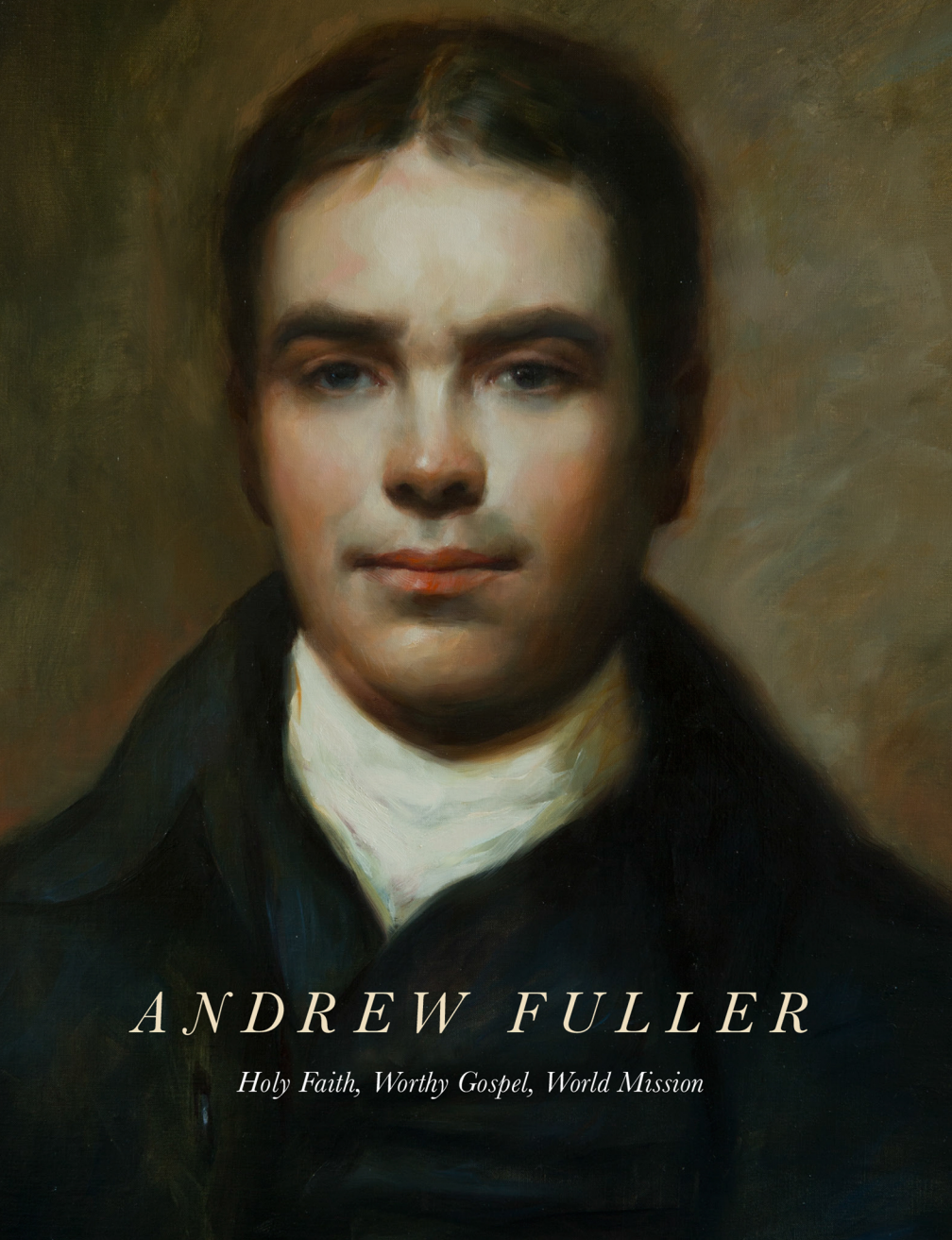


Foreword by Michael A. G. Haykin

JOHN PIPER



ANDREW FULLER

Holy Faith, Worthy Gospel, World Mission

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ANDREW FULLER

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Foreword by Michael A. G. Haykin

Andrew Fuller: Holy Faith, Worthy Gospel, World Mission

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Foreword

Near the beginning of the funeral sermon that John Ryland Jr. (1753–1825) preached for Andrew Fuller in 1815, Ryland described Fuller as “perhaps the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to our [i.e., the Calvinistic Baptist] denomination.”¹ Although Fuller was Ryland’s closest friend and confidant, Ryland’s judgment is by no means skewed. Joseph Belcher, the editor of the standard nineteenth-century edition of Fuller’s collected works, believed that those works would “go down to posterity side by side with the immortal works of the elder president Edwards [i.e., Jonathan Edwards Sr.],”² while Charles Haddon Spurgeon described Fuller as “the greatest theologian” of his century.³ And in an allusion to

1. John Ryland Jr., *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ No Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life* (London: W. Button & Son, 1815), 2–3. Ryland went on to write the classic study of Fuller’s life: *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller* (London: W. Button & Son, 1816). The same publisher published a second edition of this biography in 1818.

2. “Preface to the Complete American Edition,” in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. Joseph Belcher, 3 vols. (1845; repr., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1988), 1:viii.

3. Quoted in Gilbert Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: Carey, 1942), 127.

his weighty theological influence, the nineteenth-century Welsh author David Phillips called Fuller the “elephant of Kettering.”⁴

Despite these glowing tributes to Fuller as a theologian, come the twentieth century, he was largely forgotten. There were only two biographies of him during this entire period, those of Gilbert Laws and Arthur H. Kirkby. Neither was a major study, and Kirkby’s was but a booklet.⁵ With the advent of the present century, however, there has been a veritable renaissance of scholarly and popular interest in Fuller and his theological perspectives.⁶ And in this renaissance, this essay by Dr. John Piper provides those interested in Fuller with a unique perspective. A New Testament scholar by training, Piper has devoted the bulk of his ministry to the regular exposition of the Scriptures in the context of the local church. He has an abiding interest in church history, having been exposed, at an early stage in his walk with God, to the riches of the writings of Jonathan Edwards, who also deeply shaped Fuller, and those of C. S. Lewis. And for many years, at the annual midwinter Desiring God Conference for pastors, Piper would give a paper dealing with a major figure from church history.⁷ I was fascinated to learn that in 2007

4. David Phillips, *Memoir of the Life, Labors, and Extensive Usefulness of the Rev. Christmas Evans* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1843), 74.

5. Laws, *Andrew Fuller*; Arthur H. Kirkby, *Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)* (London: Independent, 1961).

6. For an overview of this resurgence of interest, see Nathan A. Finn, “The Renaissance in Andrew Fuller Studies: A Bibliographic Essay,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 44–61.

7. Many of these have been published in Crossway’s series *The Swans Are Not Silent*.

he had decided to speak on Fuller. And as the following study reveals, Piper clearly regards Fuller as having been a significant “game changer” in the history of God’s people. As Piper stresses, one key area of Fuller’s great impact is the globalization of Christianity: Fuller provides the pioneers of the modern missionary movement with a robust theology of missions that was hammered out in the context of theological controversy with hyper-Calvinism and Sandemanianism.

While Fuller excelled as an apologist, he was also a gifted expositor of Scripture and even wrote a biographical memoir of his close friend Samuel Pearce of Birmingham, who died in 1799 at the age of thirty-three. Modeled after Jonathan Edwards’s life of David Brainerd, this memoir recounted the life of one whom Fuller regarded as a sterling model of evangelical and mission-minded piety. Through the medium of Fuller’s book, Pearce’s extraordinary passion for Christ—which led to his being labeled the “seraphic Pearce” by contemporaries—and his zeal for missions had a powerful impact on his generation, nearly as much as Fuller’s formal treatises on missions. One London diarist noted in 1805 that he had been reading Fuller’s memoir of Pearce, “that truly eminent and pious man.” It led the writer to cry out, “Oh that I had but a double portion of his spirit, that I may be as useful, as zealous, as active, as diligent, as pious, as affectionate, as worthy of imitation, as fit for glory as he was!” May this be the

reaction of the reader of this little book on Fuller. May it not only inform the mind, but also enflame the heart!⁸

Michael A. G. Haykin,
Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary;
Director, The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies

8. For more recent studies, see Laws, *Andrew Fuller*; Kirkby, *Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*; and Phil Roberts, “Andrew Fuller,” in Timothy George and David S. Dockery, eds., *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 121–39. See also two very fine unpublished theses on Fuller: Doyle L. Young, “The Place of Andrew Fuller in the Developing Modern Missions Movement” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); Thomas Kennedy Ascol, “The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989). Also see the excellent study by E. F. Clipsham, “Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 20 (1963–1964): 99–114, 146–54, 214–25, 268–76.

An Andrew Fuller Chronology

Compiled by Ian Hugh Clary

- 1754 February 6: born in Wicken, Cambridgeshire
Jonathan Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* published
- 1761 Moved to Soham with family
- 1769 November: Conversion
- 1770 Baptized
Joined Particular Baptist church in Soham, pastored by John Eve (d. 1782)
- 1775 May 3: Ordained pastor of church in Soham
- 1776 Married Sarah Gardiner of Burwell, Cambridgeshire
- 1782 October: Moved to Kettering to pastor the Particular Baptist church
- 1784 June: Northamptonshire Association issued the "Call to Prayer"
- 1785 *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* published
- 1792 August 23: Wife Sarah died
October: Particular Baptist Society for Propagating of the Gospel among the Heathen formed, later to be called the Baptist Missionary Society; Fuller appointed as its first secretary

12 *An Andrew Fuller Chronology*

- 1793 *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared as to Their Moral Tendency* published
June: William Carey, his family, and John Thomas sent to India by the Baptist Missionary Society
- 1794 December 30: Married Ann Coles of Ampthill, Bedfordshire
- 1798 Awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Princeton
- 1799 *The Gospel Its Own Witness* published
The first of five fund-raising trips to Scotland
- 1805 Awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Yale
- 1810 *Strictures on Sandemanianism* published
- 1811 John Keen Hall appointed as Fuller's assistant
- 1815 May 7: Died in Kettering

Chapter One

A Mind for Modern Missions

Andrew Fuller's impact on history, by the time Jesus returns, may very well be far greater and different than it is now. My assessment at this point is that his primary impact on history has been the impetus that his life and thought gave to modern missions, specifically through the Baptist Missionary Society's sending of William Carey to India in 1793 with the support of Fuller, the society's first secretary. That historical moment—the sending of William Carey and his team—marked the opening of the modern missionary movement.

The Unleashing of Modern Missions

William Carey was the morning star of modern missions. Between 1793 and 1865, a missionary movement never before seen in the history of the world reached virtually all the coastlands on earth. Then, in 1865, Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission, and from 1865 until

1934, another wave of missionary activity was released so that by 1974 virtually all the inlands—all the geographic countries of the world—were reached with the gospel. In 1934, Cameron Townsend founded Wycliffe Bible Translators, which focused not on geographic areas or political states but on people groups with distinct languages and dialects and cultures—and gradually the church awakened, especially at the Lausanne Congress in 1974, to the biblical reality of “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9; cf. 7:9)—and the missionary focus of the church shifted from unreached *geography* to the unreached *peoples* of the world.

We are in the midst of this third era of modern missions. Today the great reality, as documented in Philip Jenkins’s *The Next Christendom*,¹ is that the center of gravity in missions is moving away from Europe and the United States to the South and East. Places we once considered mission fields are now centers of Christian influence and are major missionary-sending forces in the world.²

Andrew Fuller’s Impact

You won’t read it in the secular history books or hear it on the nightly news, but judged by almost any standard, this

1. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

2. Andrew Walls would view it a little differently than Jenkins: “While some scholars such as Philip Jenkins emphasize a shift of power from Western churches to those south of the equator, Walls sees instead a new polycentrism: the riches of a hundred places learning from each other.” Tim Stafford, “Historian Ahead of His Time,” *Christianity Today* 51, no. 2 (February 2007): 89.

modern missionary movement—the spread of the Christian faith to every country and almost all the peoples of the world—is the most important historical development in the last two hundred years. Stephen Neill, in the conclusion to his *History of Christian Missions*, wrote,

The cool and rational eighteenth century [which ended with William Carey's departure for India] was hardly a promising seedbed for Christian growth; but out of it came a greater outburst of Christian missionary enterprise than had been seen in all the centuries before.³

So how did it come about that the “cool and rational” eighteenth century gave birth to the greatest missionary movement in world history—a movement that continues to this day, which, if you're willing, *you* can be a part of? God's ways are higher than our ways, and his judgments are unfathomable and inscrutable (Rom. 11:33). More factors led to this great movement than any human can know. All I want to do is document one of them—just one of ten thousand things God did to unleash this great Christ-exalting, gospel-advancing, church-expanding, evil-confronting, Satan-conquering, culture-transforming, soul-saving, hell-robbing, Christian-refreshing, truth-intensifying missionary movement.⁴

3. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin, 1964), 571.

4. I use the terms *Christian-refreshing* and *truth-intensifying* because in Andrew Fuller's life, there is a reciprocal relationship between spiritual life and biblical truth, on the one hand, and missions, on the other hand. In one direction, spiritual life and biblical truth give rise to missions. And in the other direction, engagement in the missionary enterprise awakens and sustains new levels of spiritual life and sharpens and deepens and intensifies our grasp of biblical truth. I will focus on the first, but here are some glimpses into the effect missions had on Fuller's life. On July 18, 1794, he wrote in his diary:

The reason I wrote at the beginning of this chapter that it is totally possible that Andrew Fuller's impact on history, by the time Jesus returns, will be far greater and different than it is now, is that three volumes of his writings are still in print, and he was an unusually brilliant theologian. So, quite apart from his influence on the rise of modern missions, his biblical insights may have an impact for good on future generations all out of proportion to his obscure place in the small town of Kettering, England. We will see some of his theological genius as we work our way backward from effect to cause—from his engagement with the new missionary movement to the spiritual life and theology that set it in motion.

Within the last year or two, we have formed a missionary society; and have been enabled to send out two of our brethren to the East Indies. My heart has been greatly interested in this work. Surely I never felt more genuine love to God and to his cause in my life. I bless God that this work has been a means of reviving my soul. If nothing else comes of it, I and many others have obtained a spiritual advantage. (quoted in 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 [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003], 167)

Six months earlier he had written to John Ryland:

I have found the more I do for Christ, the better it is with me. I never enjoyed so much the pleasures of religion, as I have within the last two years, since we have engaged in the Mission business. Mr. Whitfield [*sic*] used to say, "the more a man does for God, the more he may." (quoted in Morden, *Offering Christ*, 167)

In one direction, when your love for Christ is enflamed and your grasp of the gospel is clear, a passion for world missions follows. In the other direction, when you are involved in missions—when you are laying down your life to rescue people from perishing—it tends to authenticate your faith, and deepen your assurance, and sweeten your fellowship with Jesus, and heighten your love for people, and sharpen your doctrines of Christ and heaven and hell. In other words, spiritual life and right doctrine are good for missions, and missions is good for spiritual life and right doctrine.



Baptist church in Kettering, Northamptonshire, where
Fuller preached and pastored from 1782 to 1815

*“Andrew Fuller’s impact on history,
by the time Jesus returns, very well may
be far greater and different than it is now.”*

JOHN PIPER

Although he never went abroad, Andrew Fuller was a zealous promoter of world missions, influencing countless missionaries, such as William Carey, and championing the importance of sound doctrine for the perseverance and fruitfulness of world evangelism. In this short biography, John Piper puts Fuller’s movement-inspiring life and theology on display, calling all Christians to devote themselves to knowing, guarding, and spreading the true gospel—even to the very ends of the earth.



JOHN PIPER is founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He served for thirty-three years as pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church and is the author of over fifty books, including *Desiring God*, *Don’t Waste Your Life*, and *A Peculiar Glory*. His sermons and articles are available free of charge at desiringGod.org.

BIOGRAPHY / MISSIONS

