

“The Glorious Work of the Reformation”: Andrew Fuller and the Imitation of Martin Luther

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Abstract

While a high view of the life and work of Martin Luther was maintained only in certain quarters of Anglophone Christianity by the close of the seventeenth century, the eighteenth-century Evangelical revival led to a profound rediscovery of him. This article examines the way one such Evangelical, the Baptist Andrew Fuller, who does not appear to have read Luther directly, regularly cited him as a model to be imitated when it came to preaching and courageous action.

It is ironic that Martin Luther’s memory in English-speaking circles in the two centuries or so after his death was cherished largely by men and women whom the German Reformer would have regarded probably as “fanatics.” As J. Wayne Baker has noted, it was high Calvinists like John Saltmarsh (died 1647), Henry Denne (died ca. 1660), and John Bunyan (1628–1688), the latter two figures also Baptists to boot, who especially admired Luther as the herald of justification by grace alone.¹

¹ J. Wayne Baker, “*Sola Fide, Sola Gratia*: The Battle of Luther in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16.1 (Spring 1985): 115–33. More generally, see Preserved Smith, “English Opinion of Luther,” *Harvard Theological Review* 10.2 (April 1917): 129–58.

During the 1640s, at the height of what should be regarded as the first Antinomian controversy—the second being in the 1690s—Saltmarsh noted that he could have cited Luther in favor of his position on God’s grace, but he observed, “He is now lookt [*sic*] on by some as one that is both over-quoted, and over-writ Free-grace.”² Two decades later, however, Bunyan was not afraid of going public in his autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), about the utterly central role that Luther and his commentary on Galatians had played in enabling him to find a stable faith: “Methinks I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Mr Luther upon the Galatians (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.”³ By the bicentennial of Luther’s death in 1683, though, such admiration of Luther was increasingly that of an embattled minority. Moralism not only dominated Anglican pulpits, but even among Dissenting authors like Richard Baxter (1615–1691) there was the opinion that Luther had sometimes expressed himself carelessly when it came to justification by faith.⁴

The Evangelical revival, which broke thunderously upon the British Isles in the 1730s and 1740s, changed this whole situation. Justification by grace and faith alone once more became central themes in preaching and worship, and Luther cited as an example to be emulated. Luther’s commentaries on Galatians and Romans were crucial influences in the 1738 conversions of both John (1703–1791) and Charles Wesley (1707–1788), for example, and the Reformer’s doctrine of justification by faith alone central in their subsequent preaching and hymnic arsenal.⁵ In the mid-1750s their friend and

See also Brilliana Harley, Letter to Edward Harley, May 10, 1639, in *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, ed. Thomas Taylor Lewis (London: Camden Society, 1854), 52–53, for aspects of the debate about Luther. In this letter, Brilliana also observed that Luther “had great fears till he had thoroughly learned the doctrine of justification by Christ alone.”

² John Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace: or, The Flowings of Christ’s Blood Free to Sinners*, 2nd ed. (London: Giles Calvert, 1646), 210.

³ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, ed. W. R. Owens (London: Penguin, 1987), 35. On Bunyan’s indebtedness to Luther in this work, see especially Vera J. Camden, “Most Fit for a Wounded Conscience’: The Place of Luther’s ‘Commentary on Galatians’ in *Grace Abounding*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 50.3 (Autumn 1997): 819–49. See also Dayton Haskin, “Bunyan, Luther, and the Struggle with Belatedness in *Grace Abounding*,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 50.3 (Spring 1981): 300–313; and Christopher Hill, *A Tinker and a Poor Man: John Bunyan and His Church, 1628–1688* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 157–60.

Of Galatians, Luther once remarked in his *Table Talk*, “The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. I have betrothed myself to it” (cited in Alfred Williams Anthony, “Criticism of the Epistle to the Galatians,” *The Old and New Testament Student* 12.2 [February 1891]: 96).

⁴ Baker, “*Sola Fide, Sola Gratia*,” 129–30.

⁵ John Munsey Turner, *John Wesley: The Evangelical Revival and the Rise of Methodism in England* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2002), 27–29; Gary Best, *Charles Wesley: A Biography* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006), 91.

fellow Evangelical George Whitefield (1714–1770) specifically prayed for men of Luther’s caliber to be raised up to preach the gospel: “What a spirit must Martin Luther, and the first Reformers be endued with, that dared to appear as they did for God! Lord, hasten that blessed time, when others, excited by the same spirit, shall perform like wonders.”⁶ Again, nearly twenty years later, at the time of the conversion of Thomas Charles (1755–1814) of Bala in January 1773, the future Welsh Calvinistic Methodist leader noted that “Luther’s exposition of Galatians 1:4 was very much and particularly blessed to me.”⁷ John Newton (1725–1807), preaching in London in 1786, well summed up this new appreciation of Luther and his doctrine of justification:

The justification of a sinner before God, by faith in the obedience and atonement of Christ, is considered by many persons, in these days of refinement, in no better light than as a branch of a scholastic theology, which is now exploded as uncouth and obsolete. At the Reformation, it was the turning point between the Protestants and Papists. Luther deemed it the criterion of a flourishing, or a falling Church; that is, he judged that the Church would always be in a thriving or a declining state, in proportion as the importance of this doctrine was attended to.⁸

I. Introducing Andrew Fuller

Another fan of Luther was the Particular Baptist theologian Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), who was an heir of both the seventeenth-century high Calvinists and the eighteenth-century Evangelicals. As the most important Baptist theologian of his era⁹ and one who was deeply respected by men like William Wilberforce (1759–1833), Timothy Dwight (1752–1817), and Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847),¹⁰ his various references to Luther, scattered throughout

⁶ George Whitefield, Letter to Mr. C.—, March 26, 1754, in *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A.* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 3:68.

⁷ Cited Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 331–32.

⁸ John Newton, Sermon XLVI in his *Messiah: Fifty Expository Discourses* (1786) in *The Works of the Reverend John Newton* (London: George Virtue, [1839]), 711.

⁹ In his funeral sermon for Fuller, John Ryland Jr. (1753–1825) described him as “perhaps the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to our denomination” (*The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ No Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life* [London, 1815], 2–3). The Victorian Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) similarly described Fuller as the “greatest theologian” of his century (cited in Gilbert Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* [London: Carey, 1942], 127). More recently, the English Evangelical historian David Bebbington has spoken of Fuller’s “extraordinary importance in the history of theology” (email to the author, March 11, 2009).

¹⁰ Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (London: Murray, 1839), 3:388–89; Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth-Century Particular Baptist Life*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 8 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), 98–99.

his works, carried significant clout in elevating the respect in which Luther was held in the British Isles by the tercentennial of his birth and well into the nineteenth century.

Fuller was born in Wicken, a small agricultural village in Cambridgeshire.¹¹ His parents, Robert Fuller (1723–1781) and Philippa Gunton (1726–1816), were farmers who rented a succession of dairy farms. In 1761 his parents moved a short distance to Soham, where he and his family began to regularly attend the local Particular Baptist church, and where Fuller was converted in November, 1769. After being baptized the following spring, he became a member of the Soham church. In 1774 Fuller was called to the pastorate of this work. He stayed until 1782, when he became the pastor of the Particular Baptist congregation at Kettering, Northamptonshire. His time as a pastor in Soham was a decisive period for the shaping of Fuller’s theological perspective. It was during these years that he began a life-long study of the works of the American divine Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758),¹² which, along with his knowledge of the Scriptures,¹³ gave him the theological resources to pen definitive responses to hyper-Calvinism—a by-product of seventeenth-century high Calvinism—and Sandemanianism, as well as impressive rebuttals of Socinianism and Deism.¹⁴

Fuller was also deeply involved in the emergence of the modern missionary movement. He served as the first secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society

¹¹ For Fuller’s life, the classic study is that of John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 2nd ed. (London: Button & Son, 1818).

The two best recent biographies are those of Paul Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2010) and Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller, 1754–1815* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2015). For brief studies, see Phil Roberts, “Andrew Fuller,” in Timothy George and David S. Dockery, eds., *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 34–51, and Michael A. G. Haykin, “Fuller, Andrew,” in Timothy Larsen, D. W. Bebbington, and Mark Noll, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 241–44.

¹² For Edwards’s influence on Fuller, see Chris Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹³ For example, he could state: “If any man venerate the authority of Scripture, he must receive it as being what it professes to be, and for all the purposes for which it professes to be written. If the Scriptures profess to be Divinely inspired, and assume to be the infallible standard of faith and practice, we must either receive them as such, or, if we would be consistent, disown the writers as imposters” (*The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to Their Moral Tendency*, in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. and rev. Joseph Belcher (1845; repr., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1988), 2:196. Hereafter this collection of Fuller’s written corpus is simply cited as *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*).

¹⁴ For these apologetic treatises, see volume 2 of *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*. For studies of Fuller’s replies to these theological aberrations, see Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., “At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word”: *Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).

from its inception in 1792 till his death in 1815. Moreover, it was his theology that lay at the heart of the missional vision of his close friend William Carey (1761–1834), the Baptist Missionary Society’s first missionary appointment. As Harry R. Boer has noted, “Fuller’s insistence on the duty of all men everywhere to believe the gospel ... played a determinative role in the crystallization of Carey’s missionary vision.”¹⁵

II. *A Champion of the Reformation*

The earliest references by Fuller to Luther are entries in his diary for June 26 and 28, 1781, when he noted that he had been reading *An Ecclesiastical History* by the Lutheran historian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755). On June 26, the Baptist pastor observed that he was “sick in reading so much about monks [and] mendicant friars,” and added, “I could have wished the history had more answered to its title—a history of the church; but it seems little else than a history of locusts!” Two days later, though, he was in a better frame of mind after reading Mosheim:

Some sacred delight in reading more of Mosheim on the coming forth of those champions of the Reformation—Luther, Melancthon [sic], Zuinglius, Calvin, &c., into the field. I think I feel their generous fervour in the cause of God and truth. How were the arms of their hands made strong by the mighty God of Jacob!¹⁶

“The cause of God and truth” was a favorite expression of Fuller that summarized what he saw as the calling of every minister: they ought to be zealous for God’s glory and his truth. It was thus a high compliment to describe Luther as such.

At the very close of his ministry, in 1814 and 1815, when Fuller came to preach on the book of Revelation, he went so far as to think that the slaying of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 might possibly refer to “the times immediately preceding the Reformation.” If this were so, Fuller reasoned, then the resurrection of the witnesses has to do with the raising up of the Reformers:

Whether the “three days and a half” during which the witnesses should lie unburied, denote three years and a half, and refer to a particular period of that duration, or only to a short space of oppression, in allusion to the “three times and a half,” as

¹⁵ Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 24. See also John Piper, *Andrew Fuller: Holy Faith, Worthy Gospel, World Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 13–16.

¹⁶ Michael D. McMullen and Timothy D. Whelan, eds., *The Diary of Andrew Fuller, 1780–1801*, vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 31.

being a kind of 1260 years in miniature, I am not able to determine; nor have I seen anything on the subject relating to a particular period which afforded me satisfaction. However this may be, if the slaying of the witnesses refer to the times immediately preceding the Reformation, their resurrection and ascension to heaven must denote the Reformation itself, and the placing, by divine providence, of the parties concerned in it out of the reach of their enemies. The resurrection, as it were, of the Waldenses, the Wickliffites, and other reputed heretics, in the persons of Luther and his contemporaries, with the rapid progress made by them in various nations nearly at the same time, would cause great fear to fall upon their adversaries; and the security in which they were placed by the secession of those nations from the see of Rome was equal to their being taken up to heaven in a cloud, where those who thirsted for their blood could only look after them with malignity and envy.¹⁷

Here Fuller admitted his inability to find any convincing interpretation of certain elements of Revelation 11, especially the meaning of the “three days and a half” after the two witnesses have been slain and during which they lie unburied (see Rev 11:7–9).¹⁸ He was willing, however, to go on record publicly as saying that the passage might have reference to the opposition to the medieval Church of Rome by the Waldensians, the followers of Pierre Valdes (ca.1140–ca.1205), and the “Wickliffites,” or Lollards, who adhered to the teaching of John Wycliffe (ca. 1330–1384), and then the “resurrection” of this opposition at the time of the Reformation “in the persons of Luther and his contemporaries.” It is noteworthy that Luther’s teaching was likened to that of Wycliffe in the early days of the English Reformation. Henry VIII (1491–1547), for example, described Luther’s teaching as “pure Wyclifism.”¹⁹

This understanding of the continuity of teaching between Luther and such forerunners of the Reformation as the Waldensians and Wycliffe meant that Fuller was not nonplussed by the query—presumably made by Roman Catholics—“Where was your church before Luther?”²⁰ During what Fuller called the “long period of ... domination” of Western Europe by the papacy,²¹ the true church was existent, albeit in hiding, only to emerge in full force during the Reformation era, which, for Fuller, like other British Evangelicals of his day, was thus a key event in the history of the church.²²

¹⁷ Andrew Fuller, *Expository Discourses on the Apocalypse*, in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3:251.

¹⁸ Fuller’s mention of “three times and a half” and the 1260 years seems to have in view Daniel 7:25; 12:7 and 11, though Daniel 12:11 speaks of “1290 days.” See Fuller, *Expository Discourses on the Apocalypse*, 244.

¹⁹ Cited by Anthony Kenny, “The Accursed Memory: The Counter-Reformation Reputation of John Wyclif,” in Anthony Kenny, ed., *Wyclif in His Times* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 159.

²⁰ Fuller, *Expository Discourses on the Apocalypse*, 258.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 243. In his 1791 sermon “Instances, Evil, and Tendency of Delay, in the Concerns

III. *Imitating Luther*

Fuller also considered Luther's method of preaching as worthy of emulation. In 1802, he cited a general statement by his fellow Baptist Robert Robinson (1735–1790) about the type of preaching that has produced profound moral change in the history of Christianity:

Presumption and despair are the two dangerous extremes to which mankind are prone in religious concerns. Charging home sin precludes the first, proclaiming redemption prevents the last. This has been the method which the Holy Spirit has thought fit to seal and succeed in the hands of his ministers. Wickliffe, Luther, Knox, Latimer, Gilpin, Bunyan, Livingstone, Franck, Blair, Elliot, Edwards, Whitefield, Tennant, and all who have been eminently blessed to the revival of practical godliness, have constantly availed themselves of this method; and, prejudice apart, it is impossible to deny that great and excellent moral effects have followed.²³

Fuller had long considered Luther's preaching a worthy model. In a sermon that he delivered on October 31, 1787, at the installation of Robert Fawcner as the pastor of Thorn Baptist Church, Bedfordshire—later entitled *The Qualifications and Encouragement of a faithful Minister illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas*²⁴—Fuller noted a key principle: “Eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness.”²⁵ After giving a number of biblical examples of men of eminent piety who were instrumental in “great reformation”—men such as Hezekiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah—Fuller commented,

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

of Religion” (*Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1:147), Fuller referred to the Reformation as “the glorious work of the Reformation.”

²³ Andrew Fuller, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as Their Moral Tendency*, in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 2:121–122. Fuller is citing from a note by Robert Robinson in his translation of Jean Claude, *An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon* (Cambridge: Francis Hodson, 1779), 2:364.

²⁴ The sermon was first published in 1787: Andrew Fuller and John Ryland, *The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister, illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas. And, Paul's Charge to the Corinthians respecting their Treatment of Timothy, applied to the Conduct of Churches toward Their Pastors. Being the Substance of Two Discourses, Delivered at The Settlement of The Rev. Mr. Robert Fawcner, in the Pastoral Office, Over the Baptist Church at Thorn, in Bedfordshire, October 31, 1787* (London: Thorn Baptist Church, 1787). It can be conveniently found in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1:135–44.

²⁵ Fuller, *The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister*, in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1:143.

whose names are held in deserved esteem in the church of God. These were men of God; men who had great grace, as well as gifts; whose hearts burned in love to Christ and the souls of men. They looked upon their hearers as their Lord had done upon Jerusalem, and wept over them. In this manner they delivered their messages; “and much people were added unto the Lord.”²⁶

Here, Fuller urged Fawcner to see Luther, as well as the others that he mentioned, as a man of “great grace,” whose love for Christ and whose longing for the conversion of sinners shaped the message he preached. Such a man was akin to “Paul and Peter,” and as such a great role model for preaching.

Four years after this sermon at Thorn Baptist Church, Fuller again cited Luther as an example to follow, this time with regard to his courage in the promotion of reform in the sixteenth century. Fuller was preaching on Haggai 1:2 (“Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time the Lord’s house should be built,” κϿν) at a meeting of the pastors of the Northamptonshire Association on April 27, 1791, in the Baptist church at Clipston, Northamptonshire, and was seeking to encourage his fellow Baptists to think about the possibility of undertaking cross-cultural missions.²⁷ This sermon was, in fact, a key step on the road to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society and the sending of Fuller’s close friend William Carey to India.²⁸

After sketching the historical context of the verse from Haggai, namely, the refusal of the Israelites to get to work on the rebuilding of the temple after their return from the Babylonian exile, Fuller noted that the main problem which afflicted the Israelites was a “procrastinating spirit.” It was not, however, a problem unique to them, but hampered both unbelievers and believers in his own day. With regard to the latter, it prevented them from “undertaking any great or good work for the cause of Christ, or the good of mankind.”²⁹ Thankfully, Fuller declared in an illustration of his point, Luther was free from this tendency:

²⁶ Ibid., 143–44.

²⁷ Fuller, “Instances, Evil, and Tendency of Delay, in the Concerns of Religion,” in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1:145–51. Fuller originally entitled this sermon, *The Pernicious Influence of Delay in Religious Concerns*.

²⁸ For more on the historical context and importance of this sermon, see John Sutcliff and Andrew Fuller, *The Clipston Sermons: A Key Moment in the History of Christian Missions*, introduced by Michael A. G. Haykin, and ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and G. Stephen Weaver (Louisville, KY: The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, 2016).

²⁹ Fuller, “Instances, Evil, and Tendency of Delay, in the Concerns of Religion,” 145–46.

Had Luther and his contemporaries acted upon this principle [of delay], they had never gone about the glorious work of the Reformation. When he saw the abominations of popery, he might have said, These things ought not to be; but what can I do? If the chief priests and rulers in different nations would but unite, something might be effected; but what can I do, an individual, and a poor man? I may render myself an object of persecution, or, which is worse, of universal contempt; and what good end will be answered by it? Had Luther reasoned thus—had he fancied that, because princes and prelates were not the first to engage in the good work, therefore the time was not come to build the house of the Lord—the house of the Lord, for anything he had done, might have lain waste to this day.³⁰

Fuller was convinced that the ministry of the Reformers in word and print had been honored by the Spirit of God for the blessing of many in the sixteenth and later centuries. The example of Luther was thus an appropriate one to bring forward to encourage his hearers to break out of the grip of a “procrastinating spirit.” As this text reveals, Fuller clearly considered the Reformation as a watershed in the history of Christianity—it was a “glorious work.” The rise of what has been termed the modern missionary movement at the end of the eighteenth century—in which Fuller, Carey, and their friends played a critical role—was certainly another. It is fascinating to see these two events linked together in this admonition to take Luther’s courage as a model to imitate.

Although it is obvious from these references to Luther that Fuller knew the German Reformer did not accomplish the Reformation by himself, and also that he was not the first to protest against the doctrinal and moral problems of the Church of Rome—Fuller was well aware of medieval fore-runners—yet Fuller can use Luther’s example to highlight the importance of individual action on the scene of history. In a 1785 tract designed to encourage revival of the Calvinistic Baptist cause in England, which was greatly needed in the late eighteenth century,³¹ Fuller again cited Luther as a model:

We may think the efforts of an individual to be trifling; but, dear brethren, let not this atheistical spirit prevail over us. It is the same spawn with that cast forth in the days of Job, when they asked concerning the Almighty, “What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” [Job 21:15b]. At this rate Abraham might have forborne interceding for Sodom, and Daniel for his brethren of the captivity. James also must be

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

³¹ For details of this declension and subsequent revival of the English Calvinistic Baptist community, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends, and His Times* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1994), and *idem*, *Ardent love to Jesus: English Baptists and the Experience of Revival in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Bridgend: Bryntirion, 2013).

mistaken in saying that the prayer of a single, individual righteous man availeth much. Ah, brethren, this spirit is not from above, but cometh of an evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God! Have done with that bastard humility, that teaches you such a sort of thinking low of your own prayers and exertions for God as to make you decline them, or at least to be slack or indifferent in them! Great things frequently rise from small beginnings. Some of the greatest good that has ever been done in the world has been set a going by the efforts of an individual. Witness the Christianizing of a great part of the heathen world by the labours of a Paul, and the glorious reformation from popery began by the struggles of a Luther.³²

Although the bulk of examples cited in this text have to do with prayer—Abraham praying for Sodom (in Gen 18), Daniel for the Jewish people in exile (in Dan 9), James’s comment about the impact of the prayers of a righteous person (Jas 5:16)—Fuller does not seem to be thinking so much of Luther as a model of prayer as an example of the impact of an individual Christian for good.

IV. *The Matter of Justification*

From what we know of Fuller’s library, there is no indication that he actually owned a book by Luther,³³ and so it is not surprising that his references to Luther do not include an actual citation from any of the Reformer’s works. What is fascinating, though, is that while the doctrine of justification had been a central part of the way Luther was remembered in the English Puritan and Evangelical traditions, Fuller refers to Luther only once with regard to justification.

That citation occurs at the close of an undated piece that Fuller wrote on justification and imputed righteousness, probably for one of the theological magazines to which he regularly contributed.³⁴ Fuller has been arguing that the picture of the church throughout the New Testament is uniformly one that is “composed of such characters as, renouncing all dependence upon their own righteousness, rely only upon the righteousness of Christ for acceptance with God.”³⁵ But what of the letter of James, “which appears to affirm that a man is justified ‘by works, and not by faith only’”? Fuller argued that James is actually using the term “justification” to refer to God’s

³² Andrew Fuller, *Causes of Declension in Religion, and Means of Revival*, in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3:322.

³³ For a list of the books in Fuller’s library ca. 1798, see Timothy D. Whelan, “Appendix A: Books in Fuller’s Library, 1798,” in *The Diary of Andrew Fuller, 1780–1801*, ed. McMullen and Whelan, 215–36.

³⁴ Andrew Fuller, “Justification: The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness,” in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3:709–12.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 711–12.

approval of an individual as being a genuine believer:

Paul discourses on the justification of the ungodly, or of sinners being accepted of God, which is by faith in the righteousness of Christ, without works; James on the justification of the godly, or of a saint being approved of God, and which is by works. Abraham is said to have been justified by faith, when he first believed the promise, prior to his circumcision; but by works, many years after it, his faith was made manifest, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar. The one therefore relates to his acceptance with God as a sinner, the other to his being approved of God as a saint. Both together completed his character. "He believed, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness" [Romans 4:3]; he obeyed, and was "called the friend of God" [James 2:23].³⁶

Seemingly oblivious to Luther's questions about the canonicity of James, Fuller then noted regarding justification,

We ... see the justice with which divines have insisted on the importance of this great article of faith. It was with good reason that Luther, in particular, considered it as a kind of corner-stone in the Reformation. Those reformed communities, whether national or congregational, which have relinquished this principle in their confessions of faith, or which, retaining it in their confessions, yet renounce or neglect it in their ordinary ministrations, have with it lost the spirit and power of true religion.³⁷

Here Fuller rightly recalls the centrality of justification for Luther, though, as noted, the Baptist author does not appear to have learned it directly from the German Reformer. When Fuller does cite authorities for his Reformation understanding of justification, it is Puritan authors like John Owen (1616–1683),³⁸ or Evangelical pioneers like his main theological mentor, Jonathan Edwards.³⁹ But Fuller's enormous respect for the Reformer ensured that the Baptist's heirs in the nineteenth century, and they were many and on both sides of the Atlantic, would continue to keep Luther in their pantheon of heroes. And this, in turn, entailed the distinct possibility that these Fullerite Baptists would take up his key books and read him.

³⁶ Ibid. Cf. Fuller's similar argument in his sermon "Justification," in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1:288.

³⁷ Fuller, "Justification: The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness," 712.

³⁸ For example, see Andrew Fuller, "Defence of the Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness," in *Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3:713.

³⁹ See the very helpful discussion of Fuller's indebtedness to Edwards regarding the doctrine of justification in Chun, *Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, 183–208. In recent days, questions have been raised regarding Edwards's view of justification, as to whether or not it involved a departure from the Reformation understanding of this doctrine. See the helpful studies in Josh Moody, *Jonathan Edwards and Justification* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). Also see Craig Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ: The Glory of Christ's Obedience in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Jackson, MS: Reformed Academic Press, 2009).