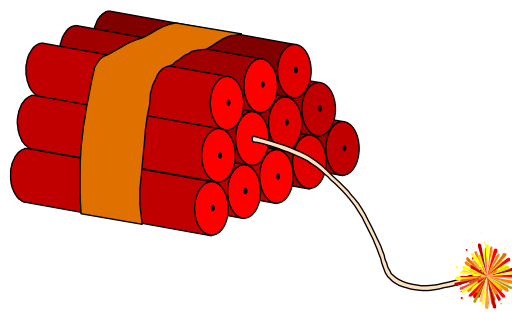


The Problem of Fullerism

**An evaluation of
the teaching of Andrew Fuller**



Paul Fahy

Contents

Andrew Fuller

What is wrong with Fuller's theology?

Overview of Fuller's key errors

Conclusion

Appendix One Definitions

Appendix Two The Duty-Faith controversy

Appendix Three Examples of praise for Fuller

Appendix Four Sources of Fuller's theology

Appendix Five A simplified abstract of Fuller's theology

Appendix Six A deeper look at Fuller's view of the atonement

Appendix Seven Examples of Fuller's inconsistent &
contradictory language and disingenuous
argumentation

Appendix Eight A comparison of theological systems

Appendix Nine The effects of Fuller's theology

Biblical quotations are from the
New King James Version

The Problem of Fullerism

ANDREW FULLER

Though well known amongst Baptists, Andrew Fuller is not a household name to most evangelicals; yet his influence has spread far beyond the Baptist movement. At the present time Fuller is being lauded, and his theology promoted, by many esteemed Reformed establishments, such as *The Banner of Truth* publishing house and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle / Sword & Trowel* magazine. Popular writers, such as John Piper, Michael Haykin, Tom Nettles and Errol Hulse also speak highly of him. Michael Haykin is leading a significant international project to get Fuller's entire written work published in 12 volumes, plus organising seminars, conferences and educational initiatives to generate further interest.¹ This has led to Fuller being accepted as a trustworthy Calvinistic author. Moreover, his approach to evangelistic preaching is taken as a Biblical norm, despite its radically heterodox nature. For these reasons a methodical warning about his appalling teaching, set in a simple format, is long overdue.

He was born at Wicken, near Cambridge in 1754 and some claim he was the most significant Calvinistic Baptist theologian of his day; indeed Spurgeon once supposedly said he was 'the greatest theologian' of his century.² He is often associated with the missionary, William Carey, whom he encouraged and supported as the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society from 1792 until his death in 1815. Indeed, one influential Baptist historian goes so far as to say that:

If Fuller's theological works had not been written, William Carey would not have gone to India. Fuller's theology was the mainspring behind the formation and early development of the Baptist Missionary Society, the first [evangelical] foreign missionary society.³

His most important work was *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785), which many Baptists believe gives the correct direction for Biblical evangelism; indeed they feel that Particular Baptist Calvinism was arid before this (Fuller called it a 'dunghill'). This work essentially sets out an Amyraldian theology in direct opposition to the Calvinism of his day. His reason for this was to oppose the High Calvinism that he felt 'had little or nothing to say to the unconverted'. The motivation of his theology was evangelism, which is what endears him to many today as their churches dwindle in numbers.

This work provoked a strong reaction from London Calvinists like John Martin (1741-1820) and William Button (1754-1821), who denounced Fullerism as 'Duty-Faith'.⁴ Arminian (General) Baptists, like Dan Taylor (1738-1816), also attacked him. The end result was the fragmentation of Baptist churches and the creation of the Strict Baptists.

¹ Contributors include: Crawford Gribben, Peter Morden, Robert Oliver, Brian Talbot and Nigel Wheeler. See footnote 3.

² Though much repeated, I (and others) have not found any source for this statement.

³ See The Andrew Fuller Project:

http://haykin.luxpub.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=47 Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin is the Principal of the Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College and Adjunct Professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

⁴ The second edition of his book [1801] was subtitled, *The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ*, which expressed the general theme. For example: 'faith in Christ is the duty of all men who hear ... the gospel'.

Even favourable Baptist historians admit that Fuller's theology was 'neo-Calvinism'.⁵ But Fullerism, or 'Moderate Calvinism', became the bedrock principle of Baptist missions.

Duty Faith [see Appendix Two]

The question of Duty-Faith had arisen earlier in evangelical circles, such as in Matthias Maurice's book, *A Modern Question Modestly Answered* (1737), Abraham Taylor's tract, *The Modern Question* or Alvery Jackson's *The Question Answered* (1752). They concluded that it *was* the duty of the unconverted to believe in the Gospel and that it should be preached as a free offer that anyone could respond to.

The problem isn't so much as to whether all men should repent, obviously they should since God commands it (Acts 17:30); the error is when this stance results in *offering* the Gospel to all men *as if* anyone can respond without a prior work of the Holy Spirit. This gospel thus elevates man's power to believe naturally. This incipient, half-baked Arminianism had been contested on the continent many times before, as in the Amyraldian controversy. In Britain it arose with some Arminian Puritans, and the Amyraldian theology of Richard Baxter.⁶ Calvinistic Baptists like John Gill and John Brine confronted this error; explaining that God must draw men (Jn 6:44,65), give faith (Eph 2:8) and grant repentance (2 Tim 2:25) in order for someone to obey the Gospel command.

The nub of the problem is that responsibility does not imply ability. The Gospel does not come to men as an offer that anyone can accept, it is a command from the creator with a double call. With the command, grace is given by God to those he has chosen and irresistibly called by his sovereign will; the reprobate, those not elect, are not given grace and are hardened in their sin. False theological systems confuse the general call to all in preaching, with the irresistible, empowering call to the elect.

When Jesus commanded crippled men to walk, his command did not imply any natural ability - they were crippled after all. Yet the very command of the Lord gave a power to get up and walk. This is a picture of the Gospel. It calls dead people into life, but only those who are elect and chosen by the predestinating will of God (Eph 1:4-5) will respond.

In seeking to enhance evangelistic efforts, Fuller developed a theological system that ascribed natural powers to man, claiming that man is not spiritually dead and can believe by obeying his duty under law. It was neither Arminian nor Calvinistic but had echoes of scepticism, liberalism, New Divinity, Socinianism, Governmental Atonement and even Pelagianism. Fuller's teaching is seriously awry.

Evangelism

Fuller is noted for his tireless support of evangelism, but his efforts to promote it severely damaged Biblical theology and put all the emphasis upon man coming to Christ instead of God sovereignly drawing sinners. The catalyst for Fuller's theology was a move amongst Baptists to earnestly preach the Gospel to sinners and hope for revival. To further this they

⁵ See *English Baptist History & Heritage*, p91, by Roger Hayden; published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain (1990) and used in their seminary for training pastors.

⁶ John Wesley, though an Arminian, did not have as high a view of man's natural abilities as Fuller. Arminian Baptists like Dan Taylor attacked him as he denied the need for any grace, even an Arminian vague, prevenient grace available to all.

began to 'invite' sinners in their preaching (i.e. prompt an immediate human reaction without soul preparation).

Fuller slowly came to his conclusions after studying John Gill, Jonathan Edwards, John Bunyan and John Owen - though his conclusions are not supported by these men. At first he believed that Gill's High Calvinism was correct, but was troubled that the Particular (Calvinistic) Baptists of his day did not give free invitations to sinners to come to Christ, whereas Bunyan and others did. He saw a difference between the evangelism of the 16th & 17th century Calvinism and that of the early 18th century. However, this is not universally true; men Fuller criticised, such as John Gill, Wm. Huntington, Augustus Toplady and James Hervey did invite sinners to come to Christ, and the evidence is in their works.

The problem is that there is a world of difference between having a sound, Biblical theology but also challenging men to come to Christ in persuasive ways; and Fuller's watering down of theology to enable men to come more easily to Christ in the flesh. In fact, 18th century High Calvinists like John Gill, William Romaine, Robert Hawker, JC Philpot, William Gadsby and William Huntington were as effective in their evangelistic endeavours as Bunyan, Owen and Edwards. There were many very successful evangelistic preachers at the time, both in Baptist circles and other denominations. Indeed some of the greatest British evangelistic ministries, that preceded or were contemporaneous with Fuller, held to a High Calvinism. Gill himself had a church of over a 1,000; the much defamed Huntington preached to audiences of up to 2-3,000 until his death in 1813 while Gadsby founded around 50 churches mostly made up of his converts.

Fuller did not single-handedly kick-start successful Baptist missions as many claim; Calvinism was not arid before him. In fact, 'Fuller never reached the membership the best of the Old School Calvinists had in their worst years in his very best years as a pastor ... his home churches ... remained relatively small.'⁷ In 1814 he took stock of Baptist churches under his influence and was forced to recognise that the local Calvinistic Anglicans had experienced growth, but the Baptist churches were largely small. Part of the problem was the strife, contention, heresy and fragmentation caused by Fuller himself:

Baptist churches are indeed very greatly changed, and certainly not for the better since the days of Dr. Gill and John Brine, and others who laboured with them in the gospel of God ... they... have arrived through moderate Calvinism to the depths of Pelagianism; which are only a little way from Socinianism ... it will be but a further step to Deism.⁸

Fuller admitted that he could not reconcile the preaching of a free [universal] offer with the doctrine of election, and thus did not preach election openly.⁹ This is because the free offer is Arminian while election is the main plank of Calvinism. He failed to see that responsibility did not mean ability. He did not understand that the command to repent has a twofold response - to bring grace to the elect and a hardening to the reprobate. Thus his theology weakened all the doctrines of grace. However, Fullerite theology fits in snugly with the rampant Arminianism of modern evangelical churches and enables modern Baptists to engage on similar platforms.

⁷ George Ella, *Law & Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, p192.

⁸ John Stevens [an eyewitness Baptist pastor], *Help for the True Disciples of Immanuel*, pv-vi. It has long been a noteworthy progression from orthodox faith, through Amyraldism, to Arminianism and then to either Socinianism or Pelagianism or even paganism. This can be seen today in Charismatic churches where even Open Theism and Celtic Pelagianism are formally championed and where ever more pagan practices appear.

⁹ Ella, op. cit, p91.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH FULLER'S THEOLOGY?

How did Fuller describe his theology?

In defending his teaching, Fuller falsely called himself a 'Strict Calvinist'.¹⁰ He separated this from the High Calvinism of his contemporaries (like John Gill) which he considered as 'more Calvinistic than Calvin' and Antinomian. He also differentiated his stance from Richard Baxter (an Amyraldian Puritan) which he called 'half-Arminian'. He considered his position to equate with John Calvin's himself! We will see below that this is completely wrong. Fuller's theology is not Calvinistic and undermines Calvin's central foundation of the sovereignty of God in salvation.

What did Fuller teach in general?

In a nutshell, he taught that: IT IS THE DUTY [AND ABILITY] OF ALL WHO HEAR THE GOSPEL TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST WITH SUCH A FAITH AS ISSUES IN SALVATION. In other words, anyone [elect or reprobate] who hears the Gospel can believe. A key foundation of Fuller's theology is that man has a natural ability to respond to God. He emphasised that all men have a Gospel awareness deep down and know they should accept it. This means that men are not totally depraved, as they have power to do spiritual good and believe; that there is no election of some to life and some to condemnation; that Christ died for everyone without exception and that the Spirit calls all men equally. Thus it destroys four of the five cardinal points of Calvinism. Even Fuller himself admitted,

I allow that the principles here defended may be inconsistent with the doctrines of grace.¹¹

Essentially, Fuller was a liberal Amyraldian who brought notions that had plagued the continent to the fore amongst English Baptists. Just as Wesley promoted Arminianism among British Anglican evangelicals, Fuller championed Amyraldism among Calvinistic Baptists. That is, the notion that God loves everyone and wants to save everyone; that Christ died for everyone, but since everyone fails to believe, God will select those who would believe to salvation. Man can believe, but fails to in practice. Jesus died for everyone, but only died for some in practice. This is utter confusion and nonsense. However on some points Fuller is worse than an Amyraldian and becomes a rationalistic, humanistic liberal or even a Pelagian.

A cavalier attitude to scripture

Fuller treated scripture more as a rationalist than a submissive believer; in fact he frequently builds up a picture of God by arguing from human ideas. This is the deductive error of liberals and heretics. There are times when he dismisses centuries-held, clear texts by saying they are metaphors. He dismisses various aspects of the law by teaching that it is subdivided into 'positive law', 'moral law', 'natural law', 'revealed law' and so on, which enables him to say whatever he wants in much confusion and contradiction; indeed he completely misunderstands the purpose of the law. He treats Christ's death on the cross in exactly the same way as the offerings of the Old Testament - there is no difference in kind, except that Christ's was of greater dignity. Apostolic teaching is that the offerings were a shadow, a type that achieved nothing to cleanse the conscience, and are nothing like the

¹⁰ Fuller frequently claimed to follow people, or believe certain truths, and yet taught concepts completely alien to these people and doctrines. His followers have claimed that he agreed with Edwards, Owen or Calvin but Fuller's liberal Amyraldism is totally opposed to their Biblical Calvinism.

¹¹ Fuller, *Works*, Vol 2, p367.

reality that is in Christ. These are examples of Fuller having a higher view of his own reasoning powers than a submission to God's word.

BIBLICAL POSITION

- The word of the LORD *is* right, and all his work *is done* in truth. (Ps 33:4)
- The entirety of your word *is* truth. (Ps 119:160)

Fullerite jargon

A real problem in dealing with Fuller is that he uses his own system of titles, descriptions and concepts, so that his writings become complex and impossible to fully understand, plus he is a terrible communicator. Nowhere is this more obvious than his ways of tampering with scripture to prove his own arguments by using complicated concepts, abstruse terms of his own invention and specious arguments. The plain meaning of scripture is often ignored for a complicated and frivolous interpretation. Reading Fuller is difficult and tedious, thus no one can claim to fully understand everything he writes.

Fuller often strips Biblical and doctrinal words of their proper theological meaning, preferring to their secular meaning instead, calling this their 'proper meaning'. This causes confusion and makes interaction difficult. Worse, he changes the meaning of certain words, at one point meaning one thing, at another point meaning something else. When he was confronted on this he accused his critics of misunderstanding him, arrogantly failing to see that the cause was his own fault for communicating badly, interpreting wrongly and using faulty argumentation. Thus for Fuller there is no cancelling of debts at the cross, no penal substitution, no punishment for sins, no imputation of righteousness and man is not spiritually powerless. For example, in order to teach that Christ was not made sin for us, Fuller changes the meaning of the word 'made' and says it is not to be taken literally. Christ's cross was a mere symbolic satisfaction for sin revealing God's displeasure against it.¹²

He also speaks of a difference between a moral and 'positive' function in God's will. This underlies his interpretation of the whole Bible. Like Grotius (see Governmental Theory in App. One) he teaches that moral precepts are natural and eternal, whereas positive laws (i.e. revealed law, Mosaic Law) are temporary, arbitrary and carnal. Man has an innate knowledge of what is eternal, true law. This is higher than the OT laws or even Christ's commands, which are temporary. In other words, man's conscience is all he needs to guide him to righteousness (Fuller fails to see that conscience can be marred, damaged, untaught, immature or seared).¹³

BIBLICAL POSITION

- We speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. (1 Cor 2:6)
- We conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God. (2 Cor 1:12)

Perversion of the doctrine of unconditional election

In typical Fullerite manner, he bobs and weaves when discussing election. One moment he states that the difference between the saved and lost is ascribed to sovereign grace, the next he avers that the grace to repent and believe is afforded to every man in common, and that

¹² Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p682.

¹³ See Fuller's pastoral letter of 1807, *On Moral and Positive Obedience*, quoted in Ella, p72-74.

Faith instead of being 'the gift of God,' is the effect of our having improved the help afforded, while others neglected it, if we think we do not ascribe the very turning point of salvation to our own virtue, we greatly deceive ourselves. But election, while it places no bar in the way of any man which would not have been there without it.¹⁴

To Fuller, predestination is more like the Arminian view that God chooses those whom he foresees will 'improve' their estate and believe. Any apparent Biblical statements on election are later compromised by Fuller adding conditions. He does not teach unconditional election; salvation rests entirely upon man:

There is no ... impossibility in the way of any man's salvation ... other than what arises from the state of his own mind.¹⁵

Fuller thus teaches that Christ merited redemption on the conditional basis of men believing. In other words, he teaches a conditional election, even if some of his other statements appear to contradict this. This is clearly the implication in his key statement,

We must ... acknowledge an objective fulness in Christ's atonement, sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him.¹⁶

This fulness doesn't secure anyone's salvation, except on certain conditions being met, i.e. faith. So the atonement doesn't guarantee redemption for anyone; man secures this on his own faith. For Fuller it is a matter of man's obedience not Christ's obedience.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Blessed *is the man* you choose, and cause to approach *you*, *that* he may dwell in your courts. (Ps 65:4)
- No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *him*. (Matt 11:27)
- He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. (Eph 1:4-5)
- Who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. (2 Tim 1:9)

Perversion of the doctrine of the Fall

Fuller taught that the Fall of man was merely moral and was not a fall of man's spiritual ability. This rendered man a criminal, guilty for sin, but not incapable of spiritual good. Man is *not* unable to believe in the Gospel. The Fall is thus figurative (as many other concepts) and man's abilities are not ruined by it. Even his moral abilities are not damaged by the Fall, since believing is a moral duty; therefore man's morals are not excessively damaged. Indeed, he teaches that obedience to the law produces faith in Christ;¹⁷ whereas the Bible demonstrates that the law exposes sin, has no power to give life, leads to condemnation and ends in death. Coming to God, for Fuller, is thus the result of works-righteousness.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat *is* an open tomb; with their tongues they have practised deceit; the

¹⁴ Fuller, *Works*, 'Election Consistent', Vol. ? p341, 342

¹⁵ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p709.

¹⁶ Fuller, *Dialogues*, p231.

¹⁷ See Fuller's essay, *Faith in Christ Being a Requirement of the Moral Law*.

poison of asps *is* under their lips; whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; destruction and misery *are* in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.' (Rm 3:10-18)

- The sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. (Rm 7:5)
- For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin. (Gal 3:21-22)

Rejection of the doctrine of Total Depravity

Fuller claimed that man has the same natural powers before the Holy Spirit works on him as afterwards;¹⁸ indeed he states that conscience, reason and immortality are not fallen at all since they are in God's image. Man's fall was just a figurative moral collapse. All man's natural and moral abilities are unabated by the Fall, except that man does not have the natural 'inclination' to believe in God.¹⁹ In other words, Fuller says that God wouldn't command repentance if man was not able to repent, therefore man must be able; 'men have the same natural powers to love Christ as to hate him, to believe as to disbelieve'.²⁰ Man just lacks moral impetus, which the example of the cross provides. He did not understand the necessary power of the Gospel to change man's deceitful heart at all. Neither did he believe clear statements of man's inability.²¹

Instead of man being a slave to sin, unable to do any good, possessing no self-determination to godliness and having no spiritual power because he is dead in sins, Fuller teaches that man has power to believe if he wants to and can do spiritual good by so believing. For Fuller, man is not dead but simply a rebel. Since God commands repentance, man must be able to repent on his own. His ideas here are worse than Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism and are virtually Pelagian, in teaching that man is able to believe without any grace. This destroys the first point of Calvinism, but also ensures that his whole structure of the Gospel is unbiblical. If this is wrong, everything flowing from it will be wrong. Fuller clearly teaches a righteousness of works.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. (Gen 6:5)
- The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. (Ps 58:3)
- [You] were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Eph 2-13)

Perversion of the doctrine of sin

Like many things, the meaning of sin is twisted by defining it metaphorically, it is thus merely a wrong inclination. It is not a debt to God's law, it is not an offence against God's will, it is not an expression of a black heart; sin is a just a criminal offence. The Fall and man's depravity is not the problem; sin is ignoring the example and moral inspiration of Christ's suffering on the cross. But fallen man cannot see this, cannot do any good, cannot repent and cannot live in obedience - he is dead.

¹⁸ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p546ff.

¹⁹ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p357; Vol. 3, p768.

²⁰ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p768.

²¹ Such as Ps 51:5; 58:3; Jn 3:5-7; Eph 2:1; Col 2:13, 1 Cor 2:14. Compare Fuller: *Works*, Vol. 2, p438.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rm 3:19-20. 23)
- For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. (Rm 7:5)
- The carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rm 8:7-8)
- [Man's] understanding [is] darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. (Eph 4:18)
- Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (Jm 1:15)
- [Sinners] walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (Eph 4:17-19)

Rejection of the imputation of sin and righteousness

Fuller tells us that this is also a figurative metaphor, that there is no exchange of sin and righteousness resulting from the cross. Man does not have Adam's guilt imputed to him by generation, neither does he have Christ's righteousness imputed to him through faith. Man is thus forgiven by Christ but still retains guilt and sin. Since sin is not a debt to Fuller, it is not transferable.²² Sin is a crime, and is thus not exchangeable. This undermines the Biblical teaching on Christ's atonement. Fuller admitted that if he could be shown that Christ's atonement was a literal payment of our legal debt his theological system would collapse. Yet scripture makes this abundantly clear.

The law demands our total obedience; a perfect and sinless life - an impossibility for mankind. Christ fully obeyed the law as our surety. If saints do not have this righteousness of Christ imputed (accounted) to them, how are they justified? In Fuller's, system believing results in an arbitrary forgiveness - human faith effects righteousness. But in this system the law has not been satisfied; sin isn't remitted and righteousness not attained. On the contrary, the Bible teaches that Christ is our righteousness; we are righteous in him as a result of imputation. It is not faith itself, but faith in Christ that secures righteousness. Only God's righteousness will do and this is the basis of the Gospel of Christ.²³

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isa 53:6)
- And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (Matt 6:12)
- Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ... by the one man's offence many died ... by the one man's offence death reigned through the one ... through one man's offence *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation ... For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Rm 5:12-19)
- But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Cor 1:30)

²² Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p686ff.

²³ Rm 1:17, For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'.

Perversion of the Biblical concept of God's Law

It is difficult to give a concise but adequate explanation of Fuller's ideas on this matter, as they are so confused, contradictory, arbitrarily sub-divided and twisted: natural law (or moral law) is contrasted to revealed law; moral law is confused with the Gospel and so on. However, to be as simple as possible: Fuller subscribed to the liberal rationalistic fashions of his day²⁴ and followed the notion of 'the nature and fitness of things'. This was an eternal principle of natural law that preceded, and excelled, the revelation of God's law and which was understood by reason. Thus this natural law is viewed as more important than the revealed will of God in the Bible; it is supreme, original and the perfect rule of action. NT believers are under this law of the nature and fitness of things. This is Antinomianism proper. If this were true, why did God give the law at all?

Fuller openly admitted to be a follower of Hugo Grotius in this (see 'Governmental Theory', Appendix One). Grotius was a heretic who was vehemently opposed to the doctrines of the Reformation and was condemned by Reformed churches. This notion of a higher, natural law forms a foundation for Fuller to teach the self-righteous law-work of man. Spiritual truths can be gained from the mere revelation of natural law; fallen man can find salvation through natural law. Contrary to scripture, Fuller thus teaches that contemplating the natural wonders of the universe can lead to salvation, a natural operation of love to God, because a higher law than the Mosaic Law is in operation here. Obeying the laws of natural religion lead to knowing God.²⁵ This is sheer heresy and close to paganism.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? *They are* higher than heaven -- what can you do? Deeper than Sheol -- what can you know? (Job 11:7-8)
- As *for* the Almighty, we cannot find Him. (Job 37:23)
- Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* his judgments and his ways past finding out! (Rm 11:33)
- The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned ... For 'who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct him?' (1 Cor 2:14-16)
- We love him because he first loved us. (1 Jn 4:19)

Rejection of vicarious atonement

Fuller did not believe that Christ suffered for our sins as our substitute enduring the wrath of God on our behalf; worse, he taught that this concept leads people into error.²⁶ Indeed, his teaching is close to the moral theology of Finney and follows the Governmental Theory of Grotius: 'Love Christ as if you had never apostatised;' i.e. the sinner has the power to come to God and love him despite not being drawn by God. Jesus said that this is impossible (Jn 6:44, 65).

He did not accept that Christ suffered under the law on our behalf or that he fulfilled the law on for us; instead he teaches that Christ was above the law. 'The sufferings of Christ in our stead, therefore, are not a punishment inflicted ... but an extraordinary interposition of infinite wisdom and love; not contrary to, but rather above the law, deviating from the letter, but more than preserving the spirit of it.'²⁷ For Fuller Christ

²⁴ Latitudinarianism, New Divinity, Cambridge Platonists.

²⁵ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p539; Vol. 3, p781.

²⁶ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p688.

²⁷ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p689.

was an example to inspire morality, not a vicarious representative who suffered as our penal substitute. How could the obedience of Christ in suffering for sin according to God's will be a deviation from the letter of God's law?

Fuller did not believe that Christ could become sin on the cross, despite scripture explicitly saying so; he argued this away as a mere metaphor. For him Christ never suffered under the law as a sinner, but was always above the law, suffering as a symbol. Christ was never punished for sin since he was innocent and did not have our sins imputed to him.²⁸ So how could our sins be remitted if there was no penal substitution? Consider this carefully, if Fuller is in grave error on this cardinal matter, his whole theology is not evangelical but is very dangerous. Indeed, his arguments are close to blasphemy. Mark this well - Fuller taught that Christ did not die to pay for the sins of his people. They rectify their own sinful life by correct actions, past sins are then ignored by God. This is Pelagianism.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- For he [God] made him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)
- Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. (Gal 3:13)
- Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isa 53:4-6)
- By one man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Rm 5:19)
- For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. (1 Pt 3:18)
- Christ also suffered for us ... who himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness -- by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Pt 2:21-24)

Rejection of particular redemption (limited atonement)

Fuller taught that Christ did not die for a specific number of sins pertinent to a specific number of people; the atonement is merely a symbol showing God's approval of righteousness and disapproval of sin. It is an example to urge men to follow Christ and love God, plus a deterrent against sin. Christ's atonement secures the actual salvation of no one for Fuller, it merely makes salvation possible for any and all if they chose to act right.

The atonement of Christ ... [is] equal to the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to embrace it.²⁹

He did not understand that death is the punishment for sin, whether one sin or thousands. Remission of sin must be accomplished by the shedding of blood, either the sinner's or that of a substitute.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- He shall see the labour of his soul, *and* be satisfied. By his knowledge my righteous Servant shall justify **many**, for he shall bear **their** iniquities. (Isa 53:11)
- *What if* God, wanting to show *his* wrath and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath [the reprobate] prepared for destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy [the elect], which he had prepared beforehand for glory, *even* us whom he called. (Rm 9:22-24)
- He will save his people [not others] from their sins. (Matt 1:21)

²⁸ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p683, 689.

²⁹ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p374.

- How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ... without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb 9:14, 20)

Eradication of God's justice

Since Fuller's Christ was never punished as our substitute, and since the church is not punished for its actual transgressions [it is saved by some vague moral satisfaction where God bends the rules], the justice required by God's law is never fulfilled. For him, God's justice was 'amiable' and 'lovely' and any thought of retribution, wrath or vengeance was 'contrary to the common sense and practice of mankind' (i.e. reason).³⁰

Justice is a key attribute of God and one that gives us all comfort. Since God is just, and since he has meted out this justice for our sins entirely upon Christ, we are saved and fully assured of salvation. Without this justice there can be no assurance; but worse, Fuller's theology of forgiveness demeans God's glory. God's righteous perfection demands a full justice and a complete punishment for sin. God's just and holy law demands that a death must occur for sin; either the one who commits it or the saviour/substitute on the elect sinner's behalf. Fuller's theological system completely ignores God's justice; an essential attribute of his glory.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of your throne. (Ps 89:14)
- The LORD loves justice. (Ps 37:28)
- The law brings about wrath. (Rm 4:15)
- The Lord, the righteous Judge. (2 Tim 4:8)
- The soul who sins shall die. (Ezek 18:4, 20)
- God ... endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. (Rm 9:22)

Proposal of two contradictory wills in God

Sound theologians understand God's will from a human viewpoint as having two aspects:

1. *A will of decree* (decretive will) which is the declaration of God's counsel, that which he will achieve; such as the salvation of the elect. This will is immutable and certain.
2. *The will of precept* (preceptive will, prescriptive will) the will of God's command, that which he commands man to do; such as that all men must repent. This will is violated.

These wills do not conflict, there is simply a twofold outworking from our perspective.³¹ God commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30) but only puts forth his power to actually save the elect alone.

Unorthodox teachers have often posited two contradictory wills in God in order to harmonise apparent universalistic texts - to teach that God desires the salvation of all, but only saves the elect. The proper way to deal with this is to interpret the texts consistently and Biblically (they do not teach universalism). Instead many teach two contradictory (or paradoxical) wills to justify interpreting the problem verses in a universalistic way; thus:

1. God's secret will (God saves the elect; though this is hardly a secret!).
2. God's revealed will (God loves everyone and commands all to repent).

Instead of the Biblical, God loves the elect and Christ died for them, these people teach that God loves everyone, Christ died for everyone, but only those who choose him will be saved.

³⁰ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p156.

³¹ See my paper, *Does God have two wills?* See also John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth*, p456.

Fuller taught a similar perversion of God's will, in fact he transmitted this old idea to many modern teachers. God's 'revealed' will in addressing all sinners with a sincere offer through the Gospel call is different (contradictory) to his 'secret' will in applying the message to individuals. God has provided an atonement that is adequate for all, but then only applies that atonement to some - 'sufficient for all, efficient for some'. The will to save the elect is secret. However, the Bible knows nothing of this. God demands man's obedience and repentance, but he applies the atonement only to the elect chosen in eternity. This is simple and clear. This will is certain to be achieved.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Who can make him change? And whatever his soul desires, that He does. For he performs what is appointed. (Job 23:13-14).
- The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. (Ps 33:11)
- *There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the LORD.* (Prov 21:30)
- My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. (Isa 46:10)
- He does according to his will in the army of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain his hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?' (Dan 4:35)

Perversion of Justification

Fuller taught that justification comes through understanding the nature, reason and fitness of things, being aware of God by nature, by obeying the moral law and accepting any revelation from God interpreted by reason.³² Justification is thus divorced from Christ's redemption. As natural, human repentance follows hearing the Gospel, a man is declared righteous by God - justification thus follows fleshly belief & repentance. The atonement is objectively for all but subjectively and conditionally only for those who have a mind for it; thus man chooses to get right with God unaided by grace.³³ Effectively, a man's own righteousness saves him; indeed Huntington (and others) charged Fuller with this error. He rejects the scriptural teaching that man is God's enemy until he is justified (Rm 4:5), teaching that man has a holy disposition before being justified in order to reach for God.³⁴

All of this is serious heresy; consequently Abraham Booth³⁵ considered Fuller 'lost'. If someone opposes such a cardinal doctrine, if someone teaches works righteousness, and worse, separates justification from the cross of Christ, how can they be Christian?

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Rm 3:28)
- But to him who does not work but believes on him, who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. (Rm 4:5)
- Having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rm 5:9-10)
- A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the

³² Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p349; Vol. 3, p781.

³³ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p709. I am indebted to some articles by George Ella in this connection. E.g *New Focus* magazine, Dec/Jan 2006.

³⁴ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 3, p714-719.

³⁵ Abraham Booth (1734-1806) was the author of *The Reign of Grace*. Regarding him, the preface to the EP 2003 edition says, 'Booth has no difficulty in asserting the doctrines of grace with vigour whilst appealing to sinners to be saved.' (p8).

law no flesh shall be justified ... If righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain. (Gal 2:16, 21)

Denial of the effectual call

Fuller believed that everyone was aware of their duty before God to believe the Gospel.³⁶ There is no need for a special ministry of the Holy Spirit to empower and regenerate men, to bring the grace of faith and repentance, since all men have the natural power to do this if they get their inclination right after being inspired by Christ's example on the cross. Everyone, therefore, is a natural son of God. Fuller appeared to have no understanding that only those changed by the Spirit's application of Christ's redemption become adopted sons of God with the privileges of heirs.

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rm 8:14)
- But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (Jn 1:12-13)
- God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Gal 4:4-5)
- Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, now we are children of God. (1 Jn 3:1-2)

Rejection of union with Christ - perversion of Biblical sanctification

The apostolic teaching of a believer being 'in Christ' is paramount in the New Testament. It is overwhelmingly stated, being mentioned scores of times; yet Fuller rejects this. Consequently, there is no possibility of Fuller having any sound understanding of sanctification and the work of the Spirit in the believer. For him, pardon for sins is all that salvation entails; the believer remains the same sinner he always was, but forgiven.³⁷ Fuller rarely mentions the Spirit's work in this connection. Holiness is reduced to a mere duty of natural man's endeavours. For him, the moral law is enough to enable a man to live a holy life if he chooses. As a man's natural powers expand, so his virtue increases.³⁸ Sanctification advances merely through exercising natural abilities in obedience to the moral law. Fuller teaches that the work of the Spirit in the believer is an external influence, not an internal, equipping power; indeed the believer's abilities are always what they were before conversion.³⁹ This is because Adam is the prototype of man if he repents, i.e. less than the NT teaching which puts believers into Christ not Adam. What humanistic, legalistic nonsense is all this?

BIBLICAL POSITION:

- Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rm 6:11)
- *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Rm 8:1)
- For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Cor 15:22)

³⁶ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p418.

³⁷ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p688.

³⁸ Benevolence itself, [is] expanded in proportion as the natural powers expand, and afford it opportunity. From Fuller's essay, *The Nature of True Virtue*. Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p818.

³⁹ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p546-547.

- Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Cor 5:17)
- The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ... If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Gal 5:22-25)
- It is God who works in you both to will and to do for *his* good pleasure. (Phil 2:13)

Fuller's character in dealing with doctrinal controversy

I am certain that part of Fuller's problem in expressing his view lies in his poor education. Compared to divines of his day his education was sub-standard. However, that isn't necessarily a major problem if one improves one's learning and focuses upon communicating truth. The coal-heaver William Huntington was able to do this. It is clear that Fuller did not; rather he became self-righteous, criticising everyone who disagreed with him when few could properly understand him. But worse, Fuller (ignoring his own background) criticised others for having a poor education and even stated that Antinomians (the bogeyman he continually attacked) arose from the uneducated classes.

Fuller was vitriolic, scathing, unkind and unreasonable in his criticism of those who disagreed with him. Godly men, such as Abraham Booth or William Huntington, were ravaged by his pen in the most unchristian manner. For example; Huntington was typical of the vulgar meridian, the breeding ground of Antinomianism, of low wit, who used street-market speech to delude listeners and should have stayed a labourer.⁴⁰ Fuller not only used intemperate language, but misrepresented their position and accused them of doctrines they did not hold. Preachers who had far more lasting evangelistic success than him were attacked for not preaching the Gospel in the way he thought they should.

He was also not above deceit and once pretended he was someone else, preaching in a church in the guise of this man in order to put over his views (with great sophistry) to a church that did not support him. One also has to question the area where he is most applauded, that of travelling endlessly to raise money for Carey's Indian mission. Fuller thought nothing of fund-raising preaching [in itself objectionable] for his missionary society, in churches he openly criticised as being unchristian.⁴¹

Clearly Fuller's character, was pugilistic [he was originally a wrestler] and unattractive in defending his insecure position. Anyone who criticised his unbiblical ideas was an Antinomian or a Hyper-Calvinist - end of story. Sadly, this Fullerite response is much in vogue today.

⁴⁰ George Ella, *Law and Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, p52-53, see Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p762.

⁴¹ See statement in Ella and footnote; op. cit. p192.

OVERVIEW OF FULLER'S KEY ERRORS

God
Eradication of God's justice - there is no wrath against sin.
There are two contradictory wills in God.
Perversion of God's law.
Election
Election makes no difference to men, all must improve their own estate by virtue. Those who do are elect.
Election is effectively God's foresight as to who believes.
The natural powers of man
Man has the natural ability to do spiritual good.
The Fall did not render man depraved and unable.
Adam's sin was not imputed to the human race.
All men are effectively sons of God.
Sin is not a debt to God. Man just has a wrong inclination.
The Law
Natural (moral) law is universal and above revealed law.
The moral law is binding and empowering upon all men, believers and unbelievers.
Obedience to the duties of the moral law leads to faith.
The Cross
The cross of Christ is not different to the sacrificial offerings of the OT.
Christ did not die as a vicarious substitute.
Moral influence / Governmental theory of the atonement.
Christ did not suffer under the law.
Christ did not obey the law fully to give us righteousness.
Christ was not made sin for us.
Justification
Justification is by human righteousness.
Repentance leads to justification.
Justification is merely a declaration of pardon and does not involve imputation of Christ's righteousness.
The righteousness of Christ is not transferable.
Calling
There is no such thing as the effectual call of the Spirit.
Sanctification
Sanctification is by human endeavour, not by the Spirit's work within us.
Sanctification = good works.
Sanctification is not an evidence of justification.
The Gospel
Taught the free offer of the Gospel [i.e. Jesus died for all; anyone can be saved, election is irrelevant].
Anyone who hears the Gospel has the power to believe it.
Man has the innate power to repent and believe.

CONCLUSION

The sheer weight of Fuller's errors beggars belief. One would think that such a capacity for heresy would have condemned him to the scrapheap of false teachers. Instead Fuller is the modern darling of mainstream UK Calvinism, being lauded by the Banner of Truth magazine for instance and championed in famous Reformed Baptist churches. One can only presume that the complexity and confusion in Fuller's works prevents most people from investigating his beliefs and trying to fathom what he is really saying.

Some have rightly claimed that Fuller introduced into Calvinistic Baptist circles a modern liberalism in terms of his shocking cavalier attitude to scripture, making the Bible subject to his own reason. Yet others have accurately accused him of introducing to England the *New Divinity* error from America.⁴² He certainly championed Amyraldian theology and perverted the church with his intellectual ideas; indeed his theology is far more damaging than the Amyraldism of Richard Baxter. Almost every major Biblical doctrine is weakened or ruined, while the whole thesis of Calvinism is undermined. In fact Fuller, in denying Total Depravity, is more heretical than John Wesley and his Evangelical Arminianism.⁴³

Yet Fuller claimed to be a Calvinist, true to John Calvin, and attacked the errors of his day, such as Sandemanianism and Socinianism - despite his ideas being as intellectual and rational as the Sandemanians or as erroneous as the Socinians. He was fervently evangelistic and worked hard as a pastor; however his many fund-raising trips led to complaints that he was an absentee pastor. He tirelessly worked for the missionary society and continued to support William Carey in India energetically. He is clearly a complex man, but a severely compromised theologian; his life being a better witness than his teaching. Under no circumstances should believers subscribe to his heterodox views.

The way a man faces death tells you much about his true character. In our dying moments, there is no point in keeping up any hypocritical pretence as we are deeply aware that soon we will meet our maker and judge. One can read of the dying moments of many great Calvinistic preachers, and they all testify to a total confidence in the grace of God in Christ, the wonder of forgiveness, and an awareness of being a great sinner trusting in a greater Saviour. Fuller's death is interesting. It seems that he had a complicated and painful illness accompanied by depression, but through this it appears that Fuller was drawn to understand the grace of God more than he had ever done before.

At one point he exclaimed, 'I am a great sinner, and if I am to be saved, it must be by great and sovereign grace - by great and sovereign grace ... I am a poor guilty creature, but Jesus is an Almighty Saviour. I have no other hope of salvation than what arises from mere sovereign grace, through the atonement of my Lord and Saviour. With this hope I can go into eternity with composure. ... I have preached and written much against the abuse of the doctrine of grace; but that doctrine is all my salvation, and all my desire.'⁴⁴

This is as close a repudiation of his teaching that can be expected from a dying man. His novel ideas about a general / indefinite atonement, denial of vicarious atonement, plus his

⁴² Certainly Fuller echoed some of their errors, such as teaching that the Fall did not render man incapable, depraved and guilty, but merely left man on probation until he accepted or rejected Christ.

⁴³ Wesleyan Evangelical Arminianism was not as unorthodox as Continental Arminianism, upholding a form of human depravity and the imputation of Adam's sin.

⁴⁴ William Rushton, *Particular Redemption*, p158-159.

upholding of man's natural power and righteousness did not sustain him when he was facing the greatest test of his life - death.

Thankfully, it seems that Fuller died a believer, but sadly his life's teaching, by his own admission, was an attack on the very grace that he trusted in to meet his maker.

This is a mere introductory evaluation of Fuller's ideas; further information can be found in books such as:

- George M. Ella, *Law & Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, Go Publications.
- William Rushton, *Particular Redemption & the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, Go Publications [The Cairn, Hill Top, Eggleston, Co. Durham, DL12 0AU] The text can also be found at <http://users.aol.com/libcfl2/fuller.htm>
- James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*; section on atonement, p312ff in Christian Gospel Foundation publication. This work is also freely available on the Internet.

These works were not used as prime sources for the original draft of this paper.⁴⁵ There are also extensive articles on the Internet.

Paul Fahy Copyright © 2006
Understanding Ministries
www.understanding-ministries.com

⁴⁵ After writing two drafts of this paper, I consulted Ella's work and made some additions; I am indebted to his thorough research. After the third draft I read Boyce (in. loc.) and Rushton's work, and made some additions.

Appendix One

DEFINITIONS

Amyraldism

Amyraldism was an attempt by the French Protestant theologian, Moise Amyraut (or Moses Amyrald, 1596-1664), to unify Calvinists and Lutherans. It does so by trying to uphold an Arminian type of universalism (God loves everyone and desires to save everyone) and tack it on to the particularism of Calvinism (God elects only some to eternal life in practice). Subsequently Amyraldian pretexts have been the way that Arminianism and Calvinism have been welded together by Reformed teachers, such as Richard Baxter and Andrew Fuller. It has been called 'Hypothetical Universalism' because it is a theological impossibility. It tries to unite two opposite and contradictory things.

The essence of Amyraldism is:

- *Universalism*: salvation is hypothetically offered to all and available for all on the condition that they believe. Thus, God wills all men to be saved. But people are not saved as a result of their sin and rejection of the Gospel. The universalism does not result in the salvation of men and is thus merely hypothetical.
- *Particularism*: salvation is certain for the specific people chosen by God since men do not believe the offer.

Thus God loves everyone and decrees the salvation of everyone if they believe. However, since men don't believe God gives faith to the elect. This is a confused and contradictory system - all men can be saved by their own faith, but only the elect are actually saved by the gift of God's faith.

The doctrine was developed to avoid the impression that God is unfair, hateful or unjust in the doctrine of election; but it completely ignores many clear scriptures, such as that God does hate the wicked, or that the reprobate are chosen to condemnation from eternity.

Antinomianism

Literally 'against the law'; the position of denying that the law of God has any place in the Christian life, that believers are free to behave as they please since grace will cover all sin. Some High Calvinists degenerated into this position in the promotion of free grace.

Arminianism

Arminianism is so called from the Reformed Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius. [Academics then used Latinised names and wrote in Latin; his Anglicised Dutch name was James Hermann.] He reacted against the doctrine of election and began to teach that God decrees to save all those who repent, believe and persevere in obedience. God doesn't choose anyone specifically but foresees those who will repent. In 1610, a year after his death, his followers developed these ideas further and published a document called 'Remonstrance' (i.e. 'protest') thus they were called 'Remonstrants'. It originally had five main points:

- God elects people on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.
- Christ died for all men, loves all men, but only believers are saved.
- Man is so depraved that grace is necessary for faith or good deeds.
- But this grace may be resisted.
- Whether all who believe persevere to the end is uncertain.

Later these doctrines were developed further to emphasise man's role in salvation -

- the will is one of the causes of regeneration
- faith is a good work of man
- man can fall away from grace
- Christ's righteousness is not imputed to a believer
- men can become perfect
- Adam's guilt is not imputed to men
- there is no assurance of salvation in this life.

A synod was convened at Dort (or Dordrecht in the Netherlands) to deal with this rebellion in the church and comprised Calvinists from many countries. (See 'Calvinism'). The teachings were condemned and the Remonstrants were removed from their church ministries for teaching the heresy of Semi-Pelagianism.

Over time the Remonstrant, Semi-Pelagian position became subsumed into Arminianism, though Arminius himself would not have accepted all that it teaches. Essentially, Arminianism rejects the sovereignty of God in salvation, emphasises man's powers (especially of will) and teaches that man co-operates in conversion (synergism) - he can choose to accept or reject the Gospel.

Calvinism

Calvinism is the Post Reformation nickname for the Biblical and apostolic teaching of the Doctrines of Grace, named after the Reformer John Calvin. Before the Reformation, these doctrines would have been known as Augustinianism (after the church father Augustine of Hippo). The emphasis of Calvinism, or Reformed Theology, is the sovereignty of God. God is absolutely sovereign in salvation and provides totally for the redemption of those he has chosen in eternity to save. These *elect* are called in time by the Spirit and given faith & repentance (conversion) as a result of the regenerating work of the Spirit when he effectually calls them through the Gospel. The impetus and power to save thus is God's work alone. The reason for this is that man is dead in sins and can do no spiritual good work.

Historically, Calvinism has been defined in five points, originally formulated at the Synod of Dort [1618-19], as a response to the Arminian protests of the Remonstrants (the followers of Jacob Arminius). These points are:

- **T**otal Depravity,
- **U**nconditional Election,
- **L**imited Atonement (or Particular Redemption),
- **I**rresistible Grace (or Effectual Calling) and the
- **P**erseverance of the saints.

The mnemonic *TULIP* is used as an aide memoir for these points.

Cambridge Platonists

This was a 17th century Anglican, rationalistic, theological and philosophical movement. As the name suggests they were more committed to a Platonist view of things rather than scriptural doctrine. As such they followed an eternal view of moral / natural law, emphasised God's love and attacked Calvinism. They believed that religion awakened and directed natural reason. Latitudinarians emerged from this movement which degenerated into deism. Traces of this are clearly found in Fuller's writings.

Deism

A rational and anti-dogmatic belief in a God who created the universe, established its laws and natural religion and then left it to fend for itself. It is usually applied to the English rationalistic movement of the mid 17th to mid 18th centuries.

The Free Offer

The free offer (or universal offer, well-meant offer, sincere offer) is an effort by modern Calvinists (US Presbyterians since the 1920s; UK Baptists since around Fuller's time) to accommodate universalism in God's will and uphold the supposed priority of the love of God for all men.⁴⁶ It is close to Amyraldism in suggesting a universal grace and a universal atonement but only the elect are actually saved.

Its interpretation of the supposed universal Biblical texts is essentially Arminian. The death of Christ is sufficient and available for all, but in practice only effective for some. [For Arminians, those who repent do so from their own will; for Amyraldians and 4-point Calvinists, they do so because they are elect.] This enables preachers to invite all Gospel hearers to make a decision for Christ and to tell them that God loves them and has a salvation ready to give them if they accept Christ.

The effect of this perverts the Gospel message by teaching the lie that God intends and desires the salvation of reprobates. But, how can God love those he hates, how can he desire the salvation of those he has damned? How can the Gospel be based on a lie? It misrepresents God. It also implicitly proposes that the initiation of salvation is the will of man.

Anyone who preaches a Gospel that is based upon: God loves everyone, Jesus died for everyone, anyone can respond and be saved, make a decision now - is preaching a free offer Gospel. Historically the Gospel was preached as: man is guilty before God as a sinner, this guilt will result in eternal condemnation, Jesus is the only saviour to save man from sin, the only mediator between man and God, seek Jesus and his salvation, cry to him for mercy, cast yourself upon God. Then time was left for the awakened sinner to understand the depths of his sin and need of salvation before coming to Christ in repentance and faith.

Four-Point Calvinists

Reformed teachers who hold to the Free Offer and believe that Christ died for all men; thus rejecting Limited Atonement from the five points of Calvinism.

Governmental theory of the atonement

Influenced by Abelard and propounded by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) to make a bridge between Reformed doctrine and Socinian teachings. It states that Christ did not die as a substitute for man's sin, did not suffer God's wrath for sin, but suffered as a perfect example of a man who honoured the law. This death is then accepted by God to satisfy the law that sin demands death; Christ's death being accepted instead of man's death. As a result of the cross, God relaxed the rule that men should die for sin and the cross also becomes a deterrent. The cause of the cross was God's sense of right and wrong, not the need to propitiate wrath. God's justice does not require all the demands of the law to be met, he can alter his requirements as he sees fit.

⁴⁶ In fact the prime attribute of God is his holiness. Only his holiness is a thrice repeated phrase, 'Holy, Holy, Holy.'

Grotius emphasised (like Fuller) the use of natural, moral law; i.e. law as a feature of human nature (rules governing actions) and not a manifestation of God's perfect will. Thus the law is not a reflection of God's nature and will for man. Salvation becomes understanding what to do, and doing it after seeing the cross. The combination of Abelard's Moral Influence theory and Grotius' Governmental Theory is the Moral Government theology evidenced in heretics like Charles Finney, where salvation becomes completely Pelagian.

Latitudinarianism

The teachings of a group of late 17th century Anglicans that championed the use of reason above scripture, based upon 'the theatre of nature', in a reaction to Puritanism. They were noted for their tolerance (latitude) of others, were broadly Arminian in theology and supportive of other liberal movements. By taking the system of Episcopius as a model, they reduced fundamental doctrines to a few points to minimise the difference between opposing church parties.

Moral influence theory of atonement

There are many variations of this but it was first espoused by Peter Abelard (1079-1142). The emphasis is upon the love of God. The cross shows the greatness of God's love, which inspires in men a desire to love God as a result. People then choose not to sin. The example of God's love to men promotes man's love to God. Taken on its own, this theory teaches that man can save himself and that Total Depravity does not exist.

New Divinity

A theological tradition arose following the work of the American revivalist preacher Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) called *New England Theology*. This was not a unified set of teachings but rather a way of reasoning on abstruse matters, with a strong practical / ethical ethos. Edwards was a Calvinist who honoured the divine majesty of God in sovereign grace, but those who followed his philosophical methods, gradually degenerated in their theology.

What followed was *New Divinity*, as proposed by the New England pastors (and friends of Edwards) Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790) and Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803). Bellamy promoted the governmental view of the atonement. Later modifications in the 19th century saw worse teachings appear under Timothy Dwight (1752-1817, Edward's grandson and President of Yale College). Human reason was elevated, man's inability was modified and man's will emphasised. Jonathan Edwards Jr. (1745-1801) extended the idea of governmental atonement and emphasised the law of God for the believer. Yale professor Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858) advanced the rationalistic degeneration, producing *New Haven Theology*; reversing Edwards teaching on free will and advocating that man has the power of free choice to self-determination. Sin was viewed as the accumulated faults of human actions rather than a depraved nature that sins. Gradually a universal atonement was also accepted, the predestinating purpose of God was denied and the imputation of Adam's sin abandoned.

This theological spectrum of beliefs influenced both Charles Finney in America and Andrew Fuller in Britain; especially the emphasis of an internal, moral, common sense that drives theology (following Scottish philosophy) and the power of human will.

Particularism

As opposed to universalism, it means the principle of being 'singled-out'. The atonement is 'particular' i.e. that it is definite for a select people only.

Pelagianism

Named after the 5th century Celtic British monk Pelagius. He denied total depravity, the imputation of Adam's guilt and upheld that man has the power to save himself through good works. Sin is minimised and free will sufficient for salvation, helped by the law and the example of Christ. It is opposed to the sovereignty of God and all the Doctrines of Grace.

Sandemanianism

The beliefs of the Scottish ministers John Glas and his son-in-law Robert Sandeman (1718-1771). Its main heresy was the insistence that faith is merely intellectual assent in the resurrection.

Semi-Pelagianism

This was an impossible attempt in the 5th century to reconcile Augustinianism and Pelagianism, i.e. to unite Augustine's denial of human merit in salvation and upholding of predestination with Pelagius' affirmation of human ability. Fallen man has some power to do good, but needs grace as well after man's will seeks it first. Grace follows man's decision.

It denies election or that man is spiritually dead but states that man needs grace, that is the assistance of the Spirit in the Bible. Man has free will and can do good; the human will thus co-operates with the Spirit in regeneration (synergism). Thus the initiative in conversion is the will of the sinner, the Spirit then assists him.

Socinianism

The heretical teachings of Faustus Socinus (1539-1604). He denied the doctrine of the trinity and taught that Christ was just a man, but who became God's viceroy after his sinless life and resurrection. He denied the atonement, teaching a form of governmental theory - Christ's death was merely an example of faith and obedience. There is no punishment for sin; men repent from their own power. He also denied the person of the Holy Spirit, predestination, original sin, total depravity and hell. In a way, he was the first liberal theologian.

Appendix Two

THE DUTY-FAITH CONTROVERSY

This is a rallying cry for Sovereign Grace Baptists; indeed it is so because of Fullerism. In this sense the condemnation of 'Duty-Faith' is justified when it focuses upon the Amyraldism of Fuller and many Four-Point Calvinists today. Faith is *not* given as a reward for fulfilling our duty to God; it is a gift of grace. Duty-Faith had also been a feature of non-evangelical groups such as the Latitudinarians. These liberals in the Anglican Church of the 17th century taught that religion comprised merely of man's duty to God. Such works-righteousness was justifiably condemned as 'Duty-Faith' since it was just faith in the performance of man's duty combined with reason.

So, if the term 'Duty-Faith' is considered as implying works righteousness, or suggesting any natural power of man to believe, it is to be condemned outright as unbiblical. However we need to be careful about this term in order to be Biblical.

It is a shame that the confusing term was used to counter Amyraldian Baptist works since there is an evangelical meaning that is entirely true. Some Hyper-Calvinist Baptists wrongly believe it is inconsistent to command those who are spiritually dead to perform spiritual obligations. But that is exactly what God does - moral responsibility does not imply spiritual ability. In Acts 17:30 Paul says to unconverted Greeks:

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.⁴⁷

Speaking to a mixed company of Jews everywhere he went, John the Baptist commanded: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' (Matt 3:2)

The Lord himself did exactly the same:

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (Matt 4:17)

Indeed, Jesus' resurrection command to the disciples was that

Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Lk 24:47)

which clearly involves preaching repentance to unawakened sinners since there were no Christians or Gospel preaching in those nations at the time. [See also: Mk 1:14-15; Acts 3:19, 8:22, 13:38-41, 20:21.]

True Calvinists know that it is God who gives grace to repent and to believe;⁴⁸ man has no power to do any spiritual good of any kind. He is dead in sins and no one does good, no not one. Yet without doubt the command of the Gospel is to be preached indiscriminately to all sinners. This is due to the power of God being exerted in the Gospel message. With God, all things are possible, and the Gospel has power when the Holy Spirit applies it to the conscience of hearers who are elect. With them the Gospel is an empowering word; God

⁴⁷ Hyper Calvinists avoid the obvious literal force of this verse by arbitrarily interpreting the word 'repent' here as 'legal repentance' not 'evangelical repentance'. Firstly, this is the Fullerite error of interpreting words as one sees fit to avoid the evident concept taught. NT words must be interpreted in terms of strict Greek grammar and the clear context, not by man's shibboleths. No sound expositor in history understands this verse in such a way, except for a few Hyper Calvinists arising after 1650. Secondly, even if such a meaning of the Greek word existed, it can't mean that here as God demands man's repentance - a change of heart and mind from sin to follow him. Man's failure to turn and be converted is what seals his condemnation. God does not command a superficial, legalistic, fleshly repentance.

⁴⁸ **The gift of faith:** Acts 14:27, 18:27; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; Jn 6:29. **The gift of repentance:** Acts 5:31, 11:18; Rm 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25-26; Heb 12:17

gives power to believe and ability to repent with regeneration. The reprobate do not receive this power but are hardened in their sins by the words of Christ.

This is similar to the power Jesus expressed when he commanded impossible things of men. He told dead men to rise up from the tomb; he told blind eyes to see and crippled men to get up and walk. The word of Christ brings power to those it is meant to affect. Not every cripple was cured by Christ, nor every blind man; few dead people were raised up; but those he commanded to do the impossible did it.

The command to repent and believe is exactly the same. Our responsibility as disciples of Christ is to preach this word to all. Those who respond are the elect that God empowers to come to him. The majority reject the word and are hardened in their sin and rebellion, and receive a greater condemnation. This command can be considered as man's duty, or responsibility as a created being, to believe and repent; failure for which will be judged. Those commanded are under a duty or obligation.

The command to repent and believe in Christ does not imply any 'creature power' in man, as unbiblical rationalism believes. Those who trust only in God's word understand that man has no spiritual power, cannot do good, cannot believe and cannot repent - yet true Gospel preaching commands that sinful men must repent and believe. We disobey God if we fail to warn all men. Gospel preaching includes the command to repent, to believe and to be baptised as a result (Mk 1:15; Acts 2:38, 3:19). All men have a moral responsibility and accountability to obey God because he is their creator. The command of the Gospel reveals those who obey (because they are elect) and those who are rebels (because they are reprobate). The Gospel is the divine litmus test to reveal this.

A W Pink explains:

It is the bounden duty of all who hear the Gospel to savingly trust in Christ, otherwise their rejection of Him would be no *sin*.⁴⁹

The commission He has given His *servants* is to preach the Gospel to every creature, and they certainly have not fully obeyed until they bid their hearers "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). *Whom* God quickens, is His own affair; *ours* is to faithfully warn the unsaved, to show wherein their sins consists (enmity against God), to bid them to throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, to call upon them to repent (Acts 17:30), to proclaim the One who receives all who come to Him in faith.⁵⁰

This being the case, the words of a certain church's articles of faith [*Gospel Standard*] that follow are clearly both wrong and right:

We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance—these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Matt. 15:19; Jer. 17:9; John 6:44, 65). [This is clearly unbiblical.]

We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. [This is correct.] So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God (John 12:29, 40; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 8:7, 8; 1 Cor. 4:7). [This is incorrect.]

⁴⁹ From *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 15, no. 5 (May 1936).

⁵⁰ From *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 15, no. 8 (August 1936).

Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Spirit, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption. [This is wrong.]

Such a position misses the point that Christ's words bring power to the elect and that the Gospel must be preached to all men without exception. While we may endorse much else from this group, Pink shows how these particular articles have departed from both the Bible and historic Calvinism, by giving many quotes. I will give but a few (emphasis Pink's):

The mercy of God is *offered equally* to those who believe and to those who believe not, so that those who are not Divinely taught within are rendered inexcusable.

John Calvin, *The Eternal Predestination of God*, p95.

Christ commands men to believe in Him, yet His limitation is neither false nor contrary to His command when He says 'No man can come to Me except it were given him of My Father.' Let preaching therefore have its force to bring men to faith.

Calvin's *Institutes*, Book 3, chap 18, par 13.

With the promises there is joined an exhortation or command to believe, which is more general than the promise; because the promise is only made to believers; but the commandment is given to believers and unbelievers also. For the elect are mingled with the wicked in the same assemblies, and therefore the ministers of the Gospel ought indiscriminately *to exhort all and every one to repent*.

W. Perkins, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 379; Vol 2, p 692.

We are expressly commanded to believe, and that upon the highest promises, and under the greatest penalties. This command is that which makes believing formally a duty. Faith is a grace as it is freely wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, the root of all obedience and duties, as it is radically fixed in the heart. But as it is *commanded* it is a *duty*; and these commands, you know, are several ways expressed, by invitations, exhortations, propositions.

John Owen, *Works*, Vol 14, p 223.

Preach the Gospel to every creature ... it becomes *the duty of every one* to come to Christ, and a command is laid upon men to do it.

T. Goodwin, *Works*, Vol 8, p 245.

And even not coming to Christ, and believing in Him in this *spiritual* manner, when He is revealed in the external ministry of the Word, as God's way of salvation, is *criminal* and blameworthy, notwithstanding men's want of both will and power.

John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth*, p 87.

Regarding such historic, godly, Calvinists Pink says:

Their holding firmly to the spiritual inability of the natural man, to unconditional election, particular redemption, and the effectual call of the Spirit, *did not tie*

their hands in preaching the Gospel freely, pressing upon their hearers their responsibility, and calling upon them to repent and believe.

The rejection of Duty-Faith arose as an overreaction to the erroneous theology of Fuller and identifies the concept of responsibility (Duty) with Fuller's errors. This is tragic since the word of Christ himself is that we must preach the Gospel to all men and in that preaching command them to believe. This demonstrates all men's accountability to the God who made them.

To reject our obligation to preach faith and repentance to all men is an error, and is clearly unbiblical; the call of the Gospel must go out to all. Hyper Calvinists misunderstand the doctrine of effectual calling by denying that a call for faith and repentance goes out to the unregenerate. But Jesus said that there is a call that is rejected,

For many are called, but few chosen. (Matt 20:16, 22:14)

The number called is larger than the number chosen. The general call goes out to all, but the effectual call (the word that brings spiritual power) is heard only by the elect. Our job is to preach to all as fishers of men, but God gives us the catch of the right fish. As the Canons of the Synod of Dort state:

[The command to repent and believe must be proclaimed] to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel ... [Many] refuse to come and be converted. (Canons 2:5, 4, 4:9)

Practical outworking

Those who hold that we cannot preach repentance and faith to unbelievers usually teach that we must discriminate in the Gospel presentation; that we preach the law to the self-righteous and the Gospel to those awakened and sin-sick. We must not confuse sheep with goats, they say. Just how are we to do this? It is impossible for mere men to look into the heart of others and know their true condition before God. Even the apostles had converts that turned away and could not have been truly converted; and what about mixed-congregations?

There is no NT model which demonstrates that the apostles evaluated audiences before deciding how to preach other than this: to the Jews Paul preached law as a preamble to the Gospel (Acts 13), since that was how a Jew would be judged and they knew God. [But even here he focused upon Christ in the law not condemnation (Acts 13:38-39).] To the Gentiles he preached responsibility before the creator before expounding the Gospel (Acts 17), since they had no law and only knew pagan gods. In both cases, belief in Christ and repentance were the central part of the Gospel message (Acts 13:39, 17:30). John the Baptist preached **the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel** (Acts 13:24) without any discrimination, sheep or goats. The apostles did the same. In Acts 3 Peter preaches the Gospel to men who had seen a miracle. There is no indication that they were especially awakened to their own sin, they were simply amazed by the healing. In fact, they misunderstood and thought that Peter had special powers. In the message Peter condemns these people for their part in the crucifixion of the Lord. After explaining that Jesus was the Messiah who would suffer, Peter commands repentance without further Gospel clarification (Acts 3:19). Philip preached the Gospel to an Ethiopian from Isaiah 53, but did not expound the law. In fact Acts 8:35 specifically states that he preached Jesus to him.

There is no teaching in the NT that we have to preach law as a preparation for the Gospel; there is no model for it, no command to do it and no specific teaching on this. We are called to preach Christ, and him crucified, to Gentiles who have no law and to Jews who

do.⁵¹ It is the job of the Spirit to bring conviction of sin, not the law.⁵² The law was a pedagogue⁵³ to bring people to Christ in the sense that it was a temporary period of time leading up to the revelation of Christ in Israel; it revealed sin and showed all that there was no hope without a Messiah-deliverer. It is necessary in Gospel preaching to preach the guilt of sinners before a holy God, but this is part of the Gospel and is not preaching law as the law.

Law is not spoken of as a method of evangelism; no apostle teaches, 'Preach the law, then preach the promise'. Explaining man's guilt before God is part of the Gospel and is important, but it can be done in various ways; mainly by demonstrating the righteous requirement of Christ as God's standard for mankind. The moral law is now subsumed in Christ as the righteous man; the Mosaic Law is not God's standard for man, Christ is - who has fulfilled the law.⁵⁴ Christ is the Gospel, not law. Christ is the measure of godly man, not law. In fact the formal introduction of the law came after the initial Gospel message, both to Adam and Abraham (though the principles of God's will were known by oral tradition). Before Moses the elect were saved through hearing the Gospel promise; the law having not yet been given on tables of stone.⁵⁵ It was given to fully expose sin and reveal the need for the Messiah/Deliverer in the plan of God.

It is true that preachers should not 'require faith' as a worked up, fleshly duty from sinner, they should preach God's command that, **all men everywhere** must believe and repent. The sinner's reaction to this message determines whether they will then receive faith or reject Christ. God gives grace to the elect, but hardens the wicked reprobate. The Gospel command is the touchstone for this.

There is a world of difference between an Arminian preaching that 'all who come believing by their power will be saved', or 'make a decision to believe now' and the Biblical 'all who believe will be saved'.⁵⁶ The first is human will power - come with your own fleshly faith, the natural, human faith of Fuller; the second is that those who truly believe have already been given faith by God. Only those who truly believe will be saved. True faith comes from God.

I will close by adding some quotes from John Gill (many more could be added), often maligned as a Hyper-Calvinist, and championed by opposers of Duty-Faith. Gill clearly agrees with the position put forward in this paper:

It is both the duty and interest of men to repent and turn to God, that they may have a discovery of the remission of their sins through the blood of Christ.
The Cause of God and Truth, p128.

⁵¹ 1 Cor 1:23, we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.

⁵² Jn 16:8, And when he has come, he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

⁵³ In Greek, the trusted slave who took the master's children to school.

⁵⁴ The Law is a standard for man in as much as it is a shadow of Christ. But better to preach the full reality than the shadow.

⁵⁵ Gal 3:16-19, Now to Abraham and his Seed [Christ] were the promises made ... the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later ... What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. However, God's will was known and understood from Adam onwards, both objectively through oral tradition and inwardly in the conscience.

⁵⁶ Mk 16:16, He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. Lk 8:12, believe and be saved. Acts 16:31, So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' Rm 10:9, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

It has been God's command in all ages, and to all men that they repent; as all men are indeed bound... though all men are not called by the gospel to an evangelical one.

The Cause of God and Truth, p128.

What God commands is the rule of man's duty, yet not the measure of his strength. It is no good arguing from God's commands, to man's power in his present state. God requires men to keep the whole law; it does not follow from thence, that they are able to do it. So, though it is *his commandment, that we should believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and repent*; yet it is certain, that faith is *not of ourselves*, it is a *gift of grace, and of the operation of God*; and the same may be said of repentance.

The Cause of God and Truth, p334.

The commands of God show his authority, and man's duty; the promises of God discover his grace and power, and are a relief to man's weakness, which no way lessen his obligation to duty.

The Cause of God and Truth, p340.

Though admitting internal conversion is meant, God's requiring it does not suppose man's ability to perform it, but his need of it; and is done with a view to bring him to a sense of his state, and that he may apply to God for it,

The Cause of God and Truth, p341.

It will be granted, that God requires all men, and it is their indispensable duty, to love him with all their heart, soul, and strength, to fear him always, and keep his commandments ... but then none of these things contradict the decree of reprobation; for they only express God's will of command, and show what is man's duty to do; and which, if done, would be grateful and well-pleasing to God, and approved of by him, but not his will, determining what shall be done.

The Cause of God and Truth, p436.

It is true, indeed, it is his will of command, that all men should repent, and turn from the evil of their ways, but this is more properly expressive of what is man's duty, than of what is the will of God; or in other words, this shows what God has made it man's duty to do, and not what he himself has willed shall be done.

The Cause of God and Truth, p445.

God's command only expresses what is his will should be man's duty, not what he has determined shall be done. It may be every man's duty to be holy, and yet God may resolve not to give his grace to some persons to make them holy, without which they cannot be so.

The Cause of God and Truth, p452.

This argument proceeds upon God's will of command, which does not thwart his will of purpose. These two wills, though they differ, are not contradictory; the purpose of God is from eternity: his command is in time; the one is within himself, the other put forth from himself; the one is always fulfilled, the other seldom; the one cannot be resisted, the other may; the will of command only signifies, what is the pleasure of God should be the duty of man, or what he *should* do, but not what he *shall* do. Now admitting that it is God's will of command, that not only all to whom the Gospel is vouchsafed, but even all

mankind, should repent, believe, and obey; it does not follow, that it is the determining will of God to give grace to all men to repent, believe, and obey; nor does it contradict such a will in God, determining to give grace to some, to enable them to repent, believe, and obey, and to deny it to others.

The Cause of God and Truth, p456.

1 John 3:23, Acts 17:30, only declare God's will of command, or what he has made man's duty, but not his intentions, purposes, counsels and decrees concerning what man shall do, or he will bestow upon him; and so in no wise contradict the doctrines of absolute election and reprobation.

The Cause of God and Truth, p457.

It is one thing for God to will and wish, that is, command and approve, what is entirely man's duty to do, though he does not see fit to give him grace to execute it, which he is not obliged to do; and another thing to will and wish the salvation of all men, which entirely depends upon himself, and which, if he did wish, he would surely see fit to execute.

The Cause of God and Truth, p491.

In an essay in a recently republished book, George Ella says,

Gill was at the forefront in calling, inviting, pleading with and exhorting men to turn to Christ. But in doing so, he did not expect them to turn to God through a feeling of duty but to be turned to God through a faith-producing work of God's grace.⁵⁷

This is a good summary of the Biblical position.

I can't resist adding a few words from that able critic of Fuller, William Rushton:

While I firmly maintain eternal election and particular redemption ... these doctrines are by no means inconsistent with the free exhibition of Christ to sinners as such, nor with the solemn calls and invitations of the gospel. So far from being inimical to Scriptural warnings addressed to the unconverted, I think that no minister of Christ is clear from the blood of all men who does not use them freely ... The publication of the Gospel is the Lord's appointed means of gathering in the redeemed ... it never can be confined within the bounds of a human system.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Introductory Essay in William Rushton's *Particular Redemption*, p34.

⁵⁸ *Particular Redemption*, footnote: p117.

Appendix Three

EXAMPLES OF PRAISE FOR FULLER

Displaying a worrying lack of discernment.

One of the first theologians, and one of the most useful preachers of an age which abounded in distinguished men. ... His writings are principally in defence of the cardinal doctrines of our common Christianity.

Andrew Gunton Fuller, (Fuller's son) Memoir of Andrew Fuller, *Fuller's Works*, Vol 3, p547.

Andrew Fuller was a Biblical theologian driven by a pastor's heart ... never straying from the doctrines of Grace ... Andrew Fuller in no way rejected what could be called Calvinism ... we owe him a great debt!

Biography from, *The Baptist Page* website.

I am working on Andrew Fuller for the Pastors' Conference [2007]. Andrew Fuller was the major ropeholder for William Carey and a very shrewd "understander" of Calvinism in his eighteenth-century day.

John Piper, Conversation with pastors, 29.9.2006, *Desiring God Conference*.

Fuller's insistence on the duty of all men everywhere to believe the gospel...played a determinative role in the crystallisation of Carey's missionary vision.

Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1961, p24.

Andrew Fuller not only championed the cause of foreign missions but strongly defended the Doctrines of Grace.

Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1986, p. 129.

Andrew Fuller's work ... made perhaps the most notable contribution towards providing a missionary theology and incentive for world evangelism in the midst of a people both Calvinistic and church oriented.

Timothy George and David S. Dockery, *Baptist Theologians*, Broadman Press: Nashville, 1990, pp. 132-133.

Fuller is a central figure in Baptist history. His writings, not only for their volume, extent, and scope, but for their enduring importance, are major documents in the Baptist story. ... This epoch-making book [*The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*] sought to be faithful to the central emphases of historic Calvinism while at the same time attempting to leave preachers with no alternative but to drive home to their hearers the universal obligations of repentance and faith.

Michael Haykin, *Andrew Fuller: Life & Legacy*, from the Andrew Fuller Project website.

Perhaps the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to our [i.e. the Calvinistic Baptist] denomination.

John Ryland, Jr. (1753-1825), funeral sermon preached for Andrew Fuller in 1815.

[Fuller is one who] held the antinomy of Predestination and Responsibility with an iron grasp.

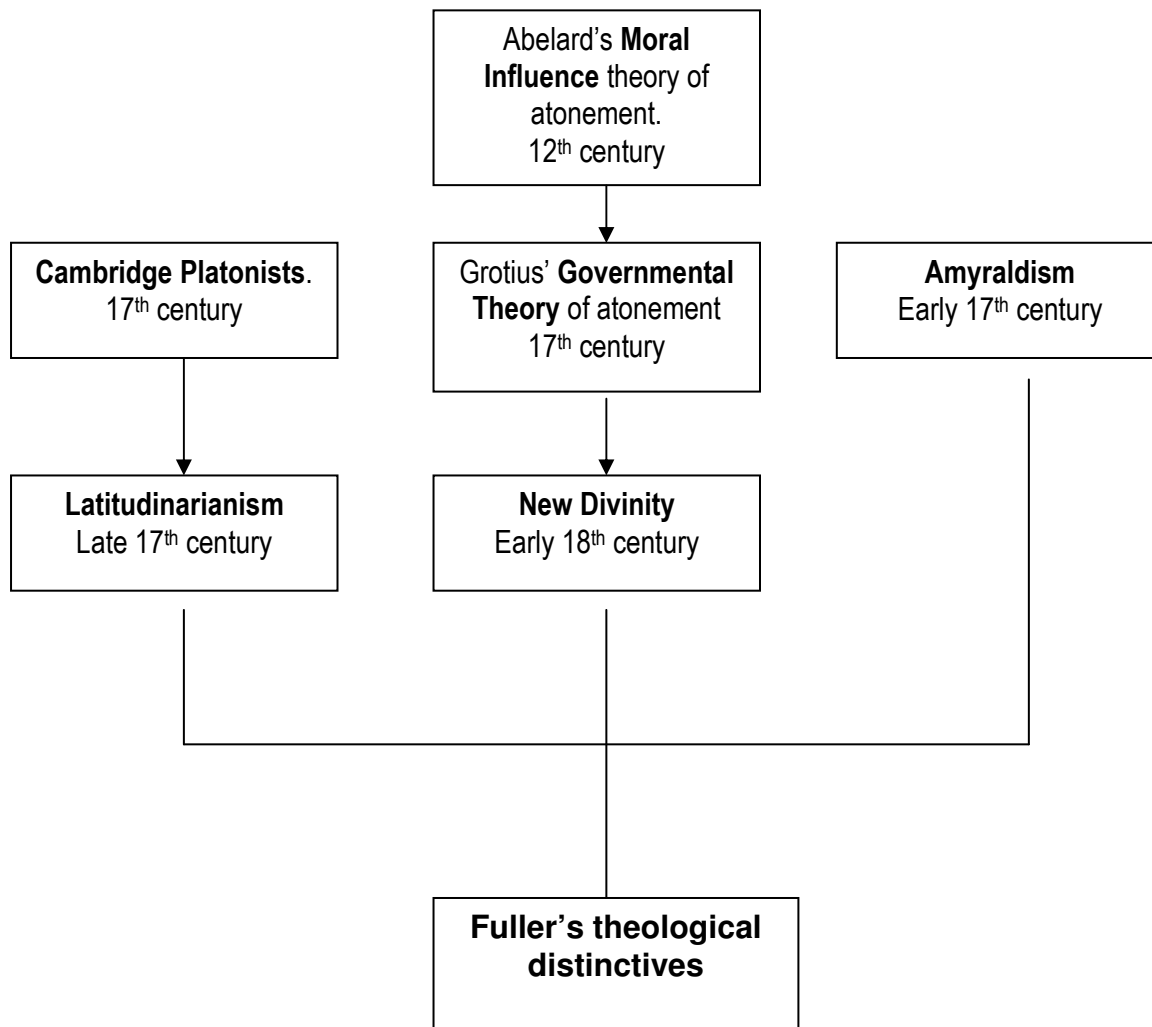
Errol Hulse, quoted in Kenneth Good, *Are Baptists Calvinists?* p76.

It may be said that he was the soundest and most creatively useful theologian the Particular Baptists have ever had.

A C Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, p166.

Both the *Banner of Truth* and *Sword & Trowel* magazines have published articles praising Fuller.

Appendix Four

SOURCES OF FULLER'S THEOLOGY

Appendix Five

A SIMPLIFIED ABSTRACT OF FULLER'S THEOLOGY

Universal, natural (moral) law is the original and superlative rule of action for men. It supersedes the revealed law (Mosaic Law). Men can respond to this law and reach God without special grace.

Man is not totally depraved or spiritually unable; since God commands belief, man must be able to repent and believe if he has the inclination. All man's powers are untouched by the Fall, apart from some moral weakness. Adam's sin was not imputed to all men; the Fall was figurative.

Christ's atonement did not secure the salvation of any particular men or pay the debt of a certain number of sins. He died for all equally, but not as a suffering substitute. The cross is a deterrent against sin and a moral example to spur men on to use their powers to believe, to give them moral inclination for faith.

God's justice is not revealed in wrath against sin or in the punishment of man's sin on the cross. **Jesus did not become sin** for the elect. Man's sin was not transferred to Christ.

There is no effectual call, the Gospel is a free offer of salvation to all who hear. It is man's duty to believe and he has the power to believe. Those who choose can believe unto salvation.

Repentance leads to justification, which does not change people, does not involve the imputation of Christ's righteousness, or adoption and is merely a declaration of pardon. It arises from man's actions obeying the moral law.

Sanctification advances through exercising natural abilities in obedience to the moral law. Growth in holiness is human obedience to duty. As a man's natural powers expand, so his virtue increases.

Appendix Six

A DEEPER LOOK AT FULLER'S VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT⁵⁹

Fuller deliberately connived to appear evangelical while teaching error. He says that he believes in particular redemption but only explains it differently;⁶⁰ yet he then explains that the particularity is in election not in the atonement itself.⁶¹ In other words this is Amyraldism, the atonement is universal but the effect is particular. To avoid this being obvious, Fuller teaches an *indefinite* atonement rather than a universal one since a universal atonement openly contradicts the sovereign election of some; so, the cross was for sin generally not a number of people specifically. However, this does not solve the problem, he still teaches that Christ's atonement is not in agreement with God's eternal counsel of particular grace. Christ's death is in some way sufficient for all, but God's sending of the Son to die was only for some. The work of the Son is thus at odds with the purpose of the Father.

Fuller makes the atonement and redemption two separate works. The Bible shows us that atonement is the redemption of sinners and reconciliation of them with God. Reconciliation and deliverance from sin, death and Satan are by the same work resulting from the Father's eternal decree. Fuller makes atonement an act of reconciliation by the cross for the whole world, resulting from a decree for the reconciliation of every man. Redemption is by a separate decree, that of election, by which only the elect are redeemed that has nothing to do with reconciliation. As well as being unbiblical, this cannot masquerade as Calvinism. It teaches a potential universal salvation but a particular election and is thus Amyraldism. How can there be such confusion in God?

Fuller denies vicarious, substitutionary, penal atonement

By denying this he places himself further outside orthodoxy than Arminians, who teach that Christ died vicariously for all men. If the atonement is only indefinite, and then applied to those God chooses, then Christ died for no one in particular. How is anyone saved? Fuller neither affirms that Christ died for all (as Arminians) or that he died for some (as Calvinism), but that his death has an indefinite merit before God ('he died for sin').

Fuller teaches that the atonement is sufficient for all but intended as efficient only for some (the elect)

There are many problems with this:

- This means a work of God failed in its objective. Jesus' blood was shed for many men who went to hell. This is appalling. Why would Christ pay the ransom for all but only redeem some? How can God do an imperfect work or waste something precious?
- Since God knows the future, and knows who will be converted, why would he do this?
- It makes the effective cause of conversion the action of men not God, who just provides a conditional universal salvation. Though Fuller sometimes attributes conversion to God as electing men (this would be Amyraldism), in other places he explains that this

⁵⁹ I am indebted to Rushton and Boyce in this appendix.

⁶⁰ *Dialogues* p233-234. *Works*, Vol. II, p. 692 to 698.

⁶¹ *Dialogues* p248. The particularity of Redemption consists in the sovereign pleasure of God with regard to the application of the Atonement, that is with regard to the persons to whom it shall be applied.

election is merely denominating those who improve their situation by obeying the law in their own strength (as in Pelagianism).

- God's justice requires a perfect satisfaction for sin, therefore a vicarious substitute, rather than a global vague sufficiency. Fuller expressly denies this.
- What's the point of atonement being sufficient for those it was not intended? How can the atonement be sufficient for those Christ did not die for?
- A universal atonement conditional on men believing is Arminian.
- An atonement that is universally sufficient, but only effective if men believe, means that Christ's atonement secures nobody. The salvation of men is thus left to chance, or rather the whim of men.
- Biblical atonement makes the salvation of the elect sure and certain; Fuller's atonement merely makes the salvation of all men possible.

Fuller refuses to understand that sin is a debt and the atonement is payment.⁶²

He even insists that mistakes arise from this consideration.⁶³ That sins are debts is clear from Matt 6:12 which forms the basis of how we pray. This demeaning of the way that God has chosen to describe the result of sin to God's honour is close to blasphemy and is certainly disobedience. This is why Fuller cannot comprehend the whole system of redemption; he fails to grasp the importance of the concept of a ransom to be paid for our transgressions. The blood of Christ is this ransom; it pays back what is owed by our sins. This is the clear testimony of scripture in many places,⁶⁴ but Fuller refuses to accept this since it is 'commercial' language and clearly implies transference (imputation) of sins and righteousness - something Fuller rejects.

Fuller denies imputation⁶⁵

This is a fundamental error of huge proportions. Crucial to forgiveness of sin and satisfaction of God's justice is the actual transfer of our sins to Christ and his bearing of them in punishment to death. The soul that sins must die, so a death has to occur to pay for specific sins. Without this there is no atonement. Scripture testifies of this from cover to cover: in the typological offerings before the Tabernacle, in the Psalms where the Messiah speaks of the sorrow for the sins he bears and in the prophets who speak of the Deliverer bearing sin and having our iniquity laid upon him. To this is added the clear words of the apostles that we have already mentioned. All this Fuller denies. Without the imputation and actual transfer of our sin to Christ on the cross, God's wrath still hangs over us.

Following on from the denial of imputation is the misrepresentation of justification.

Biblical justification is the complete removal of guilt (Rm 4:25; Cor 6:11), pardoning from judgment /wrath on sin (Rm 5:9) and establishing in a righteous new life in peace with God (Rm 5:1, 16-18; Titus 3:7). Fuller does not focus on justification at all, but when he mentions it he claims that man has a natural disposition to repent and then becomes justified. He thus divorces justification from the work of Christ and the grace of God. If sin is not transferable, if crimes are not transferable (as Fuller claims), then God may be able to pardon a sinner (on the supposed transfer of the benefits of Christ's righteousness) but the sinner cannot be justified because the actual sin has not been dealt with. This is similar to Roman Catholic understanding of justification as mere pardon, a notion that is finding its way into evangelical circles today.

⁶² *Dialogues*, p162.

⁶³ *Ibid* p218.

⁶⁴ Matt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Eph 1:7; 1 Tim 2:6; 1 Pt 1:18-19.

⁶⁵ Neither sin nor righteousness are in themselves transferable, *Dialogues* p213, see also p209, 219.

Without the imputation of our sins to Christ, and the subsequent imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (both denied by Fuller) we cannot be justified in Biblical terms. Justification results from iniquities being borne away by the scapegoat in the Old Testament, and the antitype of this is our sins being placed on Christ, and borne away to death. **By His knowledge my righteous Servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities** (Isa 53:11). Justification follows the imputation of sin and righteousness. Fuller says that sins cannot be obliterated, only the effects of them; but the truly justified saint is free from sin (Rm 6:7); sin is blotted out (Acts 3:19), remitted (Matt 26:28), removed (Ps 103:12), and annihilated (Micah 7:19). In Fuller's theological system, saints are not justified in the Biblical sense at all.

The fruit of justification

For Fuller only the effects, or the benefits, of Christ's righteousness are transferable to men; there is no real constitutional change in saints. How he can avoid 2 Cor 5:17 is amazing! The Bible, however, asserts that receiving Christ's righteousness in justification makes a massive change. The believer is raised up and legally counted righteous in the throne room of heaven and can sit with Christ (Eph 2:6). He is made glorious even in this life, grace being glory begun (Rm 8:30; Isa 60:1). He is taken into the family of God with legal rights as a son and heir (Rm 8:17). He is given eternal life through righteousness (Rm 5:17, 21). Indeed, the goal of salvation for Fuller is merely to regain the state Adam lost; but the Bible's goal for saints is conformity to the last Adam - Jesus Christ. Fuller merely wants the first man (Adamic humanity) treated as if he was righteous; God's plan is for the Second Man to be the firstborn of a new race (1 Cor 15:47-49; 1 Jn 4:17).

Federal benefits

Christ is the federal (covenant) head of his people. Just as Adam was the federal head of mankind and his fall ensued in the sin and guilt of all his progeny, so the obedience and righteousness of Christ (the final Adam) is passed on to his own people (Rm 5:14-15). The elect are vitally united to Christ, hidden in him (Col 3:3), so that they died with him (Rm 6:7), were crucified with him (Gal 2:20), were raised with him (Eph 2:6) and are righteous in him (1 Cor 1:30). After being called, they are granted the graces of faith, repentance, and new life in Christ as a result of the death of Christ. Christ died to give his covenant people faith and life (Rm 8:32). The beneficiaries of Christ's death are the very people given to Christ by the Father, the people elected in eternity (Jn 17: 6, 12, 24).

Now if, according to Fuller, the death of Christ is sufficient for everyone, then the benefits of Christ's death are also for everyone. The result is universalism - everyone gets converted and saved and there is no hell. Fuller's atonement is totally unbiblical.

Conclusion

The cross is the touchstone of Biblical orthodoxy. If a person has significantly erroneous views of the atonement then the whole of his theology is going to be wrong. One cannot teach such seriously flawed views of the cross as these and still be considered a Christian theologian. Pelagius is not considered a Christian teacher, yet Fuller's views on man's natural estate are of similar import. Socinus isn't considered an evangelical theologian yet Fuller's theological system is similar. Grotius departed from Biblical theology and his followers became liberal, yet Fuller's view of the atonement owes much to Grotius and his Northamptonshire church connection also ended up liberal. How then can Fuller be considered not only a Christian theologian in the minimal sense of the word, but be championed as the greatest of his generation? How can esteemed evangelical churches and organisations today recommend Fuller as a sound teacher to be followed?

A COMPARISON OF SYSTEMS REGARDING THE ATONEMENT

Biblical theology vs. Paganism

God saves his people	Man saves himself
SALVATION THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST'S ATONEMENT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Man is dead in sins and cannot contribute to his salvation. He can do no good or spiritual work. 	PELAGIANISM - man is not totally depraved and saves himself by good works.
	SOCINIANISM - men repent by their own power. There is no penal atonement; Christ's death was just a moral example.
	PAGANISM - works of man focused on innumerable disciplines: mysticism, idolatry, asceticism, meditation, occultism etc.
	EVOLUTIONARY HUMANISM - man is slowly evolving into a better species.
	LIBERAL THEOLOGY - God is not involved in any supernatural way. He is a moral figurehead.

Biblical theology vs. compromised evangelicalism

Monergism Salvation is of the Lord alone	Synergism Man co-operates with God
SALVATION THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST'S ATONEMENT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Man repents and believes only when grace has been given to him through the effectual call of the Spirit in regenerating the human heart. This call goes out to the elect alone. God loves his people alone. Represented in historic theology by Calvinism, Augustinianism or Reformed Theology. This theology is the <i>original</i> basis of: Presbyterian, Anglican, Congregational, Baptist, Brethren and many Independent churches. [Luther's original position was also very close to this.] 	ARMINIANISM - (Semi-Pelagianism) man saves himself (by his free-will choice) based upon an existent grace of God to all men, who loves everyone and sent Jesus to die for everyone.
	ROMANISM - a Semi-Pelagian, works-salvation system focused upon the sacraments of the church.
	THE FREE-OFFER - God loves everyone, Christ died for everyone, anyone can choose to believe and be saved on hearing the Gospel offer.
	LUTHERANISM - Salvation is offered to all who believe (no election), because satisfaction for sin has been made. Man not completely corrupt. Baptismal regeneration (baptism necessary for salvation).
	AMYRALDISM - God loves everyone and the atonement is theoretically universal (i.e. not just for the elect) but in the end God elects who will be saved; thus they choose to believe. [An inconsistent, confused attempt to bridge Calvinistic and Arminian / Lutheran concepts.]

From this one can see that the confusing system of Fuller is a hotchpotch, pick and mix of various unbiblical theologies to create a dangerous collaboration of Pelagianism, Socinianism, Amyraldism and the Free-Offer. As a result of his selection of various elements of each, it becomes difficult to confront these in his works, especially as he changes his position and the meaning of his terminology.

Appendix Seven

EXAMPLES OF FULLER'S INCONSISTENT & CONTRADICTORY LANGUAGE AND DISINGENUOUS ARGUMENTATION

1. **Universalism and particularism:** Fuller uses particular language when wishing to appear Calvinistic - such as that Christ laid down his life for his sheep - and then later states that Christ's death was of such a fulness that it is sufficient for the whole world.
2. **Atonement is universal, or indefinite, but redemption is particular - in that God's purpose applies atonement to the elect.** If the death of Christ is ultimately for the elect alone (as Fuller states), the particularism is not *merely* in God's purpose to apply it to some, Christ only died for some. If the atonement is indefinite (as Fuller also states) then Christ didn't die for the elect alone. If the death of Christ be special, it is no more indefinite; if it be indefinite, it is no more special.⁶⁶
3. **Application of atonement:** In scripture the application of atonement depends upon God's purpose - to save the elect; the Spirit applies the work of Christ to the men he died for. But Fuller makes the application dependent upon the believing of the sinner since atonement is indefinite.
4. **God's decree is separated from Christ's atonement:** God's absolute purpose to save the elect is admitted by Fuller, yet he makes Christ's atonement conditionally sufficient for all.
5. **The penal suffering of Christ:** Fuller denies that Christ's sufferings were a real punishment for sin. If this is true, then the guilt of man's sin was never punished, and thus not paid for. Justice has not been served and God's wrath not averted. Either God's justice is abused at the expense of his mercy, or guilt remains upon the saved.
6. **The meaning of words.** Fuller gives words a 'proper' and 'improper' meaning, which he then defines in whatever way suits his current purpose. If he dislikes a clear Biblical meaning (such as 'imputation' or 'Christ became sin') he dismisses this as figurative language, despite being clearly understood by Christians for hundreds of years.
7. **Misrepresentation of clear Biblical statements:** for instance, Fuller states that sin cannot be transferred and sin was not really imputed to Christ but only the *appearance* of it (cf. argument in Rm 4); that Christ only suffered *as though* he were guilty (cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pt 2:24, 3:18 - bearing sins incurs the guilt and transfer of them);⁶⁷ or that only the *effects* Christ's righteousness were imputed to us.
8. **Misrepresenting God:** e.g. when Fuller says that in justification God arbitrarily accounts a sinner righteous, when sin has not actually been judged and put away, he represents God as lying. But God exalts his word above all his name (Ps 138:2).
9. **Contradiction:** for instance, Fuller teaches that Christ did not die as a substitute for any sinner, but died in some vague general and abstract way for sin - thus there is the possibility of salvation. This is a fundamental plank of his theology. Yet in some places he also states that Christ died for his sheep.

⁶⁶ William Rushton, *Particular Redemption*, p67.

⁶⁷ Note in the OT offerings that typify Christ's sacrifice, the Hebrew word 'sin-offering' really means 'sin' itself. In Lev 4:21, the bull is literally, 'the sin of the assembly'. The offering took on the congregation's sin.

Appendix Eight

A COMPARISON OF THEOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Subject	Calvinism	Fullerism
God's justice	God judges sin by condemning the wicked in hell and by pouring out his wrath on Christ who bore the sins of the elect.	Denies that Christ became sin for the elect. There is no revelation of wrath for past sins, therefore no justice for transgressions.
God's will	God's will of decree (the salvation of the elect) and God's will of command (all must repent). There is no contradiction.	God's secret will (he saves the elect) and God's revealed will (he desires the salvation of all). These contradict each other.
Law	The Law of Moses reveals sin and condemns it, exposing man's need for a saviour. The Law of Christ (the Gospel) is the fulfilment of all God's will in Christ applied by the Spirit.	Natural law is known by men and is above revealed (Mosaic) law. By obeying the law (duty) men are led to faith.
Man	Man is fallen and totally depraved.	Man can do spiritual good. The Fall did not render man unable.
The cross	Christ became sin for the elect and suffered the wrath of God in their place.	The cross is no different to OT sacrifices. Christ was not a vicarious substitute. Christ was not punished for our sins. The cross is a moral spur and deterrent.
Regeneration	The Spirit comes sovereignly to men to give new birth, the grace of faith and the ability to repent.	This is ignored. Man needs no grace to believe, just a moral example in the cross.
Justification	Arises from Christ's atonement and the imputation of his righteousness to the elect. It leads to a new nature, adoption and a new legal standing & pardon.	Arises from man's efforts in obeying natural law and flows from repentance. It is merely a declaration of pardon and does not change people.
Imputation of sin	The guilt and corruption of Adam's sin is transferred to all men.	This is denied.
Imputation of righteousness	The righteousness of Christ, gained from his perfect obedience to the law, is transferred to the elect at justification.	This is denied.
Sanctification	The Holy Spirit applies the cross to believers and empowers them to live holy lives.	Sanctification is by human endeavour and not the Spirit.
The Gospel	The Gospel is preached to all but only the elect are drawn and given faith.	Anyone can be saved if they choose to believe. All who hear the Gospel have power to believe.
Overall thrust	God is sovereign in salvation. Man is powerless.	Salvation is man-centred.

Calvinism	Amyraldism	Arminianism	Fullerism
Total Depravity - man is dead in sin and can do no spiritual good work.	Moral inability only.	Man is not totally depraved; he is sinful but is able to believe. [Evangelical Arminians teach that a general, resistible, prevenient grace is needed.]	Man is not totally depraved but is able to believe. He is not spiritually dead and can reach out for God by natural powers, but is morally weakened.
Unconditional Election - only the elect are chosen in eternity and loved.	God loves everyone. However, God chooses some and gives them moral ability.	God loves everyone but foresees who will believe and elects these.	Those who believe are elect and foreseen. God does not reprobate people. God loves everyone.
Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption - Christ died as a penal substitute for his people only.	Universalism - The atonement is theoretically possible for everyone, but for the elect in reality.	Unlimited atonement; Christ died vicariously for everyone.	Indefinite atonement. There is no vicarious atonement; the cross is a moral example. Christ was not punished for sin.
Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling - only the elect are empowered and drawn in the Gospel.	Since man does not believe, God saves a certain number and grants faith.	Grace is available for all equally. The decision is man's.	There is no effectual calling. Man grasps grace himself, which then becomes irresistible. Man determines his salvation.
Perseverance of the saints or eternal security.	Agrees.	Believers can fall away and be lost.	Believers are eternally secure, but this should not be preached openly.

Subject	Socinianism	Fullerism
The Bible	The Bible is not inspired as reflective of God's will, some didactic parts are more inspired than others.	Fuller's view of moral and positive obedience, plus his teaching of the spirit rather than the letter of the law, approaches this. Fuller's figurative interpretation of literal Biblical terms (such as justification, imputation) further demeans scripture. God's will contradicts his revelation. God's revealed law is subservient to natural law.
Reason & revelation	Reason is the central feature and the final arbiter.	Much of Fuller's system is based upon his reasoning and arguing from the earthly to the spiritual. Rationalism ('right reason') undergirds Fuller's theology.
God's knowledge	God does not certainly know the future. God does not determine man's life. [Shades of the modern Open Theism]	Fuller has a similar view. Man, not God, controls who is saved. The atonement doesn't necessarily atone, the Fall doesn't hinder - typical Socinianism.
The Trinity	This doctrine is irrational and contrary to reason.	Fuller does not deny the Trinity, but his treatment of it is irrational. The Trinity is not engaged to save the elect. The Father ignores the atonement and applies election directly to those who believe. The Spirit is not involved in sanctification.
The image of God in man	The image consists of reason and mind. This is something of God in men.	The image is: reason, conscience and immortality, which are not lost. The Fall has not radically damaged man. There is something of God in every man (like the Quaker 'divine spark').
The Fall of Adam	No imputation of Adam's sin and guilt, no original sin. Man's sin is his own. The image is not lost or fallen	No imputation of Adam's sin and guilt; guilt cannot be transferred. The image is not lost or fallen. Adam is the prototype of man if he repents (i.e. less than the NT teaching which puts believers into Christ not Adam - this is worse than the Socinians).
The payment of sin's wages and forgiveness	The punishment of guilt cannot be borne by a substitute. This idea is contrary to grace. There is no imputation of righteousness. The cross is a moral example. There is no wrath against sin. Forgiveness of sins arises from a change in the rules after Christ's death.	In essence, Fuller virtually agrees with all of this. His arguments about debtor and creditor in connection with redemption are very similar to Socinian statements.
Imputed righteousness	Christ's righteousness is not imputed to men but they are treated as if like him. Repentance leads to righteousness.	Fuller agrees. The act of believing is imputed to men for righteousness.
The cross	Is not a penal substitution, but is a martyr's death in the cause of righteousness. Shows God's hatred of sin.	Fuller's view is very similar. He even equates the cross on the same level (or less) as OT offerings. There is no power in the blood.
Moral government	To enforce moral government, God shows his displeasure against sin in the cross.	Fuller agrees. The cross has a merely symbolic function.

This last table is adapted from: George M. Ella, *Law & Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, p151ff.

Appendix Nine

THE EFFECTS OF FULLER'S THEOLOGY

If it were not for William Carey, I doubt that Fuller would have been remembered with such fondness. By working tirelessly for the missionary society and by his support of Carey, Fuller is remembered as a champion of missions. The sacrificial work and Gospel successes of Carey rubbed off on Fuller. While Carey's lonely mission in Serampore helped to provoke over a hundred years of missionary interest, Fuller's practical influence at home was poor. Recent claims that he was a force for vibrant change for good are false.⁶⁸

In fact, the effect of Fuller's teaching had deplorable effects upon his own church, which even he was forced to admit. I have mentioned earlier his 1814 investigation of churches in his connection; these had not grown, were not as successful as the local Anglican churches and the key reason was the scattering of the flock caused by his own contentious doctrines.⁶⁹ Fuller admitted that church membership was relatively small and that no real growth had occurred over the time of his ministry. He even wrote an essay called, *On the Decline of the Dissenting Interest*. As Fuller's ideas took hold after his death, his connection eventually ended up liberal. Fuller's theology caused the death of evangelicalism in his own church alliance.⁷⁰

True Gospel preachers, both contemporary with Fuller and shortly after his death, poured scorn upon the erroneous views Fuller taught and predicted the terrible consequences that would follow. These men were correct. They include William Rushton [see his list of negative effects of Fuller's theology in his conclusion of *Particular Redemption*], John Stevens and Abraham Booth. Despite Fuller's condemnation of High Calvinist preachers, history records that such men had great success in soul winning (see introduction).

The effect on today's church

The church has not learned its lesson. Fuller brought in a new theological approach that was designed to make it easier for men to become Christians, he did this by elevating man's natural powers to repent and believe. However, the net result was that the church degenerated because the truth was diminished. What he did was to make the church more worldly, and even more fashionable, by emphasising man's strength. Today more and more methodologies arise to continue this error, by seeking to make it easier for sinners to feel comfortable under the Gospel. While numbers may increase for a short time, in the end the results are always the same - when truth is compromised, the church degenerates. Only the truth sets people free; anything that weakens the presentation of truth damages the Gospel and produces spurious converts.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Banner of Truth Magazine*, Issue 386, p20.

⁶⁹ John Stevens says, No small contention arose amongst many who had dwelt in quietness together, before what then obtained the name of Fullerism was known among them. ... [This] gave place to agitation and dissension, and many humble quiet souls became sorely unsettled and distressed in diverse places. *Help for the True Disciples of Immanuel*, p. v-vi. (An Association letter to 36 churches.)

⁷⁰ Fuller's local churches around Kettering and Northampton were the most influenced by his teaching. By 1889 the Northamptonshire Association renounced verbal inspiration while many of Fuller's disciples joined up with Arminians.

⁷¹ The methods continue, whether it is the seeker-sensitive, practical apparatus of Willow Creek, the decisionism of large campaign evangelism, or the dumbed-down theology of the Alpha Course; the results are the same. Truth is minimised, the Gospel made comfortable, and converts are largely spurious, falling away in time. This was true in CG Finney's day and is still true today.

Historically, the Arminian churches weakened the Gospel by teaching that man co-operates with God in salvation. This led to man-focused evangelistic messages and an emphasis upon man's supposed 'free-will' in coming to Christ.⁷² In 18th century England and America the main spearhead for such teaching was Wesley's Methodist preachers. In Britain, Methodism gradually diminished after Wesley's death, to the point today where it is numerically close to extinction. The effect of powerful Calvinistic preachers in Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches meant that large numbers continued to be brought to Christ by the preaching of God's sovereignty and free grace.

In 19th century America, Methodist preachers, especially the circuit preachers and preaching in Camp Meetings, led to a growing Arminian influence; coupled with this was the extreme Arminianism (even Pelagianism) of Charles Finney. This impacted first upon the Holiness Movement and then the development of Pentecostalism at the beginning of the 20th century. These combined with the effects of the Welsh Revival and the Keswick Conference teachings which spread Arminian or Semi-Arminian notions further afield.⁷³ At the same time the American campaign evangelists brought an Arminian emphasis upon the love of God for all men and the death of Christ for everyone, to large evangelistic crusades in the U.S. and Great Britain. This continued from DL Moody to Billy Graham. The result was the rising tide of easy-believism, decisionism, free-willism, superficial converts and other effects of Arminian teachings.

During this weakening of the Gospel, that affected many evangelical denominations, numerous Baptists and Presbyterians continued to hold on to the old paths of Biblical truth as expressed in Calvinistic theology. However, gradually five-point Calvinists began to be affected by the tide of error and started to shed Limited Atonement, becoming 4-point compromised Calvinists. Theologically, this was a return to the error of Amyraldism.

But still many Baptists and Presbyterians, though a minority, held to Calvinism. That is until the teaching of Fuller started to become very popular. Fuller's original teaching had contributed, by trickle effect, to the growth of Arminianism and Amyraldism since the early 19th century, but his direct influence was small outside of his local Baptist sphere. But in the last 10-20 years Fuller's teaching has begun to have a massive effect in turning the remaining faithful Calvinistic churches into compromising vital Gospel truths.

The result of Fullerism is the same easy-believism and free-willism that arises from Wesley's Arminianism, though their theologies differ. Once faithful Baptist preachers and churches, and even some key Presbyterian groups, now uphold Fuller as a champion of Gospel truth. Famous preachers, such as Michael Haykin and John Piper, are planning extensive awareness campaigns on Fuller in conferences, seminars and books.

The situation currently before us is that the churches teaching a genuine Biblical gospel, focused upon God's sovereignty and free grace, are fewer than ever before in history. Through Andrew Fuller's teaching, the last bastions of true theology are becoming compromised by serious error.

⁷² How can man be free to choose Christ if he can only come if God draws him (Jn 6:44, 65)?

⁷³ Both the Welsh Revival and the Keswick Conference had a kernel of Calvinistic preachers and supporters; but the eventual influence of both was Arminian.

**FOR A CATALOGUE OF OTHER BOOKLETS AND PAPERS ON A
WIDE VARIETY OF BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND MODERN
ISSUES CONTACT THE AUTHOR.**

**Paul Fahy Copyright © 2006
Understanding Ministries**

Contact

understandingministries@yahoo.com
understandingministries@gmail.com