisely recognized that the decline experienced in the churches belonging to the Northamptonshire association was a symptom of a much deeper root problem. These churches had become superficial with respect to the things of the gospel. They lacked heart-level affection for Christ, and they lacked zeal for holiness. All of this led to shoddy Christian character and a lowest-common-denominator spirituality.

### Conclusion

The statistical and testimonial evidence of the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists identify a period of significant decline during the first half of the century. Though some historians have postulated general contributing factors to this decline, such as doctrinal controversies and certain social issues, Andrew Fuller diagnosed the true

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<sup>28</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:321.

<sup>29</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:322 (emphasis original).

<sup>30</sup> Fuller, “Causes of Declension in Religion,” in *WAF*, 3:322 (emphasis original).

source of the decline: a superficial spirituality had crept into the churches and led to a dry and superficial love for God and the gospel. Though there were notable exceptions during this time,<sup>31</sup> it is clear why Fuller said that if this superficial spirituality had continued much longer, the Baptists would have become “a perfect dunghill in society.”<sup>32</sup> Fuller’s diagnosis was based on his deep conviction that Christian leaders and laity needed to pursue eminent spirituality. His writing reveals his belief that the congregation that is not sufficiently spiritually minded is becoming useless. Hence, his axiom, “Eminent spirituality is usually attended with eminent usefulness”<sup>33</sup> has its fingerprints all over his assessment of the decline and his call for spiritual renewal.

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<sup>31</sup> Haykin mentions men such as Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795), who ministered at Bourton on Water, and Hugh Evans (1713–1881), who ministered in Bristol. See Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 32.

<sup>32</sup> Fuller, “Discipline of the English and Scottish Baptist Churches,” in *WAF*, 3:478

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas,” in *Memoirs, Sermons, Etc.*, *WAF*, 1:142.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANDREW FULLER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REVITALIZATION OF PARTICULAR BAPTIST LIFE IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In the preface to the 1988 edition of *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, Thomas Nettles writes, “Just as there was no Reformation except the one that, for all practical purposes, began with Luther, so there was no Baptist Awakening except the one in which Fuller played a formative role.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter begins by introducing the Particular Baptist renewal toward the end of the eighteenth century and then assesses Fuller’s role in and contribution to this period of renewal.

#### **Particular Baptist Renewal Towards the End of the Eighteenth Century**

Michael Haykin points out that “during the final three decades of the century the Baptists became a dynamic force . . . outward looking and seeking to recruit new members for their congregations.”<sup>2</sup> Several indicators demonstrate a renewal in Particular Baptist life during this period. First, the renewal is evidenced within the group of gifted and godly men whom God raised up during this period and bonded with deep ties of like-minded spirituality. Christopher Anderson (1782–1852), a Scottish Baptist leader who became a close friend of Fuller, wrote a letter to a friend in which he stated the vital role of gospel friendship in seeing great things done for the kingdom of God. He writes, “In order to much good being done, co-operation, the result of undissembled love, is

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Nettles, “Preface to the New Edition,” in *WAF*, 1:vii.

<sup>2</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends, and His Times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994), 33.

absolutely necessary.”<sup>3</sup> He spoke of the “little band of brothers” that God had raised up in Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliff (1752–1814), Samuel Pearce (1766–1799), William Carey (1761–1834), and John Ryland. He comments on the character of this group of men: “They were men of self-denying habits, dead to the world, to fame, and to popular applause, of deep and extensive views of divine truth, and they had such an idea of what the Kingdom of Christ ought to have been in the nineteenth century, that they, as it were, vowed and prayed, and gave themselves no rest.” The presence of such men was evidence of God at work, raising a new generation of leaders in Particular Baptist life who were instruments of renewal.

A second indicator of renewal at that time was a renewed emphasis on prayer among ministers in the Northamptonshire Baptist Association. In the spring of 1784, John Ryland shared with John Sutcliff and Andrew Fuller a treatise of Jonathan Edwards that had been sent to him by the Scottish Presbyterian minister John Erskine (1721–1803). Edwards’s treatise was entitled *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies Concerning the Last Time*. Reading Edwards’s call to “extraordinary prayer” significantly impacted these men and led Sutcliff to propose that the churches in the association meet monthly to pray for revival. In what has become known as “The Prayer Call of 1784,” Sutcliff exhorted the churches to “have love enough for Zion to set apart *one hour* at a time, twelve times in a year, to seek her welfare.”<sup>4</sup> During the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society, F. A. Cox (1783–1853) reflected on the impact of the Prayer Call:

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<sup>3</sup> All of these quotations in this paragraph are from the letter, “Edinburgh, 7th September 1822,” in Hugh Anderson, *The Life and Letters of Christopher Anderson* (Edinburgh: W. P. Kennedy, 1854), 379.

<sup>4</sup> Baptist History Homepage, “John Sutcliff: The Prayer Call of 1784,” accessed February 19, 2023, <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/1784.cl.british.prayer.html>.

The primary cause of missionary excitement in Carey’s mind and its diffusion among the Northamptonshire ministers [was] . . . the meeting of the Association in 1784, at Nottingham, [when] it was resolved to set apart an hour on the first Monday of every month, “for extraordinary prayer for revival of religion, and for the extending of Christ’s kingdom in the world.” This suggestion proceeded from the venerable Sutcliffe. Its simplicity and appropriateness have since recommended it to universal adoption; and copious showers of blessing from on high have been poured forth upon the churches.<sup>5</sup>

This fresh zeal for prayer was further indication that God was at work, stirring the hearts of these men and causing them to pursue a revived spirituality.

A third indicator of renewal was a renewed urgency towards evangelism and cross-cultural mission. The most important of Fuller’s written works, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785), and Carey’s work, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792), inspired a whole new generation of evangelistic and cross-cultural mission endeavors. If Carey is said to be the father of modern-day missions, Fuller was the grandfather of modern-day missions. Together with their band of brothers, they were the founders and backbone of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), established in October 1792. Fuller was the first secretary of the BMS and committed to “hold the rope” as Carey was sent out as the first BMS missionary to Calcutta in 1793.<sup>6</sup> Their theological argument combined a strict Calvinism (people cannot come to God apart from the drawing and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) with a general evangelistic call for all to come to Christ for salvation. This balanced yet potent theological “evangelical Calvinism” was a potent refutation of the High Calvinism popular at that time. It birthed the modern-day missionary movement and once again demonstrated the way this group of Particular Baptists shifted from a period of decline into the dynamic force whose impact is still being felt today.

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<sup>5</sup> Francis Augustus Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society from 1792 to 1842*, 2 vols. (London: T. Ward and G. & J. Dyer, 1842), 1:10–11.

<sup>6</sup> See chap. 6 in Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth-Century Particular Baptist Life*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 8 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003). For an authoritative history of the society, see Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).



## **Andrew Fuller’s Role in the Renewal**

Historians, including Thomas Nettles and Michael Haykin, have highlighted Andrew Fuller’s instrumental role in this period of Particular Baptist renewal. Fuller’s multifaceted contribution can be assessed in several ways. The following section considers four ways Fuller was used as an instrument of renewal in the second half of the long eighteenth century: as a faithful pastor, through gospel partnership, as a pastor-theologian, and as a missions mobiliser.

### **Fuller’s Role as a Faithful Pastor**

Fuller was first and foremost a pastor and served two churches during his lifetime. From 1775 to 1782, he pastored Soham Baptist Church in Cambridgeshire, England. He then served Kettering Baptist Church in Northamptonshire, England, from 1782 until his death in 1815. The Soham years were difficult but extremely formative for Fuller. In 1776, when Fuller was twenty-two years old and one year into his formal ministry at Soham, he wrote a letter on the state of the Soham Church to the Northamptonshire Baptist Association. He stated that as a church they were “not without complaints” because of their “unfruitfulness in religion and proneness to evil.”<sup>7</sup> We learn from subsequent letters that Fuller had to regularly exercise church discipline for wayward members. For example, in 1776, a member was admonished for “repeatedly speaking falsehoods” and suspended from communion for a number of months.<sup>8</sup> In 1777, the same member was reprimanded and excluded for drunkenness alongside another member who was also interviewed with respect to his own heavy drinking. In 1779,

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<sup>7</sup> See Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2015), chap. 3, “Early Pastoral Ministry and Theological Development,” para. 5, Kindle. According to Morden’s research, a set of eight letters comprising the “Narration of . . . the Baptist Church at Soham” and covering the years 1779–1783 are included in the “Annual Letters on the State of the Church sent to the Association from the year 1776, Cambridgeshire County Archives (N/B–Soham R70/20).” There are eight letters in all, all in Fuller’s handwriting excepting the last letter.

<sup>8</sup> “Narration of . . . the Baptist Church at Soham,” 26, quoted in Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller*, chap. 3, para. 5.

Fuller wrote of “unhappy differences between individuals” and found the whole situation very “dispiriting.”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Fuller pressed on in the work of expository preaching and pastoral visiting and sought to improve his effectiveness as a pastor during these years. In a July 29, 1780, diary entry, he wrote:

Surely I do not sufficiently study the cases of the people, in my preaching! I find, by conversation, today, with one seemingly in dying circumstances, that but little of my preaching has been suited to her case. Visiting the sick and conversing sometimes even with the unconverted part of my hearers, about their souls, and especially with the godly, would have a tendency to make my preaching more experimental.<sup>10</sup>

Fuller would work hard to see the membership grow from thirty-five members in 1776 to forty-five members in 1779, the largest the membership would grow during Fuller’s pastorate.<sup>11</sup> Even so, the young pastor took the oversight of local church life seriously. He preached, prayed, visited, and exercised church discipline for the good of the church. Fuller’s diary entries for 1780 and 1781 reveal a growing heaviness about his ministry at Soham. He entered into a period of spiritual struggle, wrestling about whether or not it was time to move on.<sup>12</sup> Kettering Baptist Church had approached him in 1780 and 1781 to consider their pastorate, but he turned down their offers. However, in May 1782, Fuller finally concluded that his continuance at Soham would not be for his or their profit; it was time to make a move and accept the call to Kettering.

In October 1782, the Fuller family moved sixty miles west into the neighboring county of Northamptonshire, and Fuller took up the pastorate of Kettering Baptist Church. Fuller would serve as their pastor for the next thirty-three years, years that would be fruitful for Fuller personally and spiritually but also marked by trials of

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Men Worth Remembering: Andrew Fuller* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), 44.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Fuller, *The Diary of Andrew Fuller, 1780–1801*, ed. Michael D. McMullen and Timothy D. Whelan, in *CWAF*, 1:11.

<sup>11</sup> Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*, chap. 3, para. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Fuller, *The Diary of Andrew Fuller, 1780–1801*, in *CWAF*, 1:25.

varying degrees. During Fuller’s ministry at Kettering, the church doubled in size from 88 members to 174 members. At times, over one thousand persons would come to hear Fuller preach.<sup>13</sup> George Wallis (1775–1869), one of the deacons at Kettering during Fuller’s pastorate, described Fuller’s ministry as “very affecting and evangelical” and said his pulpit was home to “a profusion of truly evangelical, melting and affectionate discourses.”<sup>14</sup> Keith Grant shows how terms like “evangelical” and “affecting” are to be understood as an apt summary of Fuller’s ministry at Kettering.<sup>15</sup> He explains that Fuller’s preaching was characterized by two main things: (1) an emphasis on the cross of Christ, and (2) an emphasis on the affections. When Fuller addressed the students of the Bristol Education Society on the work of the Christian ministry, he said:

The person and work of Christ must be the leading theme of our ministry. . . . Every sermon, more or less, should have some relation to Christ, and bear on his person or work. This is the life of all doctrine, and it will be our own fault if it is dry. Do not consider it as one subject among others, but as that which involves all others, and gives them an interest they could not otherwise possess. Preach not only the truth, but all truth, “as it is in Jesus.” However ingenious our sermons may be, unless they bear on Christ, and lead the mind to Christ, we do not preach the faith of the gospel.<sup>16</sup>

To Fuller, evangelical ministry was ministry that sought to reveal all the blessings of God that are found in Christ.

In addition to prioritizing the preaching of the gospel, Fuller also emphasized the importance of the affections being stirred by the gospel. Fuller not only proclaimed, “Preach Christ, or you had better be anything than a preacher,”<sup>17</sup> but also, “You had

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<sup>13</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘The Very Picture of a Blacksmith’: The Life and Legacy of Andrew Fuller,” *Towers* 13, no. 9 (May 2015).

<sup>14</sup> George Wallis, “Memoirs, etc, of State of Mind, continued,” unpublished diary manuscripts (March 15, 1805–June 1, 1817), Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering, July 14, 1811, quoted in Keith S. Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 36 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013), 3, 78.

<sup>15</sup> Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, 77–103.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Faith in the Gospel a Necessary Prerequisite to Preaching It,” in *Memoirs, Sermons, Etc.*, *WAF*, 1:516.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Preaching Christ,” in *WAF*, 1:503.

better do anything than be a minister, if your heart is not engaged in it.”<sup>18</sup> Fuller preached many ordination sermons, and in one of these addresses to a young minister, he urges him to

beware that you do not preach an unfelt gospel. If you do, it will be seen, and you will be despised. It will be seen that, though you affect to be in earnest, you do not feel; and that you scarcely believe your own doctrine. We may get into a habit of talking for the truth, and pleading for holiness, and yet be dead ourselves; and if so, we shall be sure to be despised elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

For thirty-three years at Kettering Baptist, Fuller modeled what he enjoined others to do: preach a “felt gospel.”

In the appendix to Matthew Bryant’s book on Fuller’s theology of prayer, Bryant includes a sample of Fuller’s sermons that provide a picture of Fuller’s steady expository ministry at Kettering. The table includes fourteen sermons along with their titles and a note from Sunday, August 29, 1784, in which Fuller records in his diary, “Expounded and finished Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.”<sup>20</sup> Fuller wrote the preface to his published expository series through Genesis, and it reveals something of his own experience and pleasure in expository preaching:

It is now upwards of twenty-two years since I first took the oversight of you in the Lord. During the last fifteen years it has, as you know, been my practice to expound among you, on a Lord’s day morning, some part of the Holy Scriptures, commonly a chapter. From all that I have felt in my own mind, and heard from you, I have reason to hope these exercises have not been in vain. They have enabled us to take a more connected view of the Scriptures than could be obtained merely by sermons on particular passages; and I acknowledge that, as I have proceeded, the work of exposition has become more and more interesting to my heart.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Fuller, *The Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. Joseph Belcher (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1856), 361, quoted in Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Ministers Should Be Concerned Not to Be Despised,” in *WAF*, 1:489.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew C. Bryant, *Constructing a Theology of Prayer: Andrew Fuller’s (1754–1815) Belief and Practice of Prayer*, Monographs in Baptist History 17 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021), 211.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Expository Discourses on the Book of Genesis, Interspersed with Practical Reflections,” in *Expositions, Miscellaneous*, *WAF*, 3:1.

And in Ryland's biography of Fuller's life, he gives an account of Fuller's preaching ministry at Kettering:

Mr. Fuller began an exposition of the book of Psalms, on the 18th April, 1790; and expounded, in succession, Isaiah; Joel; Amos; Hosea; Micah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah; Jeremiah; Lamentations; Daniel; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi; Job; Genesis; Matthew; Luke; John; the Revelation; the Acts of the Apostles; the Epistle to the Romans; and the First Epistle to the Corinthians, as far as Chap. iv. 5.<sup>22</sup>

It was this steady evangelical and affecting pastoral ministry that gave Fuller the platform to set a tone in his age. The ripple effect of that ministry set a tone for his and following generations and became the engine room for Fuller's wider thinking and work.

### **Fuller's Commitment to Gospel Partnership**

When Fuller was ordained as the pastor at Soham in 1775, the pastoral father figure in the Midlands was a Baptist minister named Robert Hall Sr. (1728–1791) of Arnesby. Hall travelled the seventy miles east to preach at Fuller's ordination and took a great interest in Fuller as a young minister. Fuller said of Hall that he “continued my father and friend till his death.”<sup>23</sup> Hall introduced Fuller to the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, an association that would provide Fuller with a small network of “familiar and faithful” friends who would become very dear to him. Commenting on these friendships, Fuller said:

In 1776, I became acquainted with Mr. Sutcliffe, who had lately come to Olney; and soon after with Mr. John Ryland [Jr.], then of Northampton. In them I found familiar and faithful brethren; and who, partly by reflection, and partly by reading the writings of Edwards, Bellamy, Brainerd, &c. had begun to doubt of the system of False Calvinism, to which they had been inclined when they first entered on the ministry, or rather to be decided against it.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 2nd ed. (Miami, FL: HardPress, 2017), 371.

<sup>23</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 34–35.

Fuller developed a particularly close relationship with John Ryland Jr., whom he met in 1778. In 1782, when Fuller moved to Kettering, the two men had time to forge deep bonds of affection as they found opportunities to talk, pray, and wrestle through theological issues. Their friendship remained a steady constant in Fuller's life until Fuller's death in 1815. Later in his life, Fuller described his relationship with Ryland as a "long and intimate friendship" that he had "lived in and hoped to die in."<sup>25</sup> Fuller also intentionally maintained and cultivated close friendships with men like Samuel Pearce and William Carey. Carey would summarize his affection for Fuller after his death with the simple words, "I loved him."<sup>26</sup> Michael Haykin comments on the significance of these friendships in Fuller's life:

There is little doubt . . . that Fuller's friendship with a number of like-minded Baptist pastors from the Midlands—in particular the elder Robert Hall of Arnesby, John Sutcliffe of Olney, John Ryland Jr of Northampton, Samuel Pearce of Birmingham, and William Carey—was indispensable to the transformative impact of his theology. These men took the time to think and reflect together, as well as to encourage one another and pray together.<sup>27</sup>

Fuller took seriously the words of Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Fuller's commitment to gospel partnership was evidenced in the way he leaned into association life in the Northamptonshire Baptist Association. He led the Soham church into membership in the association in 1775, just one year into his ministry there, and whilst in Kettering continued a strong and vital link with the association. His concern for the churches across the association is demonstrated in his 1785 circular letter addressed to the association in which he analyzed causes for the religious declension among them and suggestions on how they might seek renewal.

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew Fuller, "Letter, Etc.," in *WAF*, 3:508.

<sup>26</sup> William Carey, "Letter to John Ryland, 15 November 1815," in Terry G. Carter, ed., *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 199.

<sup>27</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *Ardent Love to Jesus English Baptists and the Experience of Revival in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press, 2013), 49.

Further evidence of Fuller’s commitment to gospel partnerships is seen in his letter-writing ministry to a wide range of people on all sorts of matters. In one letter penned on July 13, 1788, Fuller writes to another minister Benjamin Francis (1734–1799) and exhorts him to keep going in the midst of all the challenges of Christian ministry: “How great a matter is Christian perseverance, to hold out to the end and be saved.”<sup>28</sup> In another letter to John Thomas (1757–1801), a fellow minister going through a difficult time, Fuller sought to encourage Thomas by recounting some of his own afflictions and experiences:

My dear Brother, it has afforded me some consolation, while pleading with God on your behalf, that his help could fly swifter than this letter. O that before this arrives you may be delivered from the horrible pit! Shall I tell you a little of my own experience? At one period of my life, I had a severe domestic trial. My heart melted under it like wax. I cried much to the Lord, and he delivered me out of my affliction.<sup>29</sup>

Fuller’s cultivation of deep and lasting friendships, his commitment to and concern for the network of churches in the Northamptonshire Association, his voluminous letter writing, and the tone toward and care for his fellow laborers all contributed to his influence and increased his impact on his generation. Haykin expresses his conviction that these spiritual partnerships and deep friendships were instrumental to the revival experienced towards the end of the eighteenth century:

Fuller had the ability to nurture and sustain deep, long lasting, and satisfying friendships that enabled him and his friends to serve God powerfully in their generation. No great work for God is accomplished by men working in isolation. And together these men saw revival. By 1798, there were close to 445 Calvinistic Baptist churches in England and Wales. The number had risen to well over by 1811, and in 1851 it stood at over 1,300.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller*, Classics of Reformed Spirituality (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2001), 113.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb*, 155.

<sup>30</sup> Haykin, *Ardent Love to Jesus*, 90.

## Fuller's Work as a Pastor-Theologian

During his seven years at Soham, Fuller developed his own biblical convictions on gospel ministry. As a blacksmith works the metal with hammer and anvil, so too did Fuller develop his convictions through careful study, deep reflection, and practical ministry life. At his ordination to the pastorate of Kettering Baptist, he read a statement of principles setting out his theology and ecclesiology as well as his approach to practical ministry. Fuller's statement demonstrated that he was both a deeply theological pastor and a deeply pastoral theologian. His deep theology is evident in this clear doctrinal statement, and his deep pastoral heart is evidenced in his writing this document to serve the saints in Kettering Baptist Church.

First and foremost in this doctrinal statement was a strong commitment to the primacy and authority of Scripture. Fuller called the Old and New Testament together the "perfect rule of faith and practice."<sup>31</sup> The statement was also classically Trinitarian and Calvinistic and, perhaps most significantly, it demonstrated the balanced view he struck between God's sovereignty in salvation and God's use of human means to effect regeneration in the heart of a sinner. Fuller stated:

I believe, it is the duty of every minister of Christ plainly and faithfully to preach the gospel to all who will hear it; and, as I believe the inability of men to spiritual things to be wholly of the moral, and, therefore, of the criminal kind,— and that it is their duty to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust in him for salvation, though they do not; I, therefore, believe free and solemn addresses, invitations, calls, and warnings to them, to be not only consistent, but directly adapted, as means, in the hand of the Spirit of God, to bring them to Christ. I consider it as a part of my duty, which I could not omit without being guilty of the blood of souls.<sup>32</sup>

Although this statement may not seem that significant to a modern reader, in Fuller's time, it was considered radical due to the prevailing wind of High Calvinism in the Particular Baptist pulpits of the land. High Calvinism maintained that it was not the pastor's duty to call sinners to faith through repentance from the devastating effects of

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<sup>31</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 62.

<sup>32</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 67.



total depravity. Such depravity, they said, makes it impossible for a sinner to respond to the gospel, and it would not be right to call one to do what they were not able to do. Instead, High Calvinists waited for sinners to experience some kind of internal warrant or sense of a scriptural impression within that would give evidence that they were among God's elect. Upon this revelation, the sinner then had grounds to come to God and ask for salvation. High Calvinism was driven by a high view of God's sovereignty in salvation and a low view of any kind of human response.

Fuller's statement revealed his belief that the system of High Calvinism was flawed and had had an adverse effect on the spread of the gospel, as it stifled any sense of urgency in evangelism and cross-cultural missions. Not content to keep these convictions to himself or within the walls of Kettering Baptist Church, Fuller worked for several years to put into writing his case for a more biblically-balanced view of evangelism and the sovereignty of God in salvation. In 1785, Fuller published this work under the title *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*. The subtitle revealed his intent: *The Obligations of Men Fully to Credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes Known. Wherein Is Considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of Those Where the Gospel Comes in That Matter*. The 1801 second edition was more simply subtitled, *The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ*. This second subtitle succinctly captures the book's main argument: Fuller argues that God uses the general call of the gospel as the primary means of saving people, and all sinners have a duty to believe in Christ for salvation. Fuller explained that, while sinners have a natural ability to hear and understand the gospel, because of their moral inability, they will not turn to Christ for salvation unless God does a regenerative work in the heart by the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup> Fuller insisted that saving faith is not focused on something subjective within a person but on

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<sup>33</sup> Fuller drew these categories of natural ability and moral inability from Jonathan Edwards, *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of the Will* (Boston, MA: S. Kneeland, 1754).

something objective outside a person, namely the person and work of Christ. When God works through the general call of the gospel with an effectual call in the power of the Spirit, the moral inability is overcome and the gracious fruit of that work of God is faith and repentance and justification for the sinner.

As Fuller anticipated, the book's publication caused no small stir in the churches and denominations round about the Northamptonshire association. Some, like Caleb Evans (1737–1791), founder of the Bristol Education Society, responded positively and wrote to Robert Hall expressing his appreciation for the work.<sup>34</sup> Others, however, did not respond so positively. Fuller faced opposition from both sides: the High Calvinists accused Fuller of opening a door to Arminianism, and the Arminians accused Fuller of not moving far enough away from the High Calvinist position.<sup>35</sup> Fuller responded ably to these critiques, and Fuller's system provided a theology for many others in the Baptist churches who shared the same reservations about the High Calvinism of the day.

Fuller wrote other significant works, including his *Strictures Against Sandemanianism*,<sup>36</sup> in which he defended the gospel against reduction to mere mental assent, and his helpful *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared*,<sup>37</sup> in which he defended classical Trinitarianism against the advances of Unitarianism. However, it was *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* that stands head and shoulders above the rest in terms of impact and influence.

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<sup>34</sup> Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*, chap. 4, “Kettering and Responses to the *Gospel Worthy*,” sec. 7, “The Publication of the *Gospel Worthy*.”

<sup>35</sup> The two major opponents from the High Calvinist camp were William Button (1754–1821), pastor of Dean Street Baptist Church, and John Martin (1741–1820), pastor of Grafton Street Baptist Church. The main Arminian response came from Dan Taylor (1738–1816), denominational leader of the General Baptists.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Williams and Son, 1811).

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Fuller, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to Their Moral Tendency: In a Series of Letters, Addressed to the Friends of Vital and Practical Religion* (Boston, MA: Lincoln and Edmands, 1815).

Haykin refers to *The Gospel Worthy* an “epoch-making work,”<sup>38</sup> and Paul Brewster calls it a kind of “theological bombshell” that set Fuller on a path to becoming “one of the most prolific theological writers of his day.”<sup>39</sup> Brewster notes that Spurgeon reflected on Fuller’s theological impact and declared him “the greatest theologian of his time.”<sup>40</sup> God used Fuller’s work as a pastor-theologian as a catalyst for revitalization—not just to the Particular Baptists, but to the wider church in the West’s burden for the unreached peoples of the world.

### **Fuller’s Work as a Missions Mobiliser**

If William Carey is considered the instigator and visionary of the Baptist Missionary Society, Andrew Fuller should be credited as the organizer and strategist of the society. Fuller was appointed as the secretary of the society at its inception in October 1792, and he took the job very seriously. John Ryland testifies to Fuller’s commitment: “Never was a man more indefatigable in any work for God, than brother Fuller was in his exertions of every kind for the welfare of this society.”<sup>41</sup> Fuller himself speaks of the personal burden and responsibility he felt to care well for the missionaries sent out by the society:

Friends talk to me about coadjutors and assistants; but, I know not how it is, I find a difficulty. Our undertaking to India really appeared to me, on its commencement, to be somewhat like a few men, who were deliberating about the importance of penetrating into a deep mine, which had never before been explored. We had no one to guide us; and, while we were thus deliberating, Carey, as it were, said, “Well, I will go down, if you will hold the rope.” But, before he went down, he, as it seemed to me, took an oath from each of us, at the mouth of the pit, to this effect—that “while we lived, we should never let go the rope.” You understand me. There was

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<sup>38</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 148.

<sup>39</sup> Paul L. Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian*, Studies in Baptist Life and Thought (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 32.

<sup>40</sup> Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian*, 33; See also Timothy Larsen, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Leicester, England: IVP, 2003), s.v. “Andrew Fuller,” (p. 244).

<sup>41</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 152.

great responsibility attached to us who began the business; and so I find a difficulty.<sup>42</sup>

One of Fuller's primary tasks as secretary was to raise prayer and financial support for the missionaries. This led to Fuller traveling huge distances on behalf of the society. J. W. Morris provides a snapshot of Fuller's travel itinerary from May to July of 1814, a time when Fuller's health was deteriorating. In May and June, he was to go to Olney, Bedford, Leicester, Essex, and London. In July, he was in the north of England on successive Sundays in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle and Hull.<sup>43</sup> Morden notes the remarkable extent of Fuller's travels that at times covered up to six hundred miles a month and raised on average about a pound a mile for the mission. His journeys took him to Ireland in 1804, Wales in 1812, and Scotland for a number of trips between 1799 and 1813.<sup>44</sup> Fuller canvassed support from a range of denominations during such trips, and many doors opened for him to preach and share about the mission. His travels to Scotland led to his meeting Church of Scotland minister John Erskine, who had originally pointed Ryland and Fuller towards the writings of Jonathan Edwards. He also connected with influential evangelicals like Robert Haldane (1764–1842) and his brother James Haldane (1768–1851), who used their considerable means to support the growth of Christ's church across Scotland. Speaking of the Haldanes in his journal, Fuller writes, "Certainly these appear to be excellent men, free from the extravagance and nonsense which infect some of the Calvinistic Methodists of England; and yet trying to imbibe and communicate their zeal and affection."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 155.

<sup>43</sup> J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1816), 156.

<sup>44</sup> Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth-Century Particular Baptist Life*, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* 8 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), 147.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 149.

Fuller's extensive travel and tireless effort for the mission gave him a new lease on life but would drain him of much energy in time. However, he wrote of how the mission replenished his soul and strength:

Within these few years, my soul has not only recovered its former tone; but, blessed be God! a greater degree of spiritual strength than at any former period: and I think my engagement in the work of the Mission has more than anything contributed to it. Before this, I did little but pore over my misery; but, since I have betaken myself to greater activity for God, my strength has been recovered, and my soul replenished.<sup>46</sup>

However, approximately eight years later, he wrote to his editor of the toll his constant work on behalf of the mission was taking on his physical and mental health and his relationships:

I sit down almost in despair. . . . My wife looks at me with a tear ready to drop, and says, "My dear, you have hardly time to speak to me." My friends at home are kind, but they also say, "You have no time to see us or know us, and you will soon be worn out." Amidst all this there is "Come again to Scotland—come to Portsmouth—come to Plymouth—come to Bristol." Excuse this effusion of melancholy. My heart is willing to do everything you desire that I can do, but my hands fail me. Dear brother Ryland complains of old age coming upon him, and I expect old age will come upon me before I am really old. Under this complicated load my heart has often of late groaned for rest.<sup>47</sup>

Though this work eventually exhausted him, Fuller's many journeys, numerous opportunities to preach, and varied conversations with ministers on behalf of the mission enabled him to raise considerable interest in and support for the society. In a journal entry for September 15, 1802, Fuller wrote:

Last week, I preached twice in Edinburgh, and once at Daleth. I was not a little apprehensive that I should be laid by with hoarseness; but I went through very well. On Lord's day, I preached twice in the morning, to about fifteen hundred people; and in the evening to about four thousand, when we had a collection of £130. I was not at all hurt by it. On Monday morning I took leave of friends at Edinburgh, who were many of them much affected at parting.

Moreover, though Fuller's work in such travels was mainly to raise interest in and funds for the mission, he accomplished much more than this. As a byproduct of his endeavors,

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<sup>46</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 159.

<sup>47</sup> Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb*, 180.

Fuller's evangelical theology and affecting delivery and tone spread and became yet another catalyst for renewal in the long eighteenth century. As he traveled through Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland, he spread the aroma of Christ, an aroma that had a quickening effect on many in his generation and beyond.

### **Conclusion**

Fuller was eminently useful to the Particular Baptist cause in the latter half of the long eighteenth century. His convictions on the importance of spirituality in a minister did not lead him to be so heavenly-minded that he was no earthly good. In reality, it was quite the opposite: Fuller's spirituality drove him to be an activist for the glory of God. His version of eminent spirituality would also be worked out in the minister being practically useful for the cause of God's kingdom.

## CHAPTER 4

### FULLER'S FOUNDATIONAL CONVICTION: EMINENT SPIRITUALITY LEADS TO EMINENT USEFULNESS IN THE MINISTRY

“I think it may be laid down as a rule, which both Scripture and experience will confirm, that eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness.”<sup>1</sup> This statement takes us to the beating heart of Andrew Fuller the Christian and the pastor-theologian. This chapter explores what Fuller meant by eminent spirituality and eminent usefulness and then argues that this axiom was the foundational conviction that drove Fuller’s life and ministry. The best place to observe the central role of this conviction is in the exhortations he gave to younger pastors in some of the ordination sermons he preached later in his ministry. And since these sermons often revealed the pastoral theology of the deliverer, so before delving into Fuller’s ordination sermons, a word of introduction on Particular Baptist ordination sermons in the eighteenth century is necessary.

#### **An Introduction to the Particular Baptist Ordination Sermon in the Eighteenth Century**

Speaking of the central place of preaching in the eighteenth century, church historian Raymond Brown remarks, “In any account of religious life and thought in post-reformation England, it is almost impossible to exaggerate the influence of the sermon.”<sup>2</sup> Sermons were often published and disseminated widely, and ordination sermons were no

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas,” in *Memoirs, Sermons, Etc.*, *WAF*, 1:142.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Brown, “Baptist Preaching in Early 18th Century England,” *Baptist Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (January 1985): 4.

exception. In fact, they seem to have been particularly popular due to the number of preserved sermons that are extant today. In *The Baptist Annual Register* (1790–1802), John Rippon recorded an outline and description for over one hundred ordination services. This record reveals the four types of addresses that were given at an ordination service: an introductory discourse, the incoming pastor’s statement of faith, the ordination sermon, and a pastoral address to the church encouraging them in their ongoing commitment to the gospel in their local church setting.<sup>3</sup> The ordination sermon was the third main address at the ordination service and involved a seasoned pastor giving a charge to the incoming pastor on the nature of the work and his calling. Often, the more seasoned pastor had some formative influence over the incoming pastor, perhaps as a mentor or tutor. Keith Grant notes that the most often used texts for these sermons included Acts 20:28, Colossians 4:7, and 1 Timothy 4:16, passages that specifically speak of the character and duties of a pastor.<sup>4</sup> These ordination sermons are a trove of insight into the pastoral convictions of the delivering pastors. Nigel Wheeler’s PhD research into the ordination sermons of this time period reveals that these sermons provided significant insight into the pastoral theology of the man delivering the sermon. He concluded:

These sermons embody a uniquely practical exposition of the goals, purposes, encouragements, challenges, and execution of the pastoral office. Beyond a systematic exposition of a Particular Baptist pastoral theology, they contain an

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<sup>3</sup> John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register; Including Sketches of the State of Religion among Different Denominations of Good Men at Home and Abroad*, 4 vols. (London: Dilly, Button, and Thomas, 1790–1802). An example of this ordination service format can be found in volume 2 of the *Register*:

Rev. William Terry, at Snape, Yorkshire, Nov. 13, 1793. The business of the day was opened by Mr. Rowland, of Cold Rowley, in a short introductory prayer, reading Matt. xxviii. Tit. i. I Pet. i.1–4. With a brief account of ordinations among the primitive churches, and in the dissenting congregations; then sung and prayed. Mr. Whitfield proposed the necessary questions to the church and the pastor; heard his faith, which was approved, and made the ordination prayer. After singing a hymn, he preached to the pastor from 1 Tim. iv. 16. Mr. Ashworth, of Gildersome, having prayed, preached to the people from Phil. i. 27. “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.” He also concluded with singing and prayer. (Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 2:121–22)

<sup>4</sup> Keith S. Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 36 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013), 61.



elucidation of pastoral theology purified in the crucible of practiced ministry. Pastors who had learned to implement their inherited Particular Baptist theological convictions in their own unique context strove to transmit what they had learned to a new generation of pastoral leadership. . . . Ordination sermons were delivered by active practitioners admonishing other ministerial practitioners with the fervor of a shared interest in a divine cause.<sup>5</sup>

It is fruitful to mine Fuller’s ordination sermons to unearth his convictions about the pastoral office, as Fuller’s developed pastoral theology was certainly one hammered out and purified in the crucible of his own ministry experience.

**Gleanings from Andrew Fuller’s Ordination Sermon on  
Acts 11:24, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of  
a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and  
Success of Barnabas”**

Thirty-one of the ordination sermons that Andrew Fuller preached are extant, giving us the largest body of such sermons by a single author in the long eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> These sermons invite the modern reader into the rich and nourishing world of Fuller’s pastoral theology. Fuller’s foundational axiom, “Eminent spirituality is usually attended with eminent usefulness,” is found in the sermon he preached at the ordination of Robert Fawcner, who was being installed as the pastor of Thorn Baptist Church, Bedfordshire, on October 31, 1787.<sup>7</sup> Fuller based his sermon on Acts 11:24, “He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith; and much people was added to the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> His message was entitled, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas.” By analyzing this sermon and drawing additional insight from Fuller’s other ordination sermons, we can more

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<sup>5</sup> Nigel David Wheeler, “Eminent Spirituality and Eminent Usefulness: Andrew Fuller’s (1754–1815) Pastoral Theology in His Ordination Sermons” (PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, 2009), 79–80.

<sup>6</sup> Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> See appendix 1 for the sermon text.

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise specific, all Scripture references are from the *King James Version*.

clearly understand exactly what he meant when he said, “Eminent spirituality is usually attended by eminent usefulness in the ministry.”

### **What Fuller Meant by “Eminent Spirituality”**

In the first half of his sermon, Fuller unpacked what he summarizes as the “eminent spirituality” of Barnabas. This man of eminent spirituality demonstrated three characteristics: he was a good man, he was full of the Holy Spirit, and he lived a life of faith.

First, Barnabas was a good man. Here, Fuller drew attention to the importance of a pastor’s Christian character. Fuller says, “If we would describe one that more than ordinarily shines in piety, meekness and kindness, we know not how to speak of him better to say, with a degree of emphasis, ‘He is a good man.’”<sup>9</sup> Fuller outlined six spheres of influence in which this good character should be valued and practiced by a pastor. First, he spoke of the importance of a pastor’s character at home with his family: “If you walk not closely with God there, you will be ill able to work for him elsewhere.”<sup>10</sup> Second, he mentioned the value of good character with respect to private devotions: “Give yourself up to the word of God and prayer. . . . Beware of neglecting secret prayer. The fire of devotion will go out if it be not kept alive by an habitual dealing with Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Third, Fuller urged good character in all public exercises: “It is hard going in the ministry, without a good degree of spirituality.” He urged Fawcner to minister out of a “love for Christ and the souls of your fellow ministers.”<sup>12</sup> Fourth, Fuller exhorted a valuing of character in the general tenor of one’s temperament: “Be generous and

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<sup>9</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:136.

<sup>10</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:136.

<sup>11</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:137.

<sup>12</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:137.

humane.”<sup>13</sup> Fifth and sixth, he encouraged the pursuit of character and spirituality above worldly greatness and great gifting: “Hundreds of ministers have been ruined by indulging a thirst for the character of the great man, while they have neglected the far superior character of the good man.”<sup>14</sup>

Fuller then described the second component of Barnabas’s eminent spirituality: he was a man full of the Holy Spirit. Fuller emphatically declared, “Oh how necessary is an unction from the Holy One.” He then illustrated six ways the pastor and his ministry will be blessed by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. First, Fuller said this unction “will enable you to enter into the spirit of the gospel and preserve you from destructive errors.” He continued, “He that is full of the Holy Spirit has the contents of the Bible written, as I may say, upon his heart; and thus its sacred pages are easy to be understood, as ‘wisdom is easy to him that understandeth.’”<sup>15</sup> Second, Fuller added, “Being full of the Holy Spirit will give a holy tincture to your meditation and preaching.”<sup>16</sup> His third through sixth points emphasized how the Holy Spirit will shape one’s character so that he will grow into a real man of God: “The Holy Spirit will give a spiritual savour to your conversation. . . . He will teach you how you ought to behave in every department you are called to occupy. . . . In short, it is this that will denominate you a man of God.”<sup>17</sup>

Fuller said that the third component of Barnabas’s eminent spirituality was a life “full of faith.” Fuller explained, “This includes at least the three following ideas: having the mind occupied with divine sentiment; being rooted and grounded in the truth

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<sup>13</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:137.

<sup>14</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:139.

<sup>15</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:139.

<sup>16</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:140.

<sup>17</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:141.

of the gospel; and daily living upon it.”<sup>18</sup> Fuller emphasized that a pastor is first a Christian before he is a minister:

The studying of Divine truth as *preachers* rather than as *Christians*, or, in other words, studying it for the sake of finding out something to say to others, without so much as thinking of profiting our own souls, is a temptation to which we are more than ordinarily exposed. If we studied Divine truths as Christians, our being constantly engaged in the service of God would be friendly to our growth in grace. We should be “like trees planted by the rivers of waters, that bring forth fruit in their season,” and all that we did would be likely to “prosper.” But if we study it only as preachers, it will be the reverse. Our being conversant with the Bible will be like surgeons and soldiers being conversant with the shedding of human blood, till they lose all sensibility concerning it.<sup>19</sup>

Fuller was not the only one to highlight the importance of eminent spirituality in the minister. John Gill, one of the most influential figures of eighteenth-century Particular Baptist life, often emphasized this subject in his own ordination sermons. In Gill’s sermon at the ordination of John Davis in 1754, he stated how important it was for pastors to have had “their eyes enlightened and understandings opened by Christ” so that they would have “spiritual eyes to see treasures” in the Scriptures for their people.<sup>20</sup> In another sermon, Gill stated:

Every Christian ought to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, but most especially the preachers of it—their lights should so shine before men, that they seeing their good works, may glorify their father which is in heaven. The name of God, the ways of Christ, and the truths of the gospel, are blasphemed, and spoken evil of, through the scandalous lives of professors, and especially ministers.<sup>21</sup>

The importance of eminent spirituality can also be seen in a letter that William Carey wrote to Fuller from Serampore in December 1813. Carey’s son Felix had recently volunteered his services in Amboyna, and Carey’s letter expressed a desire that Fuller send someone to help his son: “We are anxious that he should have immediate help from

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<sup>18</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:141.

<sup>19</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:142.

<sup>20</sup> John Gill, “The Doctrine of the Cherubim Opened and Explained,” in *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts in Two Volumes*, vol. 2 (London: George Keith, 1773), 38.

<sup>21</sup> John Gill, “The Duty of a Pastor to his People,” in *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:38.

England: send immediately a pious man, of some experience, but of real solid piety.”<sup>22</sup>

Carey valued piety even above experience in seeking someone to help his son in his mission work.

To conclude, Fuller and his fellow ministers considered eminent spirituality to encompass a pastor’s close walk with God, a life filled with the Spirit, and a mind set on divine things. This close walk with God shapes a man’s character so that he becomes fruitful and useful in his duties as a gospel minister. Nigel Wheeler summarizes what eminent spirituality meant to Fuller:

Included in this first part of the phrase “eminent spirituality” are the related concepts of: the admonition to read and study as a Christian and not as [a] minister for the purpose of having something spiritual to feed the flock, words that described emotions, such as the *heart, holy love, affecting the heart, and feeling*, descriptives such as *intimate communion with Christ, consistent character with the Gospel, approbation of God, spiritual influence, enlightening the mind, piety, goodness, faithfulness, love, spiritual light, unction, presence of Christ, and the mind of Christ*. . . . The preeminent evidence of true spirituality, or piety, in a minister was the reality of a manifest love for God resulting in a corresponding love for souls. And this love, if real, must necessarily be revealed through tangible feelings.<sup>23</sup>

Fuller’s greatest desire was that he and others entering the pastoral office would minister from a place of true spirituality. He knew that the best thing any pastor could do to be an effective and useful pastor was to walk with God. He understood that this close communion with God was the engine room of all effective and useful ministry.

### **What Fuller Meant by “Eminent Usefulness”**

In the final third of Fuller’s sermon at Fawkner’s ordination, Fuller turned from considering the eminent spirituality of Barnabas to his eminent usefulness, which Fuller anchored in Acts 11:24, “And much people was added unto the Lord.” This is

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<sup>22</sup> William Carey, “1813 William Carey Autograph Letter to Andrew Fuller on the Calling of His Son as a Missionary to Amboyna,” Specs Fine Books, accessed February 1, 2023, <https://specs-fine-books.myshopify.com/products/1813-william-carey-autograph-letter-to-andrew-fuller-on-the-calling-of-his-son-as-a-missionary-to-amboyna>.

<sup>23</sup> Wheeler, “Eminent Spirituality and Eminent Usefulness,” 211–12 (emphasis original).

where Fuller laid down what he calls “a rule, which both Scripture and experience will confirm, that eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness.”<sup>24</sup> He wisely qualified this by explaining that the relation between the two is not as simple as mere cause and effect, nor does usefulness always flow in direct proportion to spirituality. Rather, he stressed that God “is not wanting in giving encouragement to what he approves, wherever it is found. Our want of usefulness is often to be ascribed to our want of spirituality, much oftener than to our want of talents.”<sup>25</sup> Fuller gave examples from Scripture and church history as proof of his rule; he listed a series of men of eminent spirituality who were mightily used by God, including Hezekiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Elliot, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, and George Whitefield. He comments, “These were men of both great grace and great gifts.”<sup>26</sup> Fuller’s description of the eminently spiritual man was inextricably linked to the eminent usefulness of that man. God used these men to accomplish meaningful tasks that advanced his kingdom in this world. Notably, all of the examples Fuller provided were people God used to renew evangelical spirituality and promote a new and greater affection for God and the gospel. God used each man as an instrument of spiritual renewal, whether on a small scale or a large scale. These useful men promoted and encouraged truth-rooted affection for Christ in the hearts of others.

As Fuller brought his sermon to a close, he stated that eminent spirituality would contribute to a minister’s usefulness in three main ways. First, he said eminent spirituality “will fire your soul with holy love to Christ and the souls of men; and such a spirit is usually attended with success.” Second, he said, “Eminency in grace will direct your ends to the glory of God and where this is the case, it is usually attended with

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<sup>24</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:143.

<sup>25</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:143.

<sup>26</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:143.

blessing.” Third, Fuller explained that “eminency in grace will enable you *to bear prosperity in your ministry without being lifted up with it; and so contribute to it.*”<sup>27</sup>

Eminent spirituality will preserve one from pride, which hinders usefulness in the ministry. “I am often afraid lest this should be one considerable reason why most of us have no more real success in our work than we have; perhaps it is not safe for us to be much owned of God; perhaps we have not grace enough to bear prosperity.”<sup>28</sup> He concludes with a reminder that

God has frequently been known to succeed men of inferior abilities, when they have been eminent for holiness, while he has blasted others of much superior talents, when that quality has been wanting. Hundreds of ministers, who, on account of their gifts, have promised to be shining characters, have proved the reverse; and all owing to such things as pride, unwatchfulness, carnality, and levity.<sup>29</sup>

Fuller was not the only one at his time to use the language of usefulness to describe ministerial effectiveness. Samuel Pearce, for whom Fuller had great affection, wrote a letter to William Carey in 1796 expressing his conviction that he should stay at home and continue ministering there: “Thrice happy should I be, if the providence of God would open a way for my partaking of your labours, your sufferings, and your pleasures, on this side the eternal world: but all my brethren here are of a mind, that I shall be more useful at home than abroad; and I, though reluctantly, submit.”<sup>30</sup> Notice how Pearce used the word useful to describe ministerial effectiveness. He came to a settled conviction that he would be more useful at home than overseas with Carey. In a letter to his wife sent

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<sup>27</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:144 (emphasis original).

<sup>28</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:144.

<sup>29</sup> Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister,” in *WAF*, 1:143.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, vol. 4 in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 82.

from Dublin in the same year, Pearce wrote of the “prospect of usefulness” in Dublin and of “doors opening for the gospel.”<sup>31</sup>

When John Ryland wished to use a find a word to describe the effectiveness of Fuller’s ministry, he utilized the word “useful” repeatedly. In his introduction to his memoir of Fuller’s life, he wrote, “He endeared himself to his denomination by a long course of most useful labor, by his excellent works on the Socinian, and Deistical controversies, as well as his devotion to the cause of missions, he laid the world under lasting obligation.”<sup>32</sup> Later, he spoke of how Fuller rose to “eminent respectability and usefulness” among the Particular Baptists.<sup>33</sup> Elsewhere, he called Fuller “one of the most useful controversial writers of his time.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Eminent Spirituality and Eminent Usefulness, Fuller’s Foundational Axiom**

When examining the breadth of Fuller’s collection of ordination sermons, it becomes clear that the axiom, “Eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness,” is like a golden thread that draws them all together. It is the source of the river of Fuller’s pastoral theology. For example, in one sermon entitled, “Ministers Appointed to Root Out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” Fuller urged the ordination candidate to “encourage and cultivate *holy tempers and dispositions*. Labour to build up your people in these things. That is not always the best ministry that draws the most followers, but that which does the most good. When I see a company of modest, humble,

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<sup>31</sup> Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce*, 77.

<sup>32</sup> John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Miami, FL: HardPress, 2017), xxiv, Kindle.

<sup>33</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 76.



upright, lovely, diligent, holy people, I see the best evidence of a good minister.”<sup>35</sup> Here, Fuller defined a good ministry as one that fosters Christlike character. In the same sermon, Fuller said, “If you love Christ, you will root up those principles which degrade his dignity and set aside his atonement.”<sup>36</sup> This illuminating statement gives us insight into what drove Fuller’s more polemical writing. His spirituality and love for Christ motivated him to defend Christ’s atonement and honor when he wrote *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* in 1785 and his other apologetic works.

In another sermon entitled, “Affectionate Concern of a Minister for the Salvation of His Hearers,” Fuller stated:

An affectionate concern after their salvation, is one of the most important qualifications for the ministry. . . . This qualification is that without which the greatest gifts, natural and acquired, are nothing as to real usefulness. Genius may amuse, but “love edifieth.” A strong mind and a brilliant imagination may excite their admiration, but this will attract the hearts of the people.<sup>37</sup>

Here there is another clear link between eminent spirituality, seen in a pastor’s love and concern for the salvation of the lost, and his usefulness. Genuine concern and love for the lost would drive evangelistic zeal and be far more useful than the gifts of genius or imagination. Once again, we see how Fuller’s work in mobilizing prayer, evangelism, and missions was driven by his eminent spirituality. This was exemplified in his involvement with the Prayer Call of 1784, the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, and in his tireless work to promote and raise funds for the society and those it served. At the end of this sermon, Fuller stated clearly and seriously, “Personal religion is of the utmost importance to a minister.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” in *WAF*, 1:487 (emphasis original).

<sup>36</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” in *WAF*, 1:487.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Affectionate Concern of a Minister for the Salvation of his Hearers,” in *WAF*, 1:508.

<sup>38</sup> Fuller, “Ministers Appointed to Root out Evil, and to Cultivate Good,” in *WAF*, 1:488.

In another sermon entitled “Ministers Should Be Concerned Not to Be Despised,” Fuller spoke of the importance of genuine spirituality and affectionate feeling of the minister in his preaching ministry:

Beware that you do not preach an unfelt gospel. If you do, it will be seen, and you will be despised. It will be seen that, though you affect to be in earnest, you do not feel; and that you scarcely believe your own doctrine. We may get into a habit of talking for the truth, and pleading for holiness, and yet be dead ourselves; and if so, we shall be sure to be despised.<sup>39</sup>

In “The Nature of the Gospel, and the Manner in Which It Ought to Be Preached,” Fuller encouraged the congregation to remember that “the gospel is a message of love, and therefore it ought to be preached with great affection.”<sup>40</sup>

Fuller also addressed the minister’s sermon preparation and study. He spoke of the essential role of eminent spirituality in the pastor’s life and ministry, especially when preparing to exposit God’s Word for the church:

A spiritual state of mind is the best expositor, and more is discovered with it, in a few verses, than in whole chapters without it. Do not be content with general truth. Study the Scriptures minutely, and for yourself, and pray over your study. This will make it your own; and it will be doubly interesting to yourself and your people, than if you adopt it at second hand. Read and think, not merely as a minister, but as a Christian.<sup>41</sup>

Here we see the convictions that drove Fuller’s preaching ministry for the years he served as pastor at Soham and Kettering. He sought to cultivate that spiritual state of mind in himself that would lead to more affectionate, engaging, and powerful preaching. Indeed, he prayed for this earnestly. In a journal entry for September 5, 1780, he wrote, “I longed, in prayer tonight, to be more useful. O that God would do somewhat by me! Nor is this, I

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Ministers Should Be Concerned Not to Be Despised,” in *WAF*, 1:489.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Nature of the Gospel, and the Manner in Which It Ought to Be Preached,” in *WAF*, 1:496.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Habitual Devotedness to the Ministry,” in *WAF*, 1:507.

trust, from ambition; but from a pure desire of working for God, and the benefit of my fellow sinners.”<sup>42</sup>

### Conclusion

Nigel Wheeler has helpfully summarized his observations on Fuller’s ordination sermons: “Running through every published ordination sermon and sketch of Fuller is the common, prominent, and central thread of thought captured in the phrase, ‘eminent spirituality leads to eminent usefulness.’”<sup>43</sup> Lest it be considered that this is only the reflection of a distant observer of Fuller’s written works, the words of the Kettering deacons and diarist, George Wallis, who worked with Fuller, are insightful. Wallis described Fuller’s ministry as “very affecting and evangelical.”<sup>44</sup> These were weighty terms in Wallis and Fuller’s Day. Fuller’s ministry emphasized the importance of the affections. He called for not just a dry recounting of the truth in his preaching and teaching or by the ministers of his day; rather, he wanted himself and others to feel the gospel they preached, be moved by it, and preach from their own felt response to truth. This seems to emphasize the spirituality of Fuller’s life and ministry. His ministry was affecting and evangelical, that is, it was rooted in truth that looked outward. Evangelism and missions—the progress of the gospel—was at the heart of Fuller’s life and ministry. Eminent spirituality and eminent usefulness, very affecting and evangelical, were the core defining features of the pastoral theology and pastoral ministry of Andrew Fuller.

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<sup>42</sup> Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 81.

<sup>43</sup> Wheeler, “Eminent Spirituality and Eminent Usefulness,” 211.

<sup>44</sup> George Wallis (1775–1869), “Memoirs, etc, of State of Mind, continued,” mss diary (March 15, 1805–June 1, 1817), Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering, July 14, 1811, quoted in Keith Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, 3.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Today's gospel ministers would do well to rediscover Andrew Fuller's emphasis on eminent spirituality in the life of a pastor. Andrew Fuller's whole ministry as a pastor-theologian was driven by his foundational axiom: "Eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness." To demonstrate Fuller's importance to the renewal of the Particular Baptist cause, chapter 1 described the decline that Particular Baptists experienced in the first half of the long eighteenth century and Fuller's assessment of that decline. Fuller maintained that the decline was due to a want for true spirituality among the ministers and Christians in the local churches. He was convicted of the importance of a pastor's own godliness and Christian character—his "eminent spirituality."

Chapter 2 recounted how God used Fuller as an instrument of renewal in the second half of the eighteenth century. We observed how his own eminent spirituality led to eminent usefulness as a pastor, friend, theologian, and mission mobiliser. Having analysed Fuller's assessment of the decline and what he did to work for renewal, chapter 3 then argued that the foundational conviction driving Fuller was his belief that eminent spirituality in a minister leads to eminent usefulness. Using Fuller's flagship ordination sermon on the character and effectiveness of Barnabas, chapter 4 drew out what Fuller meant by eminent spirituality and then eminent usefulness. Fuller believed that genuine godliness in a minister would make him most useful for accomplishing meaningful and fruitful kingdom work. Fuller's emphasis on eminent spirituality and eminent usefulness was shared by other ministers and missionaries who were likewise instrumental in renewing the Particular Baptist cause in the late eighteenth-century renewal.

My greatest hope for this project is that Christian ministers and congregations will rediscover Fuller's foundational axiom and apply it to their lives and service to the kingdom of God. Sometimes it seems like search committees concentrate on giftings rather than character when seeking a new pastor. This can have disastrous and long-lasting effects. We often hear of pastoral failures of character when they are publicized in magazine articles or podcasts, such as *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill*.<sup>1</sup> However, a pastoral failure of character affects the small church just as much as it affects the megachurch. If we would hear Fuller's foundational conviction again, we will look more quickly to pastoral character and godliness as we search for a pastor who can be truly useful in kingdom work.

This thesis could be developed further by exploring on a wider scale the way pastors used the term "useful" to describe ministerial effectiveness in the eighteenth century. My research revealed many instances in which pastors said to be "useful" was what they longed for in ministry. It is a simple word, a practical word, and yet a profound word.

Fuller was a man of eminent spirituality and eminent usefulness. May we discover his foundational axiom again in our day, and may we see a new generation of pastors who are marked by this Holy Spirit-empowered spirituality and usefulness for the kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Listen to the podcast produced by *Christianity Today*, beginning with the first episode, "Who Killed Mars Hill?" See Mike Cospers, "Who Killed Mars Hill?," June 22, 2021, in *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill*, produced by Erik Petrik, podcast, 60:00, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/who-killed-mars-hill/>.

## APPENDIX 1

### ORDINATION SERMON FOR ROBERT FAWKNER, DELIVERED BY ANDREW FULLER

Andrew Fuller delivered this sermon at the ordination of Robert Fawkner, at Thorn, Bedfordshire, on October 31, 1787.<sup>1</sup> The sermon was titled, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas.”

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Fuller, “The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas,” in *Memoirs, Sermons, Etc., WAF*, 1:135–44.

**The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister Illustrated  
by the Character and Success of Barnabas**

*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith; and  
much people was added to the Lord. Acts 11:24*

My dear Brother,

It is a very important work to which you are this day set apart. I feel the difficulty of your situation. You need both counsel and encouragement; I wish I were better able to administer both. In what I may offer, I am persuaded you will allow me to be free; and understand me, not as assuming any authority or superiority over you, but only as saying that to you which I wish to consider as equally addressed to myself.

Out of a variety of topics that might afford a lesson for a Christian minister, my thoughts have turned, on this occasion, upon that of *example*. Example has a great influence upon the human mind; examples from Scripture especially, wherein characters the most illustrious in their day, for gifts, grace, and usefulness, are drawn with the pencil of inspiration, have an assimilating tendency. Viewing these, under a Divine blessing, we form some just conceptions of the nature and importance of our work, are led to reflect upon our own defects, and feel the fire of holy emulation kindling in our bosoms.

The particular example, my brother, which I wish to recommend to your attention, is that of Barnabas, that excellent servant of Christ and companion of the apostle Paul. You will find his character particularly given in the words I have just read.

Were we to examine the life of this great and good man, as related in other parts of Scripture, we should find the character here given him abundantly confirmed. He seems to have been one of that great company who, through the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, submitted to Christ soon after his ascension; and he gave early proof of his love to him, by selling his possessions, and laying the price at the feet of the apostles for the support of his infant cause. As he loved Christ, so he loved his people. He appears to have possessed much of the tender and affectionate, on account of which he was called

“Barnabas—a son of consolation.” Assiduous in discovering and encouraging the first dawnings of God’s work, he was the first person that introduced Saul into the company of the disciples. The next news that we hear of him is in the passage which I have selected. Tidings came to the ears of the church at Jerusalem of the word of the Lord being prosperous at Antioch, in Syria. The church at Jerusalem was the mother church, and felt a concern for others, like that of a tender mother towards her infant offspring. The young converts at Antioch wanted a nursing father; and who so proper to be sent as Barnabas? He goes; and, far from envying the success of others, who had laboured before him, he “was glad to see the grace of God” so evidently appear; “and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” As a preacher, he does not seem to have been equal to the apostle Paul; yet so far was he from caring about being eclipsed by Paul’s superior abilities, that he went in search of him, and brought him to Antioch, to assist him in the work of the Lord. It may well be said of such a character, that he was a “good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith.” Oh that we had more such ministers in the church at this day! Oh that we ourselves were like him! Might we not hope, if that were the case, that, according to God’s usual manner of working, more *people would be added to the Lord?*

There are three things, we see, which are said of Barnabas in a way of commendation: he was “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith.” Thus far he is held up for our example a fourth is added, concerning the effects which followed; “and much people was added unto the Lord.” This seems to be held up for our encouragement. Permit me, my dear brother, to request your candid attention, while I attempt to review these great qualities in Barnabas, and by every motive to enforce them upon you.

**I. He was a good man.** It were easy to prove the necessity of a person being a good man, in order to his properly engaging in the work of the ministry: Christ would not commit his sheep but to one that loved him. But on this remark I shall not enlarge. I have



no reason to doubt, my brother, but that God has given you an understanding to know him that is true, and a heart to love him in sincerity; I trust, therefore, such an attempt, on this occasion, is needless. Nor does it appear to me to be the meaning of the evangelist. It is not barely meant of Barnabas that he was a *regenerate* man, though that is implied; but it denotes that he was *eminently* good. We use the word so in common conversation. If we would describe one that more than ordinarily shines in piety, meekness, and kindness, we know not how to speak of him better than to say, with a degree of emphasis, He is a *good* man. After this eminence in goodness, brother, may it be your concern, and mine, daily to aspire!

Perhaps, indeed, we may have sometimes heard this epithet used with a sneer. Persons who take pleasure in treating others with contempt will frequently, with a kind of proud pity, speak in this manner: Aye, such a one is a *good* man; leaving it implied that goodness is but an indifferent qualification, unless it be accompanied with greatness. But these things ought not to be. The apostle Paul did not value himself upon those things wherein he differed from other Christians; but upon that which he possessed in common with them—charity, or Christian love. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity; I am nothing.”

My dear brother, value the character of a good man in all the parts of your employment; and, above all, in those things which the world counts great and estimable. More particularly,

1. Value it *at home in your family*. If you walk not closely with God there, you will be ill able to work for him elsewhere. You have lately become the head of a family. Whatever charge it shall please God, in the course of your life, to place under your care, I

trust it will be your concern to recommend Christ and the gospel to them, walk circumspectly before them, constantly worship God with them, offer up secret prayer for them, and exercise a proper authority over them. There is a sort of religious gossiping which some ministers have indulged to their hurt; loitering about perpetually at the houses of their friends, and taking no delight in their own. Such conduct, in a minister and master of a family, must, of necessity, root out all family order, and, to a great degree, family worship; and, instead of endearing him to his friends, it only exposes him to their just censure. Perhaps they know not how to be so plain as to tell him of it at their own houses; but they will think the more, and speak of it, it is likely, to each other, when he is gone. I trust, my brother, that none of your domestic connexions will have to say when you are gone, He was loose and careless in his conduct, or sour and churlish in his temper; but rather, *He was a good man.*

2. Value this character in your *private retirements*. Give yourself up to “the word of God, and to prayer.” The apostle charged Timothy, saying, “Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them;” or, “be thou *in* them.” But this will never be, without a considerable share of the *good man*. Your heart can never be *in* those things which are foreign to its prevailing temper; and if your heart is not in your work, it will be a poor lifeless business indeed. We need not fear exhausting the Bible, or dread a scarcity of Divine subjects. If our hearts are but kept in unison with the spirit in which the Bible was written, every thing we meet with there will be interesting. The more we read, the more interesting it will appear; and the more we know, the more we shall perceive there is to be known. Beware also, brother, of neglecting secret *prayer*. The fire of devotion will go out if it be not kept alive by an habitual dealing with Christ. Conversing with men and things may brighten our gifts and parts; but it is conversing with God that must brighten our graces. Whatever ardour we may feel in our public work, if this is wanting, things cannot be right, nor can they in such a train come to a good issue.

3. Value it in your *public exercises*. It is hard going on in the work of the ministry, without a good degree of spirituality; and yet, considering the present state of human nature, we are in the greatest danger of the contrary. Allow me, brother, to mention two things in particular, each of which is directly opposite to that spirit which I am attempting to recommend. One is, an *assumed earnestness*, or *forced zeal*, in the pulpit, which many weak hearers may mistake for the enjoyment of God. But though we may put on violent emotions—may smite with the hand, and stamp with the foot—if we are destitute of a genuine feeling sense of what we deliver, it will be discerned by judicious hearers, as well as by the Searcher of hearts, and will not fail to create disgust. If, on the contrary, we feel and realize the sentiments we deliver, emotions and actions will be the natural expressions of the heart; and this will give weight to the doctrines, exhortations, or reproofs which we inculcate; what we say will come with a kind of Divine authority to the consciences, if not to the hearts of the hearers. The other is, being under the influence of *low and selfish motives* in the exercise of our work. This is a temptation against which we have especial reason to watch and pray. It is right, my brother, for you to be diligent in your public work; to be instant in season and out of season; to preach the gospel not only at Thorn, but in the surrounding villages, wherever a door is opened for you: but while you are thus engaged, let it not be from motives of policy, merely to increase your auditory, but from love to Christ and the souls of your fellow sinners. It is this only that will endure reflection in a dying hour. The apostle Paul was charged by some of the Corinthian teachers with being *crafty*, and with having *caught the Corinthians with guile*; but he could say, in reply to all such insinuations, in behalf of himself and his fellow labourers, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”

4. Value it in the *general tenor of your behaviour*. Cultivate a meek, modest, peaceful, and friendly temper. Be generous and humane. Prove by your spirit and conduct that you are a lover of all mankind. To men in general, but especially to the poor and the afflicted, *be pitiful, be courteous*. It is this, my brother, that will recommend the gospel you proclaim. Without this, could you preach with the eloquence of an angel, you may expect that no good end will be answered.

5. Prize the character of the good man *above worldly greatness*. It is not sinful for a minister, any more than another man, to possess property; but to aspire after it is unworthy of his sacred character. Greatness, unaccompanied with goodness, is valued as nothing by the great God. Kings and emperors, where that is wanting, are but great “beasts, horned beasts,” pushing one at another. When Sennacherib vaunted against the church of God, that he would “enter the forest of her Carmel, and cut down her tall cedars,” the daughter of Zion is commanded to *despise* him. God speaks of him as we should speak of a buffalo, or even of an ass: “I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.” Outward greatness, when accompanied with goodness, may be a great blessing; yet, even then, it is the latter, and not the former, that denominates the true worth of a character. Once more,—

6. Value it *above mental greatness*, or greatness in gifts and parts. It is not wrong to cultivate gifts; on the contrary, it is our duty so to do. But, desirable as these are, they are not to be compared with goodness. “Covet earnestly the best gifts,” says the apostle, “*and yet show I unto you a more excellent way;*” viz. *charity*, or *love*. If we improve in gifts and not in grace, to say the least, it will be useless, and perhaps dangerous, both to ourselves and others. To improve in gifts, that we may be the better able to discharge our work, is laudable; but if it be for the sake of popular applause, we may expect a blast. Hundreds of ministers have been ruined by indulging a thirst for the

character of the *great* man, while they have neglected the far superior character of the *good* man.

Another part of the character of Barnabas was that

**II. He was full of the Holy Spirit.** The *Holy Spirit* sometimes denotes his extraordinary gifts, as in Acts 19, where the apostle Paul put the question to some believers in Christ whether they had received the Holy Spirit; but here it signifies his indwelling and ordinary operations, or what is elsewhere called “an unction from the Holy One.” This, though more common than the other, is far more excellent. Its fruits, though less brilliant, are abundantly the most valuable. To be able to surmount a difficulty by Christian patience is a greater thing in the sight of God than to remove a mountain. Every work of God bears some mark of Godhead, even a thistle, or a nettle; but there are some of his works which bear a peculiar likeness to his holy moral character: such were the minds of men and angels in their original state. This will serve to illustrate the subject in hand. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit are a communication of his *power*; but in his dwelling in the saints, and the ordinary operations of his grace, he communicates his own *holy nature*; and this it was of which Barnabas was full. To be full of the Holy Spirit is to be full of the *dove*, as I may say; or full of those fruits of the Spirit mentioned by the apostle to the Galatians; namely, “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness.”

To be sure, the term *full* is not here to be understood in an unlimited sense; not in so ample a sense as when it is applied to Christ. He was filled with the Spirit *without* measure, but we *in* measure. The word is doubtless to be understood in a comparative sense, and denotes as much as that he was habitually under his holy influence. A person that is greatly under the influence of the love of this world is said to be *drunken* with its cares or pleasures. In allusion to something like this, the apostle exhorts that we “be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but *filled* with the Spirit.” The word “filled,” here,

is very expressive; it denotes, I apprehend, being *overcome*, as it were, with the holy influences and fruits of the blessed Spirit. How necessary is all this, my brother, in your work! Oh how necessary is “an unction from the Holy One!”

1. It is this that will enable you to *enter into the spirit of the gospel, and preserve you from destructive errors concerning it*. Those who have an unction from the Holy One are said to “know all things; and the anointing which they have received abideth in them, and they need not that any man teach them, but as the same anointing teacheth them all things, and is truth, and is no lie.” We shall naturally fall in with the dictates of that spirit of which we are full. It is for want of this, in a great measure, that the Scriptures appear strange, and foreign, and difficult to be understood. He that is full of the Holy Spirit has the contents of the Bible written, as I may say, upon his heart; and thus its sacred pages are easy to be understood, as “wisdom is easy to him that understandeth.”

It is no breach of charity to say, that if the professors of Christianity had more of the Holy Spirit of God in their hearts, there would be a greater harmony among them respecting the great truths which he has revealed. The rejection of such doctrines as the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the total depravity of mankind, the proper Deity and atonement of Christ, justification by faith in his name, the freeness and sovereignty of grace, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, may easily be accounted for upon this principle. If we are destitute of the Holy Spirit, we are blind to the loveliness of the Divine character, and destitute of any true love to God in our hearts; and if destitute of this, we shall not be able to see the reasonableness of that law which requires love to him with all the heart; and then, of course, we shall think lightly of the nature of those offences committed against him; we shall be naturally disposed to palliate and excuse our want of love to him, yea, and even our positive violations of his law; it will seem hard, very hard indeed, for such little things as these to be punished with everlasting destruction. And

now, all this admitted, we shall naturally be blind to the necessity and glory of salvation by Jesus Christ. If sin is so trifling an affair, it will seem a strange and incredible thing that God should become incarnate to atone for it; and hence we shall be very easily persuaded to consider Christ as only a good man, who came into the world to set us a good example; or, at least, that he is not equal with the Father. The freeness and sovereignty of grace also, together with justification by imputed righteousness, will be a very strange sound in our ears. Like the Jews, we shall “go about to establish our own righteousness, and shall not submit to the righteousness of God.” It will seem equally strange and incredible to be told that we are by nature utterly unfit for the kingdom of God; that, therefore, we *must* be born again; that we are so bad that we cannot even come to Christ for life, except the Father draw us; yea, and that our best doings after all, are unworthy of God’s notice. It will be no wonder if, instead of receiving these unwelcome and humiliating doctrines, we should coincide with those writers and preachers who think more favourably of our condition, and the condition of the world at large; who either deny eternal punishment to exist, or represent men in general as being in little or no danger of it. And having avowed these sentiments, it will then become necessary to compliment their abettors (including ourselves in the number) as persons of a more rational and liberal way of thinking than other people.

My dear brother, of all things, be this your prayer, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!” If once we sink into such a way of performing our public work as not to depend on his enlightening and enlivening influences, we *may* go on, and probably *shall* go on, from one degree of evil to another. Knowing how to account for the operations of our own minds, without imputing them to a Divine agency, we shall be inclined, in this manner, to account for the operations in the mind of others; and so, with numbers in the present age, may soon call in question even “whether there be any Holy Spirit.”

2. Being full of the Holy Spirit will give a *holy tincture to your meditation and preaching*. There is such a thing as the mind being habitually under the influence of Divine things, and retaining so much of a savour of Christ as that Divine truths shall be viewed and expressed, as I may say, in their own language. Spiritual things will be spiritually discerned, and if spiritually discerned, will be spiritually communicated. There is more in our *manner* of thinking and speaking upon Divine truth than perhaps, at first sight, we are aware of. A great part of the phraseology of Scripture is by some accounted unfit to be addressed to a modern ear; and is, on this account, to a great degree laid aside, even by those who profess to be satisfied with the sentiments. Whatever may be said in defence of this practice, in a very few instances, such as those where words in a translation are become obsolete, or convey a different idea from what they did at the time of being translated, I am satisfied the practice in general is very pernicious. There are many sermons, that cannot fairly be charged with untruth, which yet have a tendency to lead off the mind from the simplicity of the gospel. If such Scripture terms, for instance, as “holiness, godliness, grace, believers, saints, communion with God,” &c., should be thrown aside as savouring too much of cant and enthusiasm, and such terms as, *morality, virtue, religion, good men, happiness of mind, &c.*, substituted in their room, it will have an amazing effect upon the hearers. If such preaching is the gospel, it is the gospel heathenized, and will tend to heathenize the minds of those who deal in it. I do not mean to object to the use of these latter terms, in their place; they are some of them Scriptural terms: what I object to is putting them in the place of others, when discoursing upon evangelical subjects. To be sure, there is a way of handling Divine subjects after this sort that is very clever and very ingenious; and a minister of such a stamp may commend himself, by his ingenuity, to many hearers: but, after all, God’s truths are never so acceptable and savoury to a *gracious* heart as when clothed in their own native phraseology. The more you are filled, my brother, with an unction from the Holy One,



the greater relish you will possess for that savoury manner of conveying truth which is so plentifully exemplified in the Holy Scriptures. Further,

3. It is this that will make the doctrines you preach, and the duties you inculcate, seem *fitted in your lips*. I allude to a saying of the wise man: “The words of the wise are pleasant, if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.” It is expected that there should be an agreement between the character of the speaker and the things which are spoken. “Excellent speech becometh not a fool.” Exhortations to holiness come with an ill grace from the lips of one who indulges himself in iniquity. The opposite of this is what I mean by the doctrines and duties of religion being *fitted in your lips*. It is this that will make your face shine, when you come forth in your public labours, like the face of Moses when he had been conversing with God in the holy mount.

4. It is this that will give *a spiritual savour to your conversation in your visits to your friends*. Though religious visits may be abused; yet you know, brother, the necessity there is for them, if you would ascertain the spiritual condition of those to whom you preach. There are many faults also that you may discover in individuals which it would be unhandsome, as well as unfriendly, to expose in a pointed manner in the pulpit, which nevertheless ought not to be passed by unnoticed. Here is work for your private visits; and, in proportion as you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will possess a spirit of love and faithfulness, which is absolutely necessary to successful reproof. It is in our private visits also that we can be free with our people, and they with us. Questions may be asked and answered, difficulties solved, and the concerns of the soul discussed. Paul taught the Ephesians, not only publicly, but “from house to house.” Now it is being full of the Holy Spirit that will give a spiritual savour to all this conversation. It will be as the holy anointing oil on Aaron’s garments, which diffused a savour on all around him.

5. This will also teach you *how you ought to behave yourself in every department you are called to occupy*. It will serve instead of ten thousand rules; and all rules without it will be of no account. This it is that will teach you to be of a meek, mild, peaceful, humble spirit. It will make such a spirit be natural to you. “As touching brotherly love,” said the apostle to the Thessalonians, “ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”

6. In short, it is this that will denominate you *the man of God*. Such was Barnabas, and such, my brother, was your predecessor, whose memory is dear to many of us;\* and such, according to all that I have heard, was his predecessor, whose memory is equally dear to many here present.† Each, in his day, was a burning and shining light; but they shine here no more. May you, my brother, and each of us, be followers of them, as they also were of Christ!

Another part of the character of Barnabas is,

**III. He was full of faith.** It may be difficult to ascertain with precision the real meaning and extent of this term; but, I should think, in this connexion it includes, at least, the three following ideas:—having the mind occupied with Divine sentiment; being rooted and grounded in the truth of the gospel, and daily living upon it. The first of these ideas distinguished him from those characters whose minds are void of principle; the next, from such as are always hovering upon the borders of scepticism; and the last, from those who, though they have no manner of doubts about the truth of the doctrines of the gospel, yet scarcely ever, if at all, feel their vital influence upon their hearts and lives. Let us review each of these a little more particularly.

1. His mind was *well occupied, or stored with Divine sentiment*. How necessary is this to a gospel minister! It is to be feared that many young men have rushed into the work of the Lord without any decided principles of their own; yea, and have not

only begun in such a state of mind, but have continued so all through their lives. Alas! what can the churches expect from such characters? What can such a void produce? How can we feed others with knowledge and understanding if we ourselves are destitute of them? To say the least, such ministers will be but “unprofitable servants.” But this is not all; a minister that is not inured to think for himself is constantly exposed to every false sentiment, or system, that happens to be presented to him. We sometimes hear of a person *changing his sentiments*; and, doubtless, in many cases it is just and right he should change them: but there are cases in which that mode of speaking is very improper; for, in reality, some persons have no sentiments of their own to change; they have only changed the sentiments of some one great man for those of another.

2. He had a *firm persuasion of the truth of that gospel which he preached to others*. He was rooted and grounded in the gospel. The great controversy of that day was whether the gospel was true; whether Jesus was the Messiah; whether he, who so lately expired on the cross, was the Son of God; and whether his death was the way to obtain eternal life. There were great temptations for a person who should view these things through a medium of sense to think otherwise. The popular opinion went against it. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Those who adhered to the gospel, thereby exposed themselves to cruel persecutions. But Barnabas “was full of faith;” he was decidedly on the Lord’s side; he “believed on the Son of God,” and had the “witness” of the truth of his gospel “within himself.”

Preaching the gospel is bearing a *testimony* for God; but we shall never be able to do this to any good purpose, if we be always hesitating and indulging a sceptical disposition. There is no need of a dogmatical, overbearing temper; but there is need of being rooted and grounded in the truths of God. “Be not carried about,” said the apostle to the Hebrews, “with strange doctrines: it is a good thing that the heart be established

with grace.” But he elsewhere condemns the character of those who are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

3. That gospel which he preached to others *he himself lived upon*. “The word preached,” we are told, “did not profit some, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.” This will equally hold good in the case of the preacher as of the hearer. If we mix not faith with the doctrine we deliver, it will not profit us. Whatever abilities we may possess, and of whatever use we may be made to others, unless we can say, in some sort, with the apostle John, “That which we have seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that declare we unto you,” our own souls may, notwithstanding, everlastingly perish! This is a very serious matter, and well deserves our attention as ministers. Professors in the age of Barnabas might be under greater temptations than we are to question whether Jesus was the true Messiah: but we are under greater temptations than they were of resting in a mere implicit assent to the Christian religion, without realizing and living upon its important truths.

The studying of Divine truth as *preachers* rather than as *Christians*, or, in other words, studying it for the sake of finding out something to say to others, without so much as thinking of profiting our own souls, is a temptation to which we are more than ordinarily exposed. If we studied Divine truths as Christians, our being constantly engaged in the service of God would be friendly to our growth in grace. We should be “like trees planted by the rivers of waters, that bring forth fruit in their season,” and all that we did would be likely to “prosper.” But if we study it only as preachers, it will be the reverse. Our being conversant with the Bible will be like surgeons and soldiers being conversant with the shedding of human blood, till they lose all sensibility concerning it. I believe it is a fact that, where a preacher is wicked, he is generally the most hardened against conviction of any character whatever. Happy will it be for us if, like Barnabas, we

are “full of faith” in that Saviour whom we recommend—in that gospel which it is our employment to proclaim.

**IV. We now come to the last part of the subject, which is held up by way of encouragement: And much people was added unto the Lord.** When our ministry is blessed to the conversion of sinners, to the bringing them off from their connexion with sin itself to a vital union with Christ; when our congregations are filled, not merely with professors of religion, but with sound believers; when such believers come forward and offer themselves willingly for communion, saying, “We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you;” then it may be said that “much people is added unto the Lord.” The connexion between such additions, and eminency in grace and holiness in a minister, deserve our serious attention.

I think it may be laid down as a rule, which both Scripture and experience will confirm, that *eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness*. I do not mean to say our usefulness depends upon our spirituality, as an effect depends upon its cause; nor yet that it is always in proportion to it. God is a Sovereign; and frequently sees proper to convince us of it, in variously bestowing his blessing on the means of grace. But yet he is not wanting in giving encouragement to what he approves, wherever it is found. Our want of usefulness is often to be ascribed to our want of spirituality, much oftener than to our want of talents. God has frequently been known to succeed men of inferior abilities, when they have been eminent for holiness, while he has blasted others of much superior talents, when that quality has been wanting. Hundreds of ministers, who, on account of their gifts, have promised to be shining characters, have proved the reverse; and all owing to such things as pride, unwatchfulness, carnality, and levity.

Eminency in grace, my brother, will contribute to your success in three ways:—

1. It will fire your soul *with holy love to Christ and the souls of men*; and such a spirit is usually attended with success. I believe you will find that, in almost all the great works which God has wrought in any period of time, he has honoured men of this character, by making them his instruments. In the midst of a sore calamity upon the murmuring Israelites, when God was inclined to show mercy, it was by the means of his servant Aaron running with a censer of fire in his hand, and standing between the living and the dead! The great reformation that was brought about in the days of Hezekiah was by the instrumentality of a man “who wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God;” and then it follows, “and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, *he did it with all his heart, and prospered.*”

There was another great reformation in the Jewish church, about the time of their return from Babylon. One of the chief instruments in this work was Ezra, “a ready scribe in the law of his God”—a man who had “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments”—a man who “fasted and prayed at the river Ahava,” previously to his great undertaking—a man who was afterwards “sorely astonished, and in heaviness, and would eat no meat, nor drink water, but fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, on account of the transgressions of the people.” Another great instrument in this work was Nehemiah, a man that devoted himself wholly to the service of God and his people, labouring night and day, and was not to be seduced by the intrigues of God’s adversaries, nor yet intimidated by their threatenings; but persevered in his work till it was finished, closing his labours with this solemn prayer and appeal, “Think upon me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”

Time would fail me to speak of all the great souls, both inspired and uninspired, whom the King of kings has delighted to honour: of Paul, and Peter, and their companions; of Wickliff, and Luther, and Calvin, and many others at the Reformation; of

Elliot, and Edwards, and Brainerd, and Whitefield, and hundreds more whose names are held in deserved esteem in the church of God. These were men of God; men who had great grace, as well as gifts; whose hearts burned in love to Christ and the souls of men. They looked upon their hearers as their Lord had done upon Jerusalem, and wept over them. In this manner they delivered their messages; “and much people were added unto the Lord.”

2. Eminency in grace will *direct your ends to the glory of God, and the welfare of men’s souls*; and where this is the case, it is usually attended with a blessing. These are ends which God himself pursues; and if we pursue the same, we are “labourers together with God,” and may hope for his blessing to attend our labours; but if we pursue separate and selfish ends, we walk contrary to God, and may expect God to walk contrary to us. Whatever apparent success may attend the labours of a man whose ends are evil, all is to be suspected; either the success is not genuine, or, if it be, it is not in a way of blessing upon him, nor shall it turn out, at last, to his account. It must be an inexpressible satisfaction, brother, to be able to say as the primitive ministers and apostles did: “James, a servant of God—Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ—We seek not yours, but you.”

3. Eminency in grace will enable you to *bear prosperity in your ministry without being lifted up with it; and so contribute towards it*. It is written of Christ, in prophecy, “He shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall *bear* the glory.” He does bear it indeed; but to bear glory without being elated is no easy thing for us. I am often afraid lest this should be one considerable reason why most of us have no more real success in our work than we have; perhaps it is not safe for us to be much owned of God; perhaps we have not grace enough to bear prosperity.

My dear brother, permit me to conclude with a word or two of serious advice. First, “Watch over your own soul, as well as the souls of your people.” Do not forget that ministers are peculiarly liable, while they keep the vineyard of others, to neglect their

own. Further, “Know your own weakness, and depend upon Christ’s all-sufficiency.” Your work is great, your trials may be many; but let not your heart be discouraged. Remember what was said to the apostle Paul, “my grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness;” and the reflection which he makes upon it, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” Finally, *Be often looking to the end of your course, and viewing yourself as giving an account of your stewardship.* We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and give account of the deeds done in the body. Perhaps there is no thought more solemn than this, more suitable to be kept in view in all our undertakings, more awakening in a thoughtless hour, or more cheering to an upright heart.

I have only to request, my dear brother, that you will excuse the freedom of this plain address. I have not spoken so much to instruct you in things which you know not, as to remind and impress you with things which you already know. The Lord bless you, and grant that the solemnities of this day may ever be remembered with satisfaction, both by you and your people!



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## ABSTRACT

### “EMINENT SPIRITUALITY AND EMINENT USEFULNESS”: ANDREW FULLER’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REVITALIZATION OF THE PARTICULAR BAPTISTS IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023  
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Andrew Fuller was convinced that eminent spirituality in a minister would usually be attended with eminent usefulness in the ministry. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and argues that this foundational conviction drove Fuller and made him an effective instrument of renewal in Particular Baptist life in the long eighteenth century. Chapter 2 outlines the decline experienced by Particular Baptist churches in England in the eighteenth century and Fuller’s assessment of the reasons for this decline. Chapter 3 explores Fuller’s instrumental role in the renewal experienced in these same churches during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. Chapter 4 describes in greater detail the undergirding convictions that made Fuller so effective by examining his pastoral theology as revealed in a sermon he preached at the 1787 ordination of Robert Fawcner. Chapter 5 concludes by recapitulating why Fuller’s foundational convictions on pastoral ministry need to be heard again today.

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