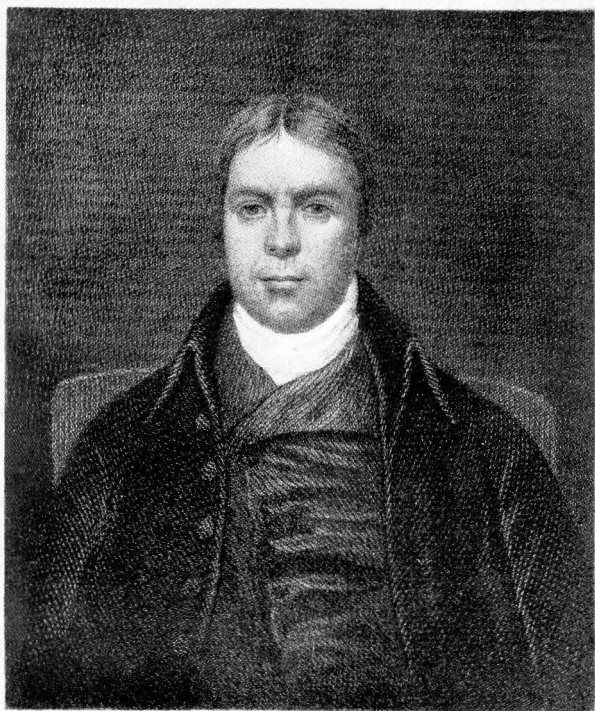


116

ANDREW FULLER

GILBERT LAWS, D.D.



Rev. Andrew Fuller

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ANDREW FULLER

PASTOR, THEOLOGIAN, ROPEHOLDER

BY

GILBERT LAWS

D.D.

*"Carey, as it were, said, 'Well,
I will go down if you will hold
the rope.'"—ANDREW FULLER.*

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To
S. PEARCE CAREY, M.A.

DEAR FRIEND,

In your noble book *William Carey* you have brought back to life your great-grandfather. In this little volume I have made a footnote to your masterpiece. If I should succeed in making it understood how great and good a man was your great-grandfather's faithful friend and helper, I should be glad.

Yours in gratitude,
GILBERT LAWS

Norwich, 1942.

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BIOGRAPHIES OF FULLER

- The Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* by John Ryland, D.D. Printed by J. G. Fuller, Kettering. 1816. Second edition, with important additions, 1818.
- Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* by J. W. Morris. Printed for the author by E. W. Morris, Printer, High Wycombe. 1816. Corrected and enlarged edition, printed by Wightman & Cramp, London, 1826.
- A Memoir prefixed to *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* by his son Andrew Gunton Fuller, published by Holdsworth & Ball, and printed by J. Haddon, Finsbury. 1831.
- A Memoir prefixed to a *Selection from the Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, a volume in Bohn's *Standard Library*, by his son Andrew Gunton Fuller. 1852.
- Memoir of the Life and Writings of Andrew Fuller* by his grandson, Thomas Ekins Fuller, a volume in *The Bunyan Library*, printed and published by J. Heaton & Son, London. 1863.
- Andrew Fuller*, a volume in *Men Worth Remembering* series, by his son Andrew Gunton Fuller, published by Hodder & Stoughton. 1882.

None of these is in print. The first two are very rarely to be met with.

Available works which bring Fuller before us are:

- William Carey*, S. Pearce Carey's superb biography, to which this little book is a footnote. 8th edition. 6s. net (by post 6s. 7d.).
- Samuel Pearce, the Baptist Brainerd* by S. Pearce Carey. Cloth, 2s. 6d. net (by post 2s. 10d.); paper, 1s. 3d. (by post 1s. 6d.).
- The First Generation* by Ernest A. Payne, a valuable little book, with graphic and accurate details of the first missionaries and their friends who sent them forth. 2s. net (by post 2s. 4d.).

TABLE OF DATES

1754	February 6	Fuller born at Wicken.
1760		Family moved to Soham.
1769		Fuller's conversion.
1770	April	Baptized and joined the Church.
1771	November	Spoke in meeting.
1772		Spoke again in meeting.
1774	January	Called to ministry by the Church.
1775	May	Ordained Pastor by Robert Hall of Arnsby.
1776		Became acquainted with Sutcliff.
		Married Sarah Gardiner of Burwell.
1781		<i>Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation</i> written.
		Hall published <i>Help to Zion's Travellers</i> .
1782	October	Removal to Kettering.
1783		Ordained at Kettering.
1784		Sutcliff proposed Concert of Prayer.
1785		<i>Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation</i> published.
1791	Easter	Clipstone ministers' meeting.
		Carey's Leicester ordination.
1792	April	Beeby Wallis died.
	May	Carey's deathless sermon at Nottingham.
	August	Fuller's wife died.
	October	Missionary Society formed at Kettering.
1793	January	Fuller stricken with facial paralysis.
	March	Carey and Thomas valedicted.
		<i>Calvinistic and Socinian Systems</i> published.
1794	December	Fuller married Ann Coles of Maulden.
1798		Hon. D.D., (Princeton).
1799		First visit to Scotland.
1800		<i>Gospel Its Own Witness</i> published.
1802		Second visit to Scotland.
1804		Visit to Ireland.
1805		Meeting-house rebuilt.
		Third visit to Scotland.
		Hon. D.D., (Yalè).
1808		Fourth visit to Scotland.

1811	John Keen Hall, M.A., appointed Fuller's assistant.
1812	Joseph Fuller (nephew) died. Serampore fire. Tour in South Wales.
1813	Fifth visit to Scotland.
1815 May 7	Fuller died at Kettering.

CHAPTER I

A SON OF THE FENLAND

ANDREW FULLER has three titles to remembrance. The first, and the groundwork of the other two, is that he was one of the leading Baptist ministers of his day. The second is that he was a theological writer who not only exercised a very wide and liberating influence upon the doctrinal sentiments of his own circle, but was also an able defender of the evangelical faith against the prevalent errors of the time. The third is that he, beyond all others, was the helper of Carey, and the first secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society.

Fuller was a son of the Fenland. His birthplace was a small farmhouse, now pulled down, situated at Wicken in the fen country of Cambridgeshire between Ely and Newmarket. The date was February 6th, 1754. His ancestors had been yeomen of substance, but the fortunes of his father had somewhat declined; otherwise Fuller might have been born at the farm bearing the name of Padney, two or three miles from Wicken, the home of his God-fearing ancestors for several generations.

The worthy yeoman in Kingsley's *Alton Locke* represents the type.

"Are you a farmer?" I asked.

"I bean't varmer; I be yeoman born. Never paid rent in moy life, nor never wool. I varms my own land, and my vathers avore me, this ever so many hoondred year. I've got the swoord of 'em to home, and the helmet that they fut with into the wars, when they chopped off the king's head—what was the name of 'um?"

"Charles the First?"

"'Ees—that's the boy. We was Parliament side—

true Britons all we was, down into the fens; and Oliver Cromwell, as dug Botesham Lode, to the head of us."

Fuller's mother, named Philippa, was the daughter of Andrew Gunton, a member of the Baptist church at Soham. Like so many men who have risen to influence, Fuller owed much to his mother, who outlived him by a year and died at the age of ninety-three. Remarkable for the strength of her Christian character, her influence on her children was powerfully effective. Her three sons were all earnest Christian men and pillars of the Baptist cause. The eldest son, Robert Fuller, became a deacon of the church at Isleham in the Fenland. The second son, John Fuller, who went farther afield, farmed land at Little Bentley in Essex, and was a deacon of the church at Thorpe in that county. The third son, Andrew, was destined to become still more prominently and influentially connected with the Baptist denomination. Happy mother, to have seen her sons serving the Saviour she loved. She rejoiced more that Andrew was a good son than that he had become a famous man.

The reference to Cromwell is not entirely fanciful. The parish registers of Wicken contain many names of the Cromwell family. When, after his father's death, Fuller's son paid a visit to the place, the vicar of the day pointed out to him beneath the communion table in the parish church, the burial place of Henry Cromwell, the Protector's second, and ablest, son. Henry Cromwell's skull, according to the old sexton of the church, was sold for five shillings! It is not mere imagination that sees in the sturdy, self-reliant, persistent character of Fuller some resemblance to similar qualities in the more famous stock of the Cromwells. If the character of a country has an influence on the character of those who live in it, the tough and enduring energy of Fuller is partly explained.

The Fenland is a country with a character of its own.

The dreary swamp which Kingsley describes in *Here-ward the Wake* had vanished in Fuller's day, for the draining of the fens had been accomplished. The old lake-bottoms had become fields of peat-black soil. But Kingsley, who loved its charm, has given us this picture of the Fenland scene as he saw it. It was upon this scene that Fuller's eye opened at birth.

"The vast height and width of the sky-arch, as seen from those flats as from an ocean—the grey haze shrouding the horizon and closing us in, till we seemed to be floating through infinite space on a little platform of earth; the rich poplar-fringed farms, with their herds of dappled oxen—the luxuriant crops of oats and beans—the tender green of the tall-rape, a plant till then unknown to me—the long straight silver dykes, with their gaudy carpets of strange floating water-plants, and their black banks, studded with the remains of buried forests—the innumerable draining mills, with their creaking sails and groaning wheels—the endless rows of pollard willows, through which the breeze moaned and rang, as through the strings of some Æolian harp; the little island knolls in that vast sea of fen, each with its long village street and delicately tapered spire—all this seemed to contain an element of new and peculiar beauty."

One of these island knolls was the spot of Fuller's nativity.

The soil of the Fenland, hardly won from the waters as much of it was by the labours of men, had to be watched and bravely defended from time to time. Floods would now and then break down the banks and turn a hundred miles of land into a lake. Many a dark night, by the light of lanterns only, the fen people must turn out in force to patch with gault the leaking defences, behind which were thousands of heads of

cattle and hundreds of human inhabitants of farms and cottages in peril.

Sometimes their utmost valour would prove unavailing, and then it was a race for dear life before the advancing waters. Such scenes and employments had something to do with the making of the fearlessness and persistence of Fuller's character.

Since Fuller's day the fens have been further drained, so that the old race of fenmen to which he belonged is largely gone. The great fields of sugar-beet, potatoes, and celery, between the deep and well-kept ditches, are more safe. The roads are built high above the sunken land. The tractor on the land and the car on the roads have altered fen farming a good deal. One thing remains but little changed, however, and that is the fen character. Fighting the flood occasionally, and the east wind that sweeps over their dwellings constantly, these men have wrenched a living from the black soil, and have been hardened in the process. Slow of speech, deep of thought, still inclined to Calvinistic theology, as becomes those who live close to nature and know the limits of what man can do, they are serious, patient, contemplative men, not without humour, albeit of a native brand, yet far removed from levity and shallow wit. Such are the fenmen still, and such was Fuller.

The Fuller family gave many members to the Isleham Church. When Spurgeon was baptized in the River Lark at Isleham he was not the only candidate. Two women were baptized at the same time, and the name of one was Eunice Fuller, a descendant of Robert Fuller, Andrew's eldest brother. Eunice Fuller lived to a good old age, and was proud of it, as of a great honour, that she had been buried with Christ by baptism into death and raised again in the likeness of Christ's resurrection in company with one who became the greatest gospel preacher of the century. The name of Fuller is still to be met with among the dwellers of the Fenland.

Fuller's education was of the scantiest, for only what the village school could supply was available for him. With his brothers he walked into Soham, a distance of about four miles, and at the end of school walked home again to the farm. When he was about six years of age, however, the whole family moved into the little town of Soham. That he was an apt scholar may be surmised from the strength of his understanding, and from the powers of self-education which afterwards became so manifest. His early discontinuance of these school studies was accounted for by the saying among the locals that he "knew more than the master himself". This reputation, honest Fuller declared, had more of flattery in it than of truth, and did him no good.

There is nothing extant about any further education, so we may presume that from his early 'teens Fuller was employed, like other farmers' sons, in the usual avocations of the agricultural daily round according to his strength and skill.

His son recalled waiting with his father at a cross-roads for the coach a few miles from Kettering. Fuller stood leaning on a gate watching some mowers at work in a meadow. Presently one of the scythe-men, finishing his swathe near the gate, remarked, somewhat rudely, that it was very easy for the gentleman to do the looking-on part. How would he like to try his hand at it? He said this with a wink at his companion.

"Well," said Fuller, "I think I have seen as hard work as you make of it: I don't mind trying what it is like."

With that he laid aside his black coat, and took the scythe. He led the line of mowers back across the meadow at such speed and with such a wide swathe that the professionals of the scythe were amazed.

"Oh, sir," said one, panting from his exertions, "you have had a scythe in your hands before to-day!"

"Yes, my friend," said the deep, grave voice of the

minister, "before you were born."

He who would beat a fenman with the scythe must be an expert indeed.

His first efforts with the stilts of the plough afforded him an illustration in later life.

"My father was a farmer," he wrote, "and in my younger days it was one great boast among the ploughmen that they could plough a straight line across the furrows or ridges of a field. I thought I could do this as well as any of them. One day I saw such a line, which had just been drawn, and I thought, 'Now I have it.' Accordingly, I laid hold of the plough, and putting one of the horses into the furrow which had been made, I resolved to keep him walking in it, and thus secure a parallel line. By and by, however, I observed that there were wriggles in this furrow, and when I came to them, they turned out to be larger in mine than in the original. On perceiving this I threw the plough aside, and determined never to be an imitator."

This resolve was kept. Nothing is more remarkable about Fuller than his independence. He thought for himself, and to great purpose, as we shall see presently. He was a pathfinder for others, but followed no man. Brought afterwards into the company of men with more advantages than he had enjoyed, a weak man would have been tempted to copy. Fuller never did. He was not highly original in the sense of having imagination like the younger Hall, or deep philosophical power like Foster. He had not the academic standing of Ryland. Nevertheless, in theological discrimination he had a surer instinct than any of them, and this was, as I think, because of his resolve never to be an imitator. But we are anticipating.

It was mostly work in the Fenland in Fuller's day, as indeed it is still. Nevertheless, there was some relaxation. Wrestling was in Fuller's time the fenman's sport in summer, as was skating on the meres the winter

pastime in which every Fenland youth desired to excel. At the former of these strenuous sports Fuller was a champion. Tall, broad in the shoulder, strong as a young bullock in thighs and legs, he was exactly right for wrestling and loved the sport to danger-point. I say to danger-point because Fuller himself said that the evils associated with the sport were dangerous to character. Often money was staked on the matches, drinking accompanied them, and quarrels often brought the day to an unseemly end. Church-members were laid under admonition on account of it, as the Soham church book shows. Honest Fuller said that after he had perceived the danger, he had difficulty in withstanding the temptation to it when he heard the shouts of those engaged in it. This was one of the weights which had to be laid aside so that he might run with patience the race set before him when the Master called.

It has been stated by the accomplished author of *Rab and His Friends* that Andrew Fuller was a boxer. But his son said that he had never heard of his father having fought in his life. It must be a mistake for wrestling. Fuller used to say that when he saw a burly man in any assembly he would instinctively draw himself up, measure him as an imaginary antagonist, and forecast how he would deal with him.

A story of a later time, too good to be left out, may be inserted here as we close this chapter. When the Association met at Clipstone, Fuller was the guest of a farmer, who said, "I have wrestled in my time, and should like to have a try with you."

"With all my heart!" said Fuller.

It was arranged that they should rise early on the Association morning, and try conclusions in the secluded orchard attached to the farmhouse. Both were stripped for the contest, when some people were observed walking along a footpath on the other side of the hedge on their way to the early morning prayer meeting with

which the Association meetings always began.

"Brother," said Fuller, taking up his coat, "this will not do. These people will think we are fighting, and we must avoid the appearance of evil." He then walked into the house followed by the farmer, who called after him, "You were afraid I would throw you." What Fuller said to this ungenerous interpretation of his action is not recorded!

I hope this story is a true one, for it is good to know that the man was not killed by the divine, and that the human element survived in one whose whole life was marked by a deadly earnestness about the things which matter most. But what a pity those people over the hedge were so early in their attendance at the meeting!

CHAPTER II

FINDING HIS SAVIOUR

1754-1771: aged 16

IT is fortunate for the purposes of biography that Andrew Fuller has described, in his own clear manner in letters to a friend, his early endeavours to find the way of life and peace. This friend was Dr. Charles Stuart, a medical man in Edinburgh, whose acquaintance Fuller made when travelling in Scotland in the interests of the Mission. These letters were written in the year 1798, and on them we draw freely for what immediately follows.

Fuller's father and mother attended the Baptist church at Soham, his mother being a member, his father not. The ministry of the time was of the high-Calvinist order, and Fuller heard none of the appeals for decision from the pulpit to which we are accustomed in the present day. The pastor was Mr. Eve, who had been sent out into the

ministry by the Stoneyard church (now St. Andrew's Street), Cambridge. The little boy, sitting with his parents under Mr. Eve's pulpit, never considered himself concerned in any way in what he heard. Nevertheless the thoughtful lad, by reading and reflection, came under strong impressions regarding religion, and was concerned for his soul.

He accuses himself of youthful sins, which troubled his conscience. Among these were lying, cursing, and swearing. Yet this bad language resulted rather from the foolish wish to appear manly than from any natural propensity. At about ten years of age this bad practice was discontinued, except under great excitement or strong provocation. Lying also, he came to consider a mean vice, and laid it aside entirely, unless under pressing temptation.

Three books are mentioned as having influenced him at about his fourteenth year—Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and his *Pilgrim's Progress*. The third book is less known, but was influential in its day. This was Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, which contains *A Gospel Catechism for Young Christians*. These Fuller read and re-read. They intensified his interest in the things of God and the soul, and brought tears to his eyes; but, there being as yet no real change within, the impressions passed away.

"One winter evening, I remember going with a number of other boys to a smith's shop, to warm myself by his fire. Presently they began to sing vain songs. This appeared to me so much like revelling, that I felt something within me which would not suffer me to join them, and while I sat silently, in rather an unpleasant muse, these words sank into my mind like a dagger, *What doest thou here, Elijah?* I immediately left the company, yet, shocking to reflect upon, I walked home, murmuring in my heart against God,

that I could not be let alone and be suffered to take my pleasure like other young people."

At this time Fuller thought himself converted. Walking alone one day there came into his mind the word of Paul, *Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace*. The suggestion of a text to the mind, especially if it came with power, was generally considered by the religious people of Fuller's circle, as a promise coming immediately from God. He therefore so understood it, and thought that God had revealed to him that he was in a state of salvation, and that iniquity should not, as he had feared, be his ruin. He was overcome with joy and transport, shed "thousands of tears", and seemed to feel himself in a new world. Yet this happy confidence passed clean away, and for more than six months he had no further thought for his salvation, but lived entirely without prayer, and was fast bound by his sins, and the more attached to them than ever.

The next year, 1768, impressions of this nature returned. Although the power of sin had increased its hold, Fuller felt that he was rather in the position of a backslider than an unbeliever, and that he had indeed received a promise from God in his former feelings. Suddenly another text came with power to his mind: *I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins*. This, from Isaiah, overcame him with joy, and he now considered himself restored and happy. But this also was transient. The great deep of the heart's depravity had not been broken up even yet. He continued in a prayerless state, and had no defence when temptation assailed him. So he continued till he was fifteen years of age.

Fuller's "world" was a restricted one, but it had hold of him thoroughly. He could not break away from it. Of an athletic frame and a daring spirit, he was often en-

gaged in wrestling and other sports with the youth of his own age. Beside this were games of hazard, which were a snare to him, and had a corrupting effect on his mind. He was becoming hardened and thoughtless. At family worship one night he played shameful tricks with one of the farm-hands, while reading and prayer were going forward, though he took care not to be detected. Conscience was becoming seared. But God's time was at hand.

His conversion he ever dated from the close of 1769 when he was approaching his sixteenth birthday. The perils of bad company were felt, and his danger perceived. "It was an enlightened conscience only that was on the side of God: my heart was still averse to everything that was spiritual or holy." For several weeks he went on vowing to be different, yet continuing the same; condemning himself for his evil conduct, yet continually repeating it. "The reproaches of a guilty conscience seemed like the gnawing worm of hell. I thought surely that must be an earnest of hell itself. The fire and brimstone of the bottomless pit seemed to burn in my bosom. I do not write in the language of exaggeration. I now know that the sense I had then of the evil of sin and the wrath of God was very far short of the truth, but yet it seemed more than I was able to sustain."

He was tempted to despair. It was suggested to his mind that he should return to the ways of evil, and take his fill of sin. He could be but lost. He was like a drowning man catching at straws. To hope for forgiveness after the way he had treated Christ seemed presumptuous. Yet he could not go back. He resolved to cast his perishing soul on Jesus for salvation, saying, in the words of Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Those who know their Bunyan will trace a resemblance in this to what is told in *Grace Abounding*. But it is not imitation of that spiritual narrative, either conscious or

unconscious, that we have in Fuller. Fuller's difficulty in finding the Saviour was not wholly or even chiefly moral. In the main it was theological. The hyper-Calvinism which dominated the religious circle of the Fullers was a real hindrance to him in his search for forgiveness and life through Christ. That hindrance must be put in his own words, words which should be noted, for they form the key of the first great controversy of Fuller's life, and indicate the error which he was destined to take out of the teaching of thousands.

"I was not then aware that any poor sinner had a warrant to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul, but supposed there must be some qualification to entitle him to do so."

Those of us who have been brought up without any knowledge of that rigid and terrible system of thought called hyper-Calvinism, find it difficult to understand how men who held it could preach at all. Yet they did, and do.

"I now found rest for my troubled soul; and I reckon I should have found it sooner, if I had not entertained the notion of my having no warrant to come to Christ without any previous qualification. This notion was a bar that kept me back for a time, though, through divine drawings, I was enabled to leap over it. As near as I can remember, in the early part of these exercises, when I subscribed to the justice of God in my condemnation, and thought of the Saviour of sinners, I had then relinquished every false confidence, believed my help to be only in Him, and approved of salvation by grace alone, through His death. And if at that time I had known that any poor sinner might warrantably have trusted Him for salvation, I conceive I should have done so, and have found rest to my soul sooner than I did. . . . When I

thought of the gospel way of salvation, I drank it in, as cold water is imbibed by a thirsty man. My heart felt one with Christ, and dead to every other object around me. I had thought I had found the joys of salvation before; but now I knew I had found them and was conscious that I had passed from death unto life. . . . I now knew experimentally what it was to be dead to the world by the Cross of Christ, and to feel an habitual determination to devote my future life to God my saviour. From this time I considered the vows of God as upon me."

The snare was broken, and Fuller's soul escaped. How he was to break that snare for a great part of his denomination, both ministers and people, will be seen later.

From the time of his conversion Fuller's course was steady and uniform. Whereas while under conviction of sin, and as yet without any sure confidence toward God in Christ, he had had to say of himself, "It was an enlightened conscience only that was on the side of God, and my heart was still averse to everything that was spiritual or holy," now all was different. Perfect love had cast out fear. All his desire now was to know more of Christ, to be more like Christ, and to be of more use to Christ.

While the letters to Dr. Stuart, upon which we have drawn for the particulars of Fuller's conversion, stop at that point, other letters to a friend in Liverpool recount his early efforts after knowledge and holiness.

One of the first signs of his new birth was a love for Christians as such. There was a poor man who later on became his father's thrasher. This man attended the Soham Baptist church, but lived three miles away. Fuller would waylay this man, or run to overtake him for the mere pleasure of his company, although Fuller himself was able to say but little.

Soon, however, the thrasher perceived the change in his young companion. "He talked to me freely," said Fuller, "and I told him all my heart." Those of us who can remember our first soul friend will understand this. Other Christians soon began to notice the earnest lad and invited him to their prayer meetings, where he took part in prayer and other religious exercises. How modern this sounds! Do we not still find that such a beginning of the Christian course leads on to usefulness and sanctification?

Although Fuller is writing in his forty-fourth year about the experience of his sixteenth, there is a simple sincerity and modesty about his words which give them the mark of truth and clear remembrance. At Shrove-tide, or at wake or feast, the shouts of the young men assembling for wrestling and other sports would excite him. He armed himself against temptation by a practice pursued for several years. He would go off to some neighbouring village—Burwell or Isleham belike—and spend the time with Christian friends, returning only in time for work. "Thus the seasons of temptation became to me seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." So passed the year 1769.

In March, 1770, Fuller saw for the first time the ordinance of believer's baptism administered. It made a deep impression on his mind, and about a month after, he himself was baptized and joined the Soham church as a member. Within a day or two a company of young men roundly abused him, and cursed him for having been "dipped". He rode on his way, thinking much about the ridicule of the wicked, and resolved to bear it. To his mind there came, as he sat on his horse, a text which was as the pole star of his life from this point onward: *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.* This might well be called "Andrew Fuller's text", for he

never entered on any serious undertaking for forty-five years thereafter without thinking upon it. Twice he was married, twice he was settled as pastor of a church. In these and other important decisions, he relied upon these words as the mariner upon the compass.

Divine mercy preserved Fuller from one of the great temptations of village life. He says, in his plain, honest way, "I was aware of the danger of being drawn into any acquaintance with the other sex, which might prove injurious to my spiritual welfare." And then, "In reviewing the early years of my life I see much ignorance, vanity, and folly. But amidst my youthful follies and sins, I bless God that I was always kept from any unbecoming freedoms, or attempting to engage the affections of any female, except with a view to marriage." From the sin which, above all others, scorches and sears the soul, Fuller, through mercy, needed no rescue. Preventive grace kept him from the snare. His pure and noble manhood was all laid upon the altar undefiled.

A David-and-Jonathan connection was formed at this time between Fuller and Joseph Diver. Diver was forty years of age, living much alone, giving himself to reading and reflection. He had been baptized at the same time as Fuller. The friendship was never broken; it ended only with Diver's death in 1780. From this ten-year friendship Fuller received most of the human aid and guidance which came his way in those years. The disparity in age was no barrier at all, which seems to show how thoughtful beyond his years Fuller was. "I account this connection one of the greatest blessings of my life," he says. It helped to make the summer of 1770 a real growing time in Fuller's soul. He was happy in the love of his pastor, Mr. Eve, in his friendship with Diver, and in the fellowship of the members of the little church at Soham. "They expressed great affection towards me in return," Fuller remarks. Altogether this picture is delightful to look upon; but a storm was

coming up. These halcyon days ended in thunder and lightning, which rent and tore the little church almost to pieces. This upsetting experience bit deep into Fuller's soul. It set in motion all the strong powers of reflection and discrimination which slumbered in the as yet unopened mind of the Fenland farmer's son.

The distressing case was this: a member of the church had got drunk, and to him went the distressed and sorrowful Fuller, with loving remonstrance. The guilty one sheltered himself behind an excuse which perplexed the clear conscience of his young visitor. He declared that no man had power to keep himself, and quoted texts on human inability. Moreover, he told Fuller that he himself was not his own keeper. This was true enough, but Fuller considered the excuse of the delinquent almost worse than his sin, and carried the story to Mr. Eve, the pastor of the church. Mr. Eve's doctrine was that "while we had no power to do things spiritually good, yet, as to outward acts we had power both to obey the will of God and to disobey it".

The upshot of the matter was that the offender was excluded from the church, but that was not the end. Fuller had come face to face with a theological monstrosity, Antinomianism by name, against which he was to contend all his days. A "loose and foul" thing, he called it later. This matter was debated forth and back by the members of the little Fenland church. In Joseph Diver, Fuller found a wisdom profitable to direct him:

"My worthy friend, who sustained a high character for wisdom and integrity, would reason thus with me: We ought to hate evil, and love the Lord, but it is the grace of God alone that can make us what we ought to be. He would often speak of the equity of the Divine requirements in the words of David: *I esteem all Thy precepts in all things to be right;*

and I hate every false way. And again, Thou hast commanded us that we should keep Thy precepts diligently: O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes. Thus it is that we should turn every precept into a prayer, instead of inferring from it a sufficiency in ourselves to conform to it. All our conformity to the Divine precepts is of grace: it will never do to argue from our obligations against our dependence, nor from our dependence on grace against our obligations to duty. If it were not for the restraining goodness and preserving grace of God, we should be a kind of devils, and earth would resemble hell."

The debate in the church on this matter of human inability continued, and in the end Mr. Eve left and settled at Wisbech. The church seemed likely to come entirely to grief. Fuller went to hear an Independent minister in the neighbourhood, but Diver, who was now a deacon, stuck to the ship. He held the majority together, kept the services going, expounding the Scripture some part of the time, leading singing and prayer at other times. He called for a day of fasting and prayer to which Fuller was constrained to go. From that day Fuller remained with the church, and faithfully supported it till he was called to preside over it in the office of pastor.

CHAPTER III

FINDING HIS LIFE WORK

· 1771-1782: aged 17-28

IN November, 1771, Joseph Diver met with an accident. Being unable to attend on Sunday, he sent word to Fuller hoping that the Lord would be with him. Surprised at Diver's obvious meaning, never having

attempted anything in the meetings beyond engaging in prayer, he nevertheless rose at the call of the eldest deacon, and spoke with comfort for half an hour.

Now it had happened on the Saturday that, riding to a nearby village on business, Fuller had found much pleasure in meditating on a text: *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning* (Psalm xxx. 5). He did, in a manner, preach to himself on it as he rode along. It was on the basis of these thoughts that he preached his first sermon, and no doubt it was an experimental one, for certainly young Fuller had gone through his own "night of weeping" before reaching his "morn of song". At a second invitation he again spoke, but not with the joy and success that he met with at the first attempt. He was discouraged, but did not give up.

In the spring of 1773, Diver being again absent through illness, Fuller was called on, and spoke from the words of our Lord: *The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*. He felt great freedom, the attention of all in the meeting was fixed, several young persons came under impressions in that hour that led to decision, baptism, and union with the church as members. It was a great hour for Fuller. The very choice of the text shows that something of liberty from the hyper-Calvinistic shackles was coming to him. The result of the sermon proved that the new approach was right. The pleasure of the Lord was beginning to prosper in his hand.

Very naturally the little church began to think of Fuller as suited to the ministry, and Fuller himself felt some drawings that way, though the native modesty of his mind induced him to keep his thoughts to himself. It was now usual for Diver to take one service on the Sunday and for Fuller to take the other.

In January, 1774, an elderly lady, a member of the church, died, leaving a request that, if the church did

not think it disorderly, Fuller might be allowed to preach a funeral sermon on the occasion. On a day before the funeral the church met for fasting and prayer, and called Fuller to the ministry. "From that time," he says, "I exercised from the pulpit." Now we are not to suppose that this meant a call to the pastorate of the Soham church. The step now taken meant that Fuller was accredited as a "minister" by the church of which he was a member, to preach "wherever in the providence of God he might be called", as the phrase was. His preaching in the Soham church, as in any other church, was still by the invitation of the members, who retained full authority over the pulpit, and over the chair. This was Fuller's ecclesiastical position for another full year.

Being now recognized as a "minister" in his circle, Fuller gave himself earnestly to reading and meditation. He was almost without guidance or help, and often regretted that those years 1771 to 1774 should have so passed. Nevertheless the native vigour of his mind, occupied as it was with an acute controversy of the deepest kind, and his devotion to the Scriptures, enabled him to put on strength in an astonishing manner. Many were led to hear the Word from this twenty-year-old preacher.

A reference by Fuller himself to the great controversy is so clear and full that it must be given in his own words:

"With respect to the system of doctrine which I had been used to hear from my youth, it was in the hyper-Calvinistic strain, admitting nothing spiritually good to be the duty of the unregenerate, and nothing to be addressed to them in the way of exhortation, excepting what related to external obedience.

"Outward services might be required, such as attendance on the means of grace. Abstinence from

gross evils might be enforced. But nothing was said to them from the pulpit in the way of warning them to flee from the wrath to come, or inviting them to apply to Christ for salvation.

"And though our late disputes had furnished me with some few principles inconsistent with these notions, yet I did not perceive their bearings at first, and durst not for some years *address an invitation to the unconverted to come to Jesus*. I began, however, to doubt whether I had got the truth respecting this subject.

"This view of things did not seem to comport with the ideas which I had imbibed concerning the power of man to do the will of God. I perceived that the will of God was not confined to mere outward actions, but extended to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart. The distinction of duties, therefore, into internal and external, and making the latter only concern the unregenerate, wore a suspicious appearance.

"But, as I perceived this reasoning would affect the whole tenor of my preaching, I moved on with slow and trembling steps; and, having to feel my way out of a labyrinth, I was a long time ere I was fully satisfied."

This was not the only question on which Fuller had to exercise his powerful understanding during this year of ministry. Pamphlets came his way dealing with a question which may be stated in question form: "Whether Christ's human soul had pre-existence before He was born of the Virgin Mary?" For many years this question agitated persons in the Particular Baptist churches. It was called the Heavenly Manhood theory. Fuller made short work of it. In a group of ministers he so answered the question in the negative that they gave it up. This was really his first polemical victory.

Another Christological question of the day among the churches was: "Whether Christ was ever called the Son of God in respect of His pre-incarnate Being?" This he answered in the affirmative. The seeds of this high thinking on the Person of Christ remained in his mind. Later, as will be seen in another chapter, he was to write against the Socinians—Priestley, Belsham, Lindsey, and others.

In regard to these controversies of his early youth, Fuller says:

"I have seen reason to bless God for preserving me at a time when my judgment was so immature. When I have seen the zeal which has been expended in maintaining some such peculiarities, I have thought it a pity. They have appeared to me as a sort of spiritual narcotics, for which when a man once gets a taste, he will prefer them to the most wholesome food."

Fuller distinguished between these high matters, about which we can really know little, and the other controversy with respect to man's responsibility for receiving or rejecting the Gospel. This latter affected all preaching, and it was with this question that the practical, though theological, mind of Fuller was to be so fully given through many years.

In the spring of 1775, when Fuller had preached a year, the Soham church solemnly called him to the pastorate, and arranged for his ordination on May 3rd of that year. His ordination was conducted with the solemnities usual at that time among Baptists. The young minister made a declaration of his faith and of his call. A charge was given him by the presiding minister, Robert Hall the elder, of Arnsby in Leicestershire, who had come seventy miles for the service. Acts xx. 28 was the text. John Emery, of Little Staughton in Bedfordshire, gave the charge to the church. Thomas Pilley of Luton also took part. Then the ministers

present, with representative members of the local church, laid hands on him while the presiding minister prayed.

It is a pity that in a slacker age this apostolic practice was so generally disused. Happily it is now becoming the practice again. What could be more dignified, more seemly, more in harmony with what the New Testament tells us?

From that hour, if not before, Hall senior became his "father and friend" as Fuller said. With the other ministers, Hall went into the controversy which had so troubled the Soham church. He was well qualified to do so, for he had himself done much thinking over the matter of hyper-Calvinism, and was later on to publish a liberating work on it which had great influence. This was his famous book entitled *Help to Zion's Travellers*, originally an Association sermon of 1779, and afterwards expanded into a treatise for publication. It was from this book that Carey got light upon his way when feeling for the truth which had not yet become clear to him.

Hall had settled with the little cause at Arnsby in 1753, a year before Fuller was born, and he was never able to tear himself away from his people, though he might easily have gone to a more numerous and affluent church had he so desired. Thirty-eight years in all this noble man gave to that village, and Fuller himself was to speak the last words over the honoured grave of the patriarch, who died on March 13th, 1791, just a year before the great adventure of Missions was launched.

We shall come to Hall again later on. Meanwhile here is what Fuller was to say at that last service:

"His talents and virtues were in some measure concealed from the world, and almost entirely from himself, by a veil of the most unaffected modesty. He was never so happy as when he was permitted to sit in the shade, though the high opinion entertained of his

abilities seldom allowed him that indulgence. It would be difficult to conceive a human mind more completely purged from the leaven of pride or envy, than was that of our deceased friend. In this particular his magnanimity was so great that he seemed on all occasions desirous of sinking the recollection of himself in the reputation and applause of his contemporaries. To draw merit from its obscurity and give confidence to timid worth, formed some of the highest satisfactions of his life."

In those last words, perhaps, Fuller was remembering the encouragement given him by this humble but great-souled man from his first beginnings in Soham.

Hall had already been twenty-two years at Arnsby on Fuller's ordination day, and from about that time he was the oldest, wisest, and most trusted counsellor of the Association. He had fourteen children, the most famous, of course, being the talented Robert Hall, M.A., of Bristol, Cambridge, Leicester, and again Bristol.

Hall's influence began to work immediately, and the first sign of it was in the action of the Soham church in the month following Fuller's ordination. On June 8th, 1775, is this entry in the church book: "The church, by unanimous consent, applied for reception into the Northamptonshire Association and were readily accepted." The Northamptonshire Association area went far beyond the county boundary, and included churches in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. Soham was drawn to it because of its agreeable doctrinal basis.

Robert Robinson of Cambridge had been agitating the question of Open Communion since 1771, and neither Fuller nor the Soham church were ready for that! As a matter of fact Fuller remained a Strict Communionist all his days. Later on, however, he and his church at Kettering had fellowship with other ministers

and churches who followed the way of Open Communion. Churches of both types were included in the Northamptonshire Association. The uniting bond was more the Calvinism common to all than any uniformity of view regarding the Communion question. They were all Particular Baptists, but not all Strict Communionists.

What is certain, and splendidly certain, is that from his ordination day onwards, Fuller would make new contacts with ministers through his church's union with the Association. In addition to Hall there would be John Ryland, whose father, John Collett Ryland, was pastor of College Lane church in Northampton and master of a school. The younger Ryland was then teaching in the school, helping his father in the church, and would in a few years more (1781) be ordained co-pastor. A few years after that, and Ryland junior would be left in sole charge, when his father and the school removed to Enfield (1786). A precocious and prodigious scholar, John Ryland was to help Fuller with his Greek and Hebrew before being called away to Broadmead and Bristol College, 1793.

And there would be John Sutcliff of Olney, a Yorkshireman, who, having been three years a student in Bristol College, had settled in Olney in 1775, the year of Fuller's ordination. A year or so older than Fuller, he was to become his fast and familiar friend, and firm associate in the great work that God had in store for them presently. They first met on May 28th, 1776, when the Association, then numbering sixteen churches, met at Olney.

Later there would also be Carey and Pearce, but in 1775, when Fuller joined the Association, Carey was only fourteen years of age, still learning his trade in Clarke Nichols' shop at Piddington, and not yet converted.

As for Pearce, to whom Fuller's soul was one day to be knit, he was only nine years old when Fuller was

ordained, and still a boy in his grandfather's house at Tamerton Foliot, in far-away Devon. The golden threads of Divine Providence were fastened upon all these elect souls, and they would be drawn together in due time. But we must not anticipate.

Fuller had found his work. He was, as he would have said, a minister of the Gospel of the Baptist denomination. Within this definition he wrought all his work as pastor, writer, and missionary secretary. For the next seven years, however, he is to be pastor of the Soham church, with cares and anxieties not a few.

Some of these cares were financial. Ryland says of these days: "The people were few in number, and poor in circumstances, so that they could raise him but £13 a year, besides £5 from the Baptist Fund in London. He had also £3 for preaching four times a year at a neighbouring village." His personal property was being wasted year by year, so that he was driven to expedients to meet expenses. He opened a shop, which was not a success. He tried keeping a school, but neither did this succeed.

In 1776, on the 23rd December, he married Miss Sarah Gardiner, daughter of Stephen and Sarah Gardiner of Burwell, "a truly pious woman". Four children were born to them during the first four years of their married life, "though they mostly died young". It may here be mentioned that of this marriage there were in all eleven children. The mortality of those times was dreadful. Three of the children died at Soham, five at Kettering, one at sea, and two only lived to survive their father.

Beyond the problems of a rising family to be maintained on an extremely slender income, there was a further anxiety from the dissatisfaction of some with his ministry. True, they were not many who were critical, but to a man so devoted to the work of God, and so solicitous for the welfare of all the little flock, the

hostility even of a few was distressing. Like every true pastor, he felt that even the most awkward and antagonistic were still his members and dear to his heart. They must be borne with till they could be persuaded. But they are a dour people in the Fenland, very set in their views and in their ways. The strong man was broken down by it, and about 1779 a severe illness brought him almost to the grave.

The troubles were theological. Fuller had been moving: many of his people had not. The old hyper-Calvinism still held them. Fuller had followed what he had found for himself in the Scriptures. He had dared to preach as John the Baptist preached, and as the Master Himself preached, and as the Apostles preached, inviting and beseeching sinners to believe and live. He had been reading Scripture without Gill and Brine, and though he had not yet got rid of the feeling of something inconsistent between his practice in preaching, and the views in which he had been brought up, he was rapidly coming to the point where a solution would appear.

Hall, on the occasion of Fuller's ordination, had recommended him to read Jonathan Edwards' great work *The Freedom of the Will*. Grand advice! But Fuller knew so little of books, beyond his three authors, Bunyan, Gill, and Brine, that he actually thought the reference of Hall was to a Calvinistic Anglican, Dr. John Edwards of Cambridge, whose book *Veritas Redux* he obtained and read. He "thought it a good book, but it did not seem to answer Mr. Hall's recommendation". I should say not! Fuller mastered the right book later, and President Edwards on *The Religious Affections* also.

His new friends, Sutcliff and Ryland, although far away and seldom seen, were helpful to Fuller in his dubitations and enquiries, though he did not enter into correspondence with them on the theological question to any great extent. No, it was by his own reflection that the man who had resolved "never to be an imitator"

found his way out of the entanglements. Never did braver soul grapple with "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute". In his way, like Milton's self, this Fenland farmer's son sought to "justify the ways of God to man".

Fuller now took his pen in hand. (We might almost say he never laid it down again, for he wrote incessantly till the end.) His powerful mind was not attended by glib utterance. He liked ever to put things down in writing, to stand off from his objectified ideas and look critically at them. This course he began at Soham. He commenced to write down his thoughts upon the matter in controversy. The result appeared as an elaborate essay, which, after many revisions, was published only after he had removed to Kettering, under the title *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. The sub-title gives the best clue to the argument. It ran, "Or The Obligations of Men Cordially to Believe Whatever God Makes Known". In another edition, however, the sub-title is, "Or The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ". This challenging work was ready for publication by 1781, when Fuller was only twenty-eight, but it was not printed till later.

It is impossible to summarize its argument. It must suffice to say that while Fuller was a Calvinist, and believed the doctrine of personal election, he was able to reconcile with that doctrine a free offer of the Gospel to all men, and moreover was able in all sincerity to beseech all men without distinction to be reconciled to God. He had seen this free offer of the Gospel in Bunyan, but had supposed that Bunyan was inconsistent. He had seen the same in President Edwards, and in Brainerd who went to the Indians. He also had seen the same in seventeenth century writers that had come his way, like Dr. John Owen. But only by working through the Scriptures himself, by thinking long and hard, and by earnest prayer for light, had he come to the place where,

while still a Calvinist, he was able, without any back thoughts or qualifying clauses, to offer freely the salvation of God to all to whom the Gospel should come, and moreover, to lay the blame for the rejection of Christ not on any decree of God, but on the moral turpitude and wicked unbelief of the sinner himself. There was no *cannot*, except *will not*. Now was his soul at rest and his duty clear. Thus had Fuller answered what had been called "The Modern Question".

Before we take leave of these Soham years we will hear Fuller himself speaking, once to his God, and twice to himself. Here is his solemn vow, or renewal of covenant with God, dated January 10th, 1780:

"O my God (let not the Lord be angry with His servant for thus speaking), I have, Thou knowest, heretofore sought Thy truth. I have earnestly entreated Thee that Thou wouldest lead me into it; that I might be rooted, established, and built up in it, as it is in Jesus. I have seen the truth of that saying, *It is a good thing to have the heart established with grace*; and now I would this day solemnly renew my prayer to Thee, and also enter afresh into covenant with Thee.

"O Lord God! I find myself in a world where thousands profess Thy Name; some are preaching, some writing, some talking about religion. All profess to be searching after truth; to have Christ and the inspired writers on their side. I am afraid lest I should be turned aside from the simplicity of the Gospel. I feel my understanding full of darkness, my reason exceedingly imperfect, my will ready to start aside, and my passions strangely volatile. O illumine mine understanding, teach my reason reason, my will rectitude, and let every faculty of which I am possessed be kept within the bounds of Thy service.

"O let not the sleight of men, who lie in wait to deceive, nor even the pious character of good men, who

yet may be under great mistakes, draw me aside. Nor do Thou suffer mine own fancy to misguide me. Lord, Thou hast given me a determination to take up no principle at second-hand; but to search for everything at the pure fountain of Thy Word. Yet, Lord, I am afraid, seeing I am as liable to err as other men, lest I should be led aside from truth by mine own imagination. Hast Thou not promised, *The meek Thou wilt guide in judgment, and the meek Thou wilt teach Thy way?* Lord, Thou knowest, at this time, my heart is not haughty, nor are mine eyes lofty. *O guide me by Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.*

“One thing in particular I would pray for; namely, that I may not only be kept from erroneous principles, but may so love the truth as never to keep it back. O Lord, never let me, under the specious pretence of preaching holiness, neglect to promulgate the truths of Thy Word; for this day I see, and have all along found, that holy practice has a necessary dependence on sacred principle. O Lord, if Thou wilt open mine eyes to behold the wonders of Thy Word, and give me to feel their transforming tendency, then shall the Lord be my God. Then let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I shun to declare, to the best of my knowledge, the whole counsel of God.”

Surely this man who sought for truth as others seek for money, power, or pleasure, was not left to himself when he cried thus for light to the Source of Light.

And here is a passage out of many from his journal of these Soham years, which will illustrate his watchfulness over his own heart. It is dated January 29th, 1780, a few days after this renewal of covenant with God.

“O what a horrid depth of pride and hypocrisy do I find in my heart! Surely I am unfit for any company. If I am with a superior, how will my heart court his praise, by speaking diminutively of myself, not for-

getting to urge the disadvantages under which I have laboured, to excuse my inferiority. And here is a large vacancy left, in hope he will fill it up with something like this: 'Well, you must have made good improvement of what advantages you have enjoyed.'

"On the other hand, when I am in company with an inferior, how full of self am I! While I seem to be instructing him, by communicating my observations, how prone to lose sight of his edification, and everything but my own self-importance, aiming more to display my own knowledge than to increase his!

"While I make these observations I feel the truth of them. A thought has been suggested to write them, not as having been working in my heart to-day, but only as discovered to-day. O horridly deceitful and desperately wicked heart! Surely I have little else in my religious exercises but these workings. I am afraid of being deceived at last.

"If I am saved, what must the Son of God have endured! "

And here is a third passage from the journal of the Soham years. It is dated September 12th in that same year of 1780.

"Very much in doubt respecting my being in a state of grace. I cannot see that I have, or ever had, for any constancy, such an idea of myself as must be implied in true humility. The Lord have mercy upon me, for I know not how it is with me. One thing I know, that, if I be a Christian at all, real Christianity in me is inexpressibly small in degree. O what a vast distance is there between what I ought to be and what I am! If I am a saint at all, I know I am one of the least of all saints: I mean that the workings of real grace in my soul are so feeble that I hardly think they can be feebler in any true Christian. . . . I think of late I

cannot in prayer consider myself as a Christian, but as a sinner casting myself at Christ's feet for mercy."

These words, written for no eye but his own, display some afterglow of that terrible doctrine from which he was slowly passing. Even yet he is inclined to look within instead of looking off unto Jesus. Yet was it not a smaller error than that which so hinders religion to-day, namely, the light and easy way in which we take ourselves for granted as believers?

About this time the church at Kettering, which had been a vacant pastorate for three years, made repeated overtures to Fuller. He was much distressed, not knowing what to do. The prospect was attractive to one of Fuller's powers, and in the unsettled state of the Soham church the inducements were great towards the change.

June 5th, 1782, is a date that must be noted among the few external events of the Soham years. Fuller went to the Association, held that year at Olney in Sutcliff's meeting-house, carrying his burden of care regarding the Kettering call, and still uncertain. The gatherings were numerous attended, for signs of revival were appearing in the Association. A window is taken out of the meeting-house, and an improvised pulpit placed within, so that those without may hear also. Looking upon Fuller from the yard as he preached on *Be not children in understanding* was young Carey, from Hackleton, where he and a few more had just formed a little church on Open Membership lines. Only since 1779 had Carey known the way of salvation and life and not yet had he been baptized, nor would be till next year. Never had he spent such a day of delight as this. But let Pearce Carey tell of his great-grandfather's experience on that day.

"Carey's first experience of an Association day was a thing for remembrance. No leader knew him or gave him a thought. He was one of the least of

the concourse thronging the Olney meeting-house and graveyard. . . . Carey had never seen Fuller before and would fain have thanked him. He had never witnessed such a day's religious zeal. With not a penny in his pocket he could buy no food, and except for a glass of wine at a friend of Chater's, he fasted. But his mind and spirit had a feast. He would have been amazed had he foreseen how fiery a chariot this Association was to become, with himself its charioteer."

But all was hidden that day. Carey, but three years a believer, was nobody; Fuller's gifts were only beginning to show themselves. That both were to become great men to shine like twin stars in the firmament and to launch a world-wide movement—how should they or anyone else know! Yet such was their unimagined destiny.

JOHN GILL, D.D. (1697-1771)

Gill was a Kettering man. His father was a preacher to a mixed congregation. By private study he became a really learned man. Some have affirmed that Gill learned Hebrew without a teacher. Certain it is that he was an able Hebraist when Hebrew was little known. Called to London to the pastorate of Horsliedown Baptist church (the church now continuing in the Metropolitan Tabernacle), he was the standard-bearer of the hyper-Calvinists. A profound thinker, he wrote clearly and voluminously. His chief works were *The Cause of God and Truth* and *A Body of Divinity*. This might be called the textbook of his school, and it is still a standard with those of that pattern of thought who remain. *Practical Divinity* was compiled from his preaching. Then followed *Exposition of the New Testament* in three volumes, and *Exposition of the Old Testament* in six. Although a doughty defender of his principles, Gill found no pleasure in attacking others.

JOHN BRINE (1703-65)

Brine is less well known, but in his day he was a power. Also a Kettering man, Brine owed his conversion to Gill. He was sent out into the ministry by the "Little Meeting". Called to the Curriers' Hall church in Cripplegate, London, he was, during a long life, an influential pastor and a great writer. Few, I imagine, have seen or read his works. They are all sermons enlarged for publication, highly valued by persons of the school of Gill. Clear in language, and logical in arrangement, they were an armoury of weapons for theological gladiators of the period. Brine's works were edited and re-issued by the eminent London minister, James Upton of Church Street, Blackfriars, in 1813.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST TEN YEARS AT KETTERING

1782-1792: aged 28-38

TO say that Fuller was reluctant to leave Soham would be to tell but a small part of the agony of mind through which he went before he could bring himself to leave the little flock. There were many reasons for this. For one thing, it was the place of his boyhood and youth, and the fact that he never lost touch with the church through all the years that followed proves his love for it. For another, he felt that the pastoral relation was somewhat like the marriage tie. It was for life unless some overwhelming necessity sundered it. This was a by no means uncommon view at the period, though Ryland said this was carrying things too far. But the chief reason for his reluctance to leave was that the church members could not see it to be right. Many were the meetings held, many were the tears shed, and Fuller was torn with painful doubts

whether he might not be taking himself out of the hands of God if he should yield to the pressure of the larger and more important church. His journal for the period 1780-1782 is a poignant document indeed.

When the Association met in May, 1781, he referred the case to the judgment of nine ministers, Booth, Evans, Gill, Guy, Hall senior, Hopper, Ryland senior, Ryland junior, and Sutcliff. All were of opinion that he should accept the call. Still he was not satisfied. The case was after that referred to a committee of three. Of these, one thought he should try a little longer whether the church would not support him better; the second was against his leaving; the third could not make up his mind either way. Further reference was made to Robert Robinson of Cambridge. Fuller and a deacon went to see him together. Three or four hours they gave to it, and Robinson's verdict was, "That Mr. Fuller ought to continue for one whole year, and after that if it should appear that he can live on his income; and that the people ought to abide by their proposal to raise Mr. Fuller's income to £26 a year, as they had proposed, clear of all deductions." But Robinson was a business man and a farmer as well as a pastor, and had an idea that others could do as he did.

Fuller did decline the call at first, and urged the Kettering people to look elsewhere, but they had no heart for any such step. They were set on Fuller, if he could be obtained. They waited one year more and renewed the call.

Fuller's name had been put before the Kettering church by Hall senior. Mr. Beeby Wallis, the principal deacon, conducted the negotiations. In the end Fuller accepted the call, and removed to Kettering in October, 1782, and his membership was transferred by the Soham church. Following what was a general custom, Fuller was not ordained to the pastorate till the October following. A year's probation was served, but there was never

any doubt of the issue. Father Hall again presided at Fuller's induction and gave the charge, in October, 1783.

The oft-quoted words of Dr. Ryland must here be set down once more: "Men who fear not God would risk the welfare of a nation with fewer searchings of heart than it cost Fuller to determine whether he should leave a little Dissenting Church, scarcely containing forty members, besides himself and his wife."

Kettering, the place with which Fuller's name was to be thereafter associated, was, in his day, a little town of 3,242 inhabitants. The principal industry was the shoe trade. But of course the factory and the machine had not arrived yet. Work was given out to be done in the homes of the workers and returned to the employer at stated times. One of Kettering's deacons, Thomas Gotch, was a shoe manufacturer on this plan, and he it was for whom Carey once worked, and by whom Carey was relieved from working and encouraged to pursue languages instead.

The church to which Fuller went in Kettering was known as "The Little Meeting". This name distinguished it from the Independent church, which was called "The Great Meeting". The cause had been founded by Beeby Wallis's great-grandfather, William Wallis, when he, with several others, peaceably withdrew from the Independent church and began services of their own in the year 1696. Wallis was elected pastor, and continued to 1715, when he was succeeded in the pastorate by his son Thomas Wallis, Beeby Wallis's grandfather, who continued till his death, which took place in 1726. His son William Wallis, though not pastor, was a member of the church, and when he died in 1757, Beeby Wallis was twenty-two years of age, but not yet a member of the church. However, at twenty-eight he was baptized and united with the church of his ancestors. About five years later he was elected a deacon, an office which he filled "with honour and satis-

faction for twenty-four years ", as Fuller was to say later at his funeral. Thus Fuller's deacon and friend was the fourth generation of the Wallises. Unfortunately he left no issue, and with the death of his widow the succession ceased.

At the time of Fuller's call the church had, according to Ryland, eighty-eight members. It should at once be added that congregations were largely in excess of what those figures would indicate to us of the present day. The door-step of the church was very high indeed. Have we not just said that Beeby Wallis himself could not mount that step till past his twenty-eighth birthday? Tender of conscience, inclined to spiritual despondency, judging his state scrupulously, he could not lightly profess religion, and receive its ordinance of confession. To appear before the church and "give his experience" required a confidence he was long in arriving at. So high was the step that many good Christians remained "hearers" all their days, attending regularly, supporting the cause with their money, but never getting to the place where they could be sure of their "election". Such considerations explain that while Fuller's hearers, including those from the villages round, amounted to about a thousand, the membership was only 174 when he died.

The first two years at Kettering were given to the regular work in his new church, and to little beside. Now that he was near to Sutcliff, Ryland, and Father Hall, he saw them often, and found his heart knit to them in bonds of love, and his mind enriched by their fellowship.

He took a deep interest in the affairs of the Association, and soon became an influential man among them, despite his comparative youth. He kept a private record, his son says, of the statistics of the churches, of their history, with remarks on their circumstances, all indicative of a living and loving interest. "He had a

bishopric," said Morris of Clipstone, "without any of its titles or emoluments; and the care of all the churches, within the immediate circle of his acquaintance, came upon him daily. In their formation, in the ordination of their pastors, and in every case of difficulty, his assistance was required, and in these important services he excelled. The interest he felt in the peace and prosperity of the churches around him was deep and lasting; and when any of them was left destitute or in low circumstances, he would ardently exclaim, 'O Lord, what wilt Thou do for Thy great Name?'"

On June 2nd, 1784, the Association met in Nottingham, and it was destined to be "a beginning of days". Fuller preached on *Walking by Faith*. This was the first writing of Fuller's to be printed, and for the purpose of publication it was expanded into a considerable pamphlet, to which was appended *Persuasives to an Extraordinary Union in Prayer for the Revival of Real Religion*.

The expository part of the sermon deals with a mistaken idea of faith into which many had fallen. Faith, as Fuller defined it, was not believing in our own safety as the elect of God. Faith did not terminate on something in ourselves, but on the declarations of God in the Gospel. Faith was belief of the truth—about the character of God, the sinfulness of man, the sufficiency of Christ as Redeemer. In short Fuller was back again at *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, in opposition to the hyper-Calvinism, and incipient Antinomianism which was spreading harmfully through the churches.

There was also, even so early as 1784, included in the points of application of the sermon a breath of the wind that was later on to blow strongly through the Association. It is the earliest indication I can find of "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" indicating an imminent advance of gospel troops on the

heathen world. The preacher said:

“If we compare the present state of things, or even the past, with the glorious prophecies of the Word of God, we cannot think, surely, that all is yet accomplished. By these prophecies the Christian church is encouraged to *look for great things* at some period or other of her existence. She is taught to look for a time when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; when a nation shall be born at once; when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* But surely, for the present, though great things, upon the whole, have been done in the world, yet nothing like this has ever come to pass. Instead of the world being conquered, what a great part yet continues to stand out against him. Heathenism, Mohammedanism, popery, and infidelity, how extensive still their influence!

“In all probability not a single country, city, town, village, or congregation has ever yet been brought wholly to submit to Christ! Nay, is it not very rare to find, in any one of these, so many real friends as even to make a majority in His favour? May not the Christian church then, for the present adopt that language, *We have been with child, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.*

“What then, shall we despair? God forbid! *The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry; and, meanwhile, the just shall live by faith.*

“Let us take encouragement, in the present day of small things, by looking forward, and hoping for

better days. Let this be attended with *earnest and united prayer* to Him by Whom Jacob must arise. A life of faith will ever be a life of prayer. O brethren, let us pray much for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon our ministers and churches, and not upon those only of our own connection and denomination, but upon *all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.*"

But not Fuller's heart alone was beginning to be stirred by new and warmer desires. The same was true of his friend Sutcliff, who had come to that Nottingham Association in June with President Edwards' *Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer* in his pocket. He had received this American pamphlet in the previous April, in a parcel of books from Dr. John Erskine of Edinburgh, says the Rev. E. A. Payne,¹ and it was this pamphlet which inspired the plan for a monthly meeting for special prayer for the revival of religion. Fuller went home to Kettering either with a copy in his possession, or perhaps he borrowed Sutcliff's copy a few days later, for on June 13th his diary shows that he was with Sutcliff at Olney. Then on July 9th he notes, "Read to our friends this evening" (it was his Friday prayer meeting) "a part of Mr. Edwards' *Attempt to Promote Prayer for the Revival of Religion* to excite them to the like practice. Felt my heart profited and much solemnized by what I read." Then on July 13th he enters in the diary, "Spent this day in fasting and prayer, in conjunction with several of my brethren in the ministry, for the revival of our churches and the spread of the Gospel." Here was the beginning of many more meetings, Associational and otherwise, and always for the twin objects, "the revival of our churches and the spread of the Gospel". On August 10th he

¹ *The Prayer Call of 1784.*

enters in the diary, "Occupied in writing for the press *Some Persuasives to United Prayer for the Revival of Real Religion.*" Thus he performed what had been asked of him at the June Association meeting, and his sermon *Walking by Faith*, with the *Persuasives* attached, went to the churches.

The *Persuasives* argued the readiness of the Lord to hear prayer, the prevalent declension in religion, the action of God in Bible times, and in later times, in answer to prayer, and the promises of God in that matter. The thought of the whole world, present in the sermon, is present also in the *Persuasives*.

"Christianity has not yet made its way, even in name, over one-fifth part of the world. Out of 730 millions who are supposed to inhabit our globe, not above 122 millions profess the Christian name. All the rest are heathens, Jews, or Mohammedans. And of those who do profess it, the far greater part are either of the apostate Church of Rome, or of the Greek Church, which is nearly as corrupt. Add to this, what great numbers of real heathens abound in Christian lands, and unbelievers even in the congregations of the faithful. Surely it is high time to awake out of sleep, and to send our united cries to heaven in behalf of our fellow creatures."

This sermon, with the *Persuasives*, preceded by eight years Carey's famous sermon at Nottingham, *Expect great things from God: attempt great things for God.*

While Fuller ever nobly affirmed that the origin of the Mission was to be found "in the workings of our Brother Carey's mind", yet in his own mind thoughts were stirring, and in other minds as well. Rarely does God's Spirit work in isolation.

Carey, to whom all this was to mean so much, was not present in 1784: indeed he had only been baptized a few months before, and was not yet a pastor.

With one publication issued, Fuller's thoughts turned to the manuscript of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, still unpublished. He writes, under date October 21st, "Feel some pain in the thought of being about to publish *On the Obligations of Men to Believe in Christ*, as supposing I shall thereby expose myself to much abuse, which is disagreeable to the flesh. Had I not a satisfaction that it is *the cause of God and truth*, I would drop all thoughts of printing. The Lord keep me meek and lowly in heart." And on November 22nd, "Walked to Northampton. Some prayer that God would bless that about which I am going, namely, the printing of a manuscript on faith in Christ being the duty of unregenerate sinners."

Fuller might well be apprehensive. He had already lent his manuscript round to one and another of the ministers of his acquaintance, and had received from some nothing but abuse. One correspondent called him an Arminian, a Baxterian, and much else. Others, however, received his views with favour.

With the publication of the work the storm broke, and for twenty years he was never free from the duty of defending his doctrine against attacks of many kinds. The venerable Abraham Booth of Prescott Street, London, the premier Particular Baptist church, at first in good spirit, but presently with harshness and misrepresentation, entered the fray, though indeed the differences between these good men were all within the family. At the other extreme was Dan Taylor, Arminian in doctrine, and the leader of the new group of General Baptists. From Scotland, Archibald M'Lean, the Sandemanian Baptist, wrote largely. These and many others had to be answered. In Fuller's collected works hundreds of pages are occupied with his answers to his critics. Human depravity, moral obligation, the nature of saving faith, the extent of the atonement, the nature and necessity of the Spirit's work in regeneration, the

priority of the new birth over the exercise of saving faith—all these points were argued, sometimes with charity and truth, sometimes with bitterness and calumny.

"Fuller," says Dr. John Stoughton, in *Religion in England*, "was one of that class of theologians who are equally impressed by the facts of God's gracious sovereignty, and of man's moral obligation. In contemplating the one he could not lose sight of the other. He saw that on neither of these principles, taken *alone*, can a system of divinity be securely based; it must cover both. . . . In fact he did not feel himself bound to become a thorough follower of John Calvin, or a thorough follower of James Arminius. A tendency wrought in Fuller similar to that which had appeared in John Howe and Richard Baxter. Without the Platonic culture of the one, or the dialectic skill of the other, he had much of the theological catholicity and comprehensiveness of both. But he wrought out his results, not as a copyist of any one, but after a fashion of his own. He belonged to the same school of Evangelical divines as John Newton and Thomas Scott, but was far more inventive in method and distinct in conclusion than either of these good men. For native force he stands first in the Evangelical school of his day; and perhaps no one had so much influence as he upon Nonconformist theological opinions during more than the first quarter of the nineteenth century."

We have mentioned thus early Fuller's views and position in theology rather than later when dealing with his writings as a whole, because it is necessary to understand his message and spirit. *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* might be called Fuller's gospel. It was what he preached, and belongs rather to the development of his preaching than to his authorship, if we may thus speak.

For the years 1785 and 1786 there is a full record in the diary. The engagements are of the routine kind,

preaching here, preaching there, receiving the publications coming out in opposition to *The Gospel Worthy*—from William Button of Dean Street, Southwark; from Dan Taylor; from Dr. Withers, who had threatened to “reduce to dust” the work of the author. There are letters back to Soham, where troubles still persist, and a long visit to Cambridgeshire. The Association meetings come round, and the ministers’ meetings also. Brethren are seen and prayed with. And good Mr. Toller of the Independent meeting is a standby for sympathy in sorrow. In preaching, his heart warms to the young people, and in the prayer meeting he is humbled in hearing Beeby Wallis pray for him in terms which show how much more highly he thinks of his pastor than is justified, according to Fuller’s own judgment of himself.

On May 30th, 1786, his little daughter aged six died. She had been into Northampton, staying with the Rylands for a change, but was now home again. For her Ryland wrote the little children’s hymn, *Lord, teach a little child to pray*, and another piece. On the day of her passing Fuller was ill in bed, and heard whispering, then silence. Then came the dread news of her death. “I called my family round my bed. I sat up, and prayed as well as I could; I bowed my head and worshipped, and blessed a taking as well as a giving God.” “Dear Brother Ryland” preached at her funeral. *Is it well with the child? It is well.*

On June 6th the stricken father rode into Northampton for the Association meeting. “I am glad to find the state of the churches upon the whole encouraging. The next day I and Mr. Hopper and Mr. Sutcliff preached; but I wanted more spirituality.”

For three years the curtain falls. Pages are cut out of the diary. No further entry is made until the autumn of 1789. These years were hardly judged by Fuller later. He says that his heart was in a cold state and his ministry little blessed. But he was wont to write hard

things against himself, and we should err if we took him too literally. Of one thing we may be sure. There were no moral faults to conceal, no skeleton in the cupboard. No breath of that kind ever dimmed for a moment the mirror of his daily walk and conversation. The trouble was spiritual, and it soon passed in the glow that came over his soul when the Mission adventure began. Indeed, the self-accusings were written from a sense of contrast which the great enterprise threw backwards on the inferior years.

With 1790 better things appear. He begins writing again. He has been reading the Unitarians, Priestley, Belsham, and Lindsey, and making notes against them for a day that is to come. He has more joy in preaching, and "gained ground in spiritual things". President Edwards' sermons leave a deep impression on his heart. Uncomfortable debates in the church are now finished. Dr. Owen on *Mortification of Sin* and on *Spiritual-mindedness* are read.

In the spring of 1791 a religious concern is apparent among the young people. He meets them in the vestry, to pray and talk with them. He hears of revival about Walgrave and Guilsborough, and that it came about through setting apart days for fasting and prayer. "Surely if ever I wrestled with God in my life I did so then, for the Holy Spirit as promised to those that ask, for more grace, for forgiveness, for the restoration of the joys of salvation, and that not only for myself but for the generality of Christians among us." So the year ends. Great things are coming to birth next year, though he knows it not as yet.

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

1792: aged 38

How did things stand with Fuller and his associates when the year 1792 arrived—that memorable year, to be engraved upon the consciousness of all Baptists until this hour?

For friendship and conference Ryland in Northampton was nearest, now for several years sole pastor of College Lane, his father and the school having gone to Enfield. Next was Sutcliff at Olney, cautious, steadfast, devout, loyal. These two, with Fuller, were the triumvirate of the Association, with Father Hall of Arnsby standing by, feeling only pride and pleasure in the growth of younger men, until he passed away in 1791, to be buried by Fuller amid general lamentation with tender eulogy.

Sutcliff, especially, had fostered the prayer project, reprinting President Edwards' *Humble Attempt* in 1789, with a preface dated from Olney, May 4th that year. He had it ready, Ernest Payne says, for the Association meetings, which that year had been at Spalding. Great blessing had God given to this movement "for the revival of our churches, and the spread of the Gospel". The Independents also had taken it up in the Midlands, the Baptists in many parts from Yorkshire to Devonshire.

These spiritual efforts had united the triumvirate, and raised them high in the esteem of all who loved the Gospel. Fuller's *Persuasives* and Edwards' *Humble Attempt* were fuel for the holy fire far and wide. Fuller's *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* had shown men of all schools of thought that here was a thinker to be

reckoned with. So, with one thing and another, the Northamptonshire Association was acquiring great influence, in Baptist circles at first, and beyond later. The combination of prayer "for revival in our churches and the spread of the Gospel", with the freer proclamation of the good news which Fuller's writing had made possible for ministers who still held by Calvin in the main, was a powerful influence.

But this was not all. Carey had been added to the Association as minister at Moulton. Ryland, Sutcliff and Fuller had laid ordaining hands on him, not yet seeing what manner of man they were welcoming to their fellowship. In deep poverty, Carey worked at his trade, being employed now by Thomas Gotch, shoemanufacturer of Kettering, one of Fuller's deacons. Wind had got abroad of Carey's unusual studiousness, and one day Gotch met him as he was returning goods made up and collecting more uppers and sole leather for another week's labour. "Let me see, Mr. Carey," he said, "how much do you earn a week by your shoemaking?"

"About nine or ten shillings, sir."

"Well now," said the good deacon, with a twinkling eye, "I've a secret for you. I don't mean you *to spoil any more of my leather*, but get on as fast as you can with your Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, and I'll allow you from my private purse ten shillings weekly."

As Pearce Carey, from whose *William Carey* this story and much more about Carey is culled, says, Gotch's gift of £26 a year to an unknown man, to speed his future studies, was rare generosity and a high tribute to his sense of Carey's worth.

Carey had proposed at a ministers' meeting the question for discussion, "Whether the command given to the apostles to teach all nations was not binding on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world". For four years, with his globe, his maps, his statistics pains-

takingly compiled, his books, and above all his Bible and his prayers, Carey had given his mind to the matter. Again and again he brought it up. "They mostly regarded it", says Fuller, "as a wild impracticable scheme, and gave him no encouragement. Yet he would not give it up, but talked with us one by one, till he had made some impression." In fact the obligation of the Church to preach the Gospel to the heathen was Carey's passion, and he brought it up everywhere. As Fuller had proved that the Gospel *could* be preached to all, so did Carey follow with the corollary that it *should* be preached to all. If, according to Fuller, the Gospel was intended for all, then according to Carey it was our bounden duty to offer it to all. Fuller had shown that there was no reason why the Gospel should not be preached to everyone. Carey contended that there was every reason why it should be so preached. Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* bore fruit after its kind in Carey's *Enquiry*.

The Easter meeting of the ministers of the Association in 1791 took place at Clipstone. Fuller preached on a striking text, Haggai i. 2: *This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built*. The title of the sermon as printed in Fuller's collected works is, *The Instances, the Evil Nature, and the Dangerous Tendency of Delay, in the Concerns of Religion*. It was a powerful utterance in the context of all the praying that had been done for the "revival of our churches and the spread of the Gospel". One by one the various pleas for delay in good work are answered. The great commission is quoted as a command, the efforts made to give effect to it are acknowledged to be negligible.

"The truth is," Fuller cries, "we wait for we know not what. We seem to think the time is not come, the time for the Spirit to be poured down from on high.

We pray for the conversion and salvation of the world, and yet neglect the ordinary means by which those ends have been used to be accomplished. It pleased God, heretofore, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed: and there is reason to think that God will still work by that distinguished means. Ought we not then at least to try by some means to convey more of the good news of salvation to the world around us than has hitherto been conveyed? The encouragement to the heathen is still in force, *Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved, but how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?* ”

Every heart was subdued, said Morris, the local minister. Carey leaped upon them, so to speak, pleading for action. But no, the ministers, including Fuller himself, felt the difficulty of treading an absolutely untrodden, yea, unmarked path. They advised Carey to publish his pamphlet, and by so doing to feel the pulse of the churches.

That night the light was burning in Morris's manse till long past midnight. At one o'clock, says Pearce Carey in *William Carey*, Fuller was hungry again.

“Have you any meat, Morris?”

“Yes,” answered Morris.

“Then bring it out.” And he bored the mantelpiece, and hung by a string from the gimlet the beef for their nocturnal second repast. The tradition is that, as portions were ready, slices were cut and given to the company.

Fuller's own account of this Clipstone meeting is:

“After worship Mr. Carey, who was present and

much interested in the discourses, moved that something should be that day agreed upon relative to the formation of a *society for the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen*. The other ministers had, it is true, been in a manner compelled to *think* upon the subject by his repeatedly advancing it, and became desirous of it, if it could be accomplished; but feeling the difficulty of setting out in an unbeaten path, their minds revolted at the idea of attempting it. It seemed to them something too great and too much like grasping at an object utterly beyond their reach. However, partly to satisfy Brother Carey, and partly to gain time, they advised him to revise his manuscript on the subject and to print it."

Fuller met Carey again within a month, for Carey had been called to Harvey Lane, Leicester, and this brought the triumvirate together for his induction. The evening preacher on this occasion was Samuel Pearce, recently come to Cannon Street, Birmingham, from Bristol College. Fuller and Ryland had both been at Pearce's ordination in August 1790, laying hands on him, and on five deacons, all young men just elected as helpers of Pearce. Now this flaming soul, for whom Ryland found the appropriate word "the seraphic", is brought into the circle of friends, and the big three from now on become the big five—Fuller, Ryland, Sutcliff, Carey, Pearce.

Pearce had preached on *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*. Carey had never heard preaching like that, and his soul was knit to Pearce's, as flame is drawn to flame. Fuller had already taken Carey to his heart, and now Pearce was received into that same deep, quiet, undemonstrative, but tender and faithful affection. What a group were these five!—the scholarly Ryland, the

virile Fuller, the steadfast Sutcliff, the zealous Carey, the seraphic Pearce.

When the day's proceedings were concluded, Pearce asked that Carey should read what he had written of *The Enquiry*, being prompted thereto, Pearce Carey says in his *Samuel Pearce*, by his deacon Thomas Potts, who had promised Carey £10 towards the printing.

The following May, 1792, the Association met at Nottingham. Here it was that on the Wednesday of the gatherings, Carey preached his memorable sermon on Isaiah liv. 2, 3: *Enlarge the place of thy tent, with the deathless divisions, Expect great things from God: attempt great things for God.* The effect of the sermon was great. "If all the people," said Ryland, "had lifted up their voice and wept, as the children of Israel did at Bochim, I should not have wondered at the effect, it would only have seemed proportionate to the cause; so clearly did he prove the criminality of our supineness in the cause of God."

But what Ryland reports so calmly needs supplementing with further detail. The day following the sermon opened with an experience-meeting at sunrise. Then came the business session of the ministers and others. After local matters had been decided, Carey confronted his brethren once again with his great passion. Even so, they were about to disperse without action, when Carey, in his distress, turned to grip Fuller's arm, crying, "Is nothing again going to be done, sir?" That cry moved Fuller to swift action. The matter was again discussed, and this time it issued in a step forward by the passing of a resolution: "That a plan be prepared against the next meeting of ministers at Kettering for forming 'A Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen'."

From that moment the die was cast. Fuller went home to make plans for the Kettering meeting next October, and from then onward for twenty-three years

to be the mainspring of the machine. He was to travel, write, plead, beg and pray for the rest of his life, chiefly for this adventure. What emotions passed through the soul of Fuller in that hour who can say? This stern, tender, gruff, strong man was strangely moved when Carey gripped his arm in spiritual anguish. Something passed between them in that hour that made them one. *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* had led to this!

To this year 1792 belong two great sorrows—the death of Beeby Wallis and the death of Fuller's wife. One had indeed been endured before the Nottingham meeting: the other was to come. On April 2nd Beeby Wallis had died. Fuller preached a great sermon on *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*. It is printed in his collected works. The personal tribute with which the sermon ends still seems to throb with a pastor's love for a good deacon and friend. How far we can see through this little window:

“It is often seen, where persons of affluence unite with a Christian community they consider themselves as doing great honour to it, and expect great homage in return. But this everyone that knew him can bear witness was not his spirit. It was not natural to him to assume the airs of a Diotrephes, or to avail himself of the influence which his circumstances and situation afforded him to lord it over God's heritage. He was sometimes warm and sanguine; but that was not frequent, and never but when he considered himself as engaged in the cause of truth and righteousness.”

“About a week before he died,” the sermon says, “he requested that a few of his Christian friends might come to see him, and pray with him. Five of us went. He told us he did not wish us to pray for his life: he considered it as the will of God that he should die. But pray, he said, that if there be any sins of

which I have been guilty, and have not yet repented, any sins for which God has any controversy with me, that He would give me a proper sense of them before I die. Or, if not, that I might enjoy the light of His countenance in death."

So passed this good man. Fuller wrote an epitaph, including these lines:

"Active and generous in virtue's cause
With solid wisdom, strict integrity,
And unaffected piety, he lived
Beloved amongst us, and beloved he died."

A still greater sorrow fell upon Fuller and his family in the August of this memorable year. Mrs. Fuller became mentally deranged, and so continued for a long time. A pathetic letter to her father, Mr. Gardiner, from the stricken husband, gives affecting particulars of this mental illness. Lucid intervals came from time to time.

"About a fortnight before her death, she had one of the happiest intervals of any during the affliction. She had been lamenting on account of this *impostor* that was come into her house, and would not give her the keys. She tried for two hours to obtain them from me by force, in which she exhausted all her own strength, and almost mine. Not being able to obtain her point, as I was necessarily obliged to resist her in this matter, she sat down and wept, threatening me that God would surely judge me for treating a poor helpless creature in such a manner! I also was overcome with grief: I wept with her. The sight of my tears seemed to awaken her recollection. With her eyes fixed on me, she said, 'Why, are you *indeed* my husband?'

" 'Indeed, my dear, I am.'

“ ‘ Oh, if I thought you were, I could give you a thousand kisses! ’

“ ‘ Indeed, my dear, I am your own dear husband! ’

“ She then seated herself on my knee, and kissed me several times. My heart dissolved with a mixture of grief and joy. Her senses were restored, and she talked as rationally as ever. I then persuaded her to go to rest, and she slept well.”

But the improvement was not maintained, and the end came. Her babe, a daughter, was born, but the mother died. They called the child *Bathoni*; the same name, except for the difference in sex, which Rachel gave her last-born.

Under these sorrows Fuller prepared for the epoch-making meeting of ministers, October 2nd, 1792. The story of this meeting is one of the best known stories of the whole missionary enterprise, and if we tell it briefly here, it is only because of space, which may justly be reserved for the less well-known facts of Fuller's life. The full story, with the picturesque details, may be read in Pearce Carey's *William Carey*, also in his *Samuel Pearce*, and in Ernest Payne's little volume *The First Generation*.

The ministers met in the little back parlour of the home of Beeby Wallis. The house was called in the town “ Gospel Inn ” from the many ministers who had been entertained in it. Eleven ministers of the Association were present; with Samuel Pearce, who, though not in the Association, could not keep away; Joseph Timms, a layman, recently elected a young deacon of Kettering in place of Beeby Wallis; and a student who had been preaching at College Lane. Carey, who was with the others at Deacon Gotch's house, had already pledged in Nottingham all the profits from his *Enquiry*, a not inconsiderable sum for those days. Promises amounting to £13 2s. 6d. were collected in Fuller's snuff-

box, on the lid of which was a representation of the conversion of the apostle Paul! The list was as follows:

John Ryland, Northampton	. .	£2	2	0
Reynold Hogg, Thrapstone	. .	2	2	0
John Sutcliff, Olney	. .	1	1	0
Andrew Fuller, Kettering	. .	1	1	0
Abraham Greenwood, Oakham	. .	1	1	0
Edward Sharman, Cottisbrook	. .	1	1	0
Joshua Burton, Foxton	. .	0	10	6
Samuel Pearce, Birmingham	. .	1	1	0
Thomas Blundell, Arnsby	. .	0	10	6
William Heighton, Roade	. .	0	10	6
John Ayre, Braybrook	. .	0	10	6
Joseph Timms, Kettering	. .	1	1	0
Anon (William Staughton, student)	. .	0	10	6
		£13	2	6

This promising, for promising it mainly was, represented on the average a week's salary for these, chiefly, village pastors.

To the second meeting, held on the last day of the same month, when the promises were redeemed, came Pearce again with £70 from Birmingham, gathered from his people under the impulse communicated by his ardent preaching. "This put new spirits into us all," says Ryland's record of the gathering. This, with the proceeds of Carey's *Enquiry*, donated by the author, was the fund with which the enterprise was launched.

Reynold Hogg, the only minister with any means beyond his salary, was appointed treasurer, and, of course, Fuller was secretary, with Ryland, Sutcliff, Pearce, and Carey as the others of the committee.

Thus the Society was formed. The great world knew nothing of it. In Fuller's own words: "When we began in 1792 there was little or no respectability among us, not so much as a squire to sit in the chair, or an orator to

make speeches to him. Hence good Dr. Stennett advised the London ministers to stand aloof, and not commit themselves. Which advice was very generally adopted." The Church of God, outside the little band of obscure Dissenters, knew nothing of it. Yet God knew. What had been done was of His prompting, and according to His mind. Behind it was little earthly support, but within it, as its beating heart, was the will and commandment of the Risen One who said, *All power is given unto Me, in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age.*

CHAPTER VI

HOLDING THE ROPE

1793-1798: aged 39-44

WHERE was a beginning to be made? Carey had thought of Tahiti; Pearce had been reading of the Pellew Islands. Had Carey gone to either place he would have been his noble self and done wonderful work, but who can admire sufficiently the Providence which directed him to India, where his unique linguistic and other gifts were to be invested in a myriad peopled land whose future is yet to be so great?

There came home to London in 1792 a surgeon and a Baptist, one John Thomas, who had been living in India and doing Christian work. He had been in correspondence with the venerable Booth, and with Dr. Stennett, in London. Fuller was desired to make full enquiry in the metropolis about Thomas, and to inter-

view him if he thought fit. Abraham Booth told of his correspondence with Thomas. Encouraged by this, Fuller met Thomas himself, and invited him to meet the Society at Kettering, on January 9th, 1793, at a day of "fasting, business and prayer".

When the day arrived Fuller was disappointed in the attendance. Ryland was away at Bristol in connection with his removal to that city as pastor of Broadmead and President of the College. Sutcliff was not able to come, nor was Thomas himself, owing to an injury to his foot. Nevertheless when they had read some of Thomas's warm, enthusiastic letters to Booth, they agreed that Providence was pointing them to India as the place of beginnings for their missionary operations and that, if Thomas agreed, they would endeavour to procure him an assistant, to go out with him in the spring. Then they gave themselves to prayer. In the evening of the day Carey preached on *Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me*. Scarcely had he finished when who should arrive but Thomas himself, limping on his damaged foot.

Thomas told them much about India, its peoples, its religions, its poverty. He told of his own efforts, of his pundits and Brahmin enquirers, whose joint letter to the home churches he read in their hearing. Carey's excitement was great.

Thomas also told them much of material things, of prices, of provisions, of houses and so forth. On these topics, however, he was a very faulty informer. His rosy picture of being able to live on little was, through his enthusiasm to return to India, sadly overdrawn. Thomas's financial affairs were his weakness, though his religious zeal was deep and pure. Many sorrows were to come of that incompetence about money matters. But this was not foreseen yet; it was not in the picture at all.

Carey volunteered that night. Thomas fell on his neck in tearful joy. "Knowing," says Fuller, "Carey's up-

rightness of character, genuine piety, sound principles, growing abilities " (though their magnitude was not even yet suspected) " and great ardour, they could do no other than accept his disinterested offer. They had long considered him peculiarly fitted for so arduous a work." Thus did Carey place himself, in lowly humility, second to Thomas in the great adventure.

Fuller went to his home with wonder and amazement filling his great heart, and with some anxieties resting on his mind. What would Ryland think? What Sutcliff? He sits down to write to Ryland, January 16th :

" You see things of great consequence are in train. My heart fears while it is enlarged. I have this day been to Olney to converse with Brother Sutcliff, to request him to go with me to Leicester to conciliate the church there, and sound Mrs. Carey's mind whether she will go and take the family, that we may know for what number of passengers to provide, and to apply for to the Directors of the East India Company. . . . I am much concerned with the weight that lies upon us. It is a great undertaking, yet surely it is right. We have all felt much in prayer. We must have one solemn day of fasting and prayer, on parting with our Paul and Barnabas. I suppose it must be at Leicester, a little before they go, which it is supposed will be about April. I hope you will be there. Help us by your prayers and advice."

Fuller's mission to Mrs. Carey was fruitless. She could not bring herself to face the prospect of herself and the whole family accompanying her husband to Calcutta. Who can wonder or blame?

With the Harvey Lane church at first they could not prevail. Carey had seen them out of grievous troubles, a third of the members were his own spiritual children. They resisted and rebelled. At length, however, inspired by one who struck a brave note, they agreed, not to let

him go, but to *send* him. Had they not had their monthly prayer meetings, and their special prayer meetings on market days for the benefit of country members coming to town? How then could they obstruct God's way of answering these intercessions?

Efforts were made from now on to interest the denomination in the enterprise. Fuller was, of course, the organizer in chief. He sent Carey here and Pearce there, Thomas somewhere else, and himself to any place open, beside writing with that fluent pen to persons at a distance. To Timothy Thomas in London Fuller wrote. In response London ministers to the number of eight, with twenty-three laymen, gathered in Devonshire Square meeting-house under the presidency of Dr. Stennett. Fuller wrote to Carey of this gathering: "Dr. Stennett predicts that the mission will come to nothing." The venerable Booth was not present at this meeting, being unwell, but his two leading deacons were there—Fox and Gutteridge, both definitely hostile. The upshot was—no action by the churches: let individuals help if they wished.

From far-off Bourton-on-the-Water came a reply from the veteran Benjamin Beddome: "I had the pleasure once to see and hear Mr. Carey; he struck me as the most suitable person in the kingdom, at least whom I knew, to supply my place, and make up my great deficiencies, when either disabled or removed. A different plan is formed, however, and pursued, and I fear that the great and good man, though influenced by the most excellent motives, will meet with a disappointment. However, God hath His ends, and whoever is disappointed, He cannot be so." Beddome was a great man in his day, and had been fifty years at Bourton. We can excuse in such a pastor the view that to follow himself in that charge was labour and honour enough for any man.

Meantime Carey's valedictory drew on. Fourteen

ministers were there, all of their circle but one. Staughton the student also came. At the morning prayer meeting Fuller was able to say that Bristol had sent £160, and Mr. Newcomen of Barnstaple £21. "The hearts of the little churches in Worcestershire had never been so opened, their collections far exceeding what the most zealous could have expected."

In the afternoon Thomas spoke of his experiences in Bengal. The Harvey Lane meeting-house was so crowded that they began half an hour before the advertised time. In the evening Reynold Hogg addressed the church, and then came Fuller's charge to the missionaries designate from the words of our Lord, *As my Father hath sent me even so send I you.*" The sermon is in full in Fuller's collected works.

"Go then after your Saviour's example, go in pursuit of the lost sheep; follow after them, search and find them out, that they may be brought home to His fold, from the dark mountains whither they have wandered. . . . Go, then, my dear brethren, stimulated by these prospects. We shall meet again. Crowns of glory await you and us. Each, I trust, will be addressed at the last day by our great Redeemer: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father; these were hungry and you fed them; athirst and you gave them drink; in prison and you visited them. Enter ye into the joy of the Lord. Amen.'"

Writing to Ryland, the great-souled Fuller said, "I loved Carey, but I loved the cause of Christ better, and on that account I could not be sorry at his departure, though it was with the probability never to see him more." Prophetic word: so it was. Carey's forty years in India went forward without break till God's finger touched him and he slept. Yet to Fuller's soul Carey was never far away. Their communion remained unbroken. Their letters would make one of the great books

of epistolary literature could they be collected and printed.

Fuller's love and confidence met an ample return from the absent Carey. Time and distance brought "no severing of their loves". In the throes of the trouble at Serampore after Fuller's death Carey wrote, "Beloved Fuller with one scowl of his brow would have dissipated a thousand such insinuations!"

When the proceedings of Carey's valedictory day were completed the big five got together. It must have been a holy time. Not very early would the lights go out that night. Here it was that they pledged themselves yet once more to the great undertaking, so adventurous, so mysterious, so beckoning, yet so burdened with questioning beyond human answer.

At a later time, when Fuller was strained almost beyond the breaking-point of his own great strength, he explained why he could not remit to anyone else the duties he had so long performed.

"Friends talk to me about coadjutors and assistants, but I know not how it is, I find a difficulty. Our undertaking to India really appeared to me, on its commencement, to be somewhat like a few men, who were deliberating about the importance of penetrating into a deep mine, which had never before been explored.

"We had no one to guide us, and while we were thus deliberating, Carey, as it were, said, 'Well, I will go down if *you* will hold the rope.' But before he went down, he, as it seemed to me, took an oath from each of us, at the mouth of the pit, to this effect, that while we lived, we should never let go the rope. You understand me. There was great responsibility attached to us who began the business: and so I find a difficulty."

Great difficulties, which cannot be recited here owing to considerations of space, met the two missionaries re-

garding their getting to India. It must suffice to say that they were unable to obtain permits and resolved to sail without them. Captain White of the *Earl of Oxford*, with whom Thomas had twice sailed as surgeon, took the missionaries and those who went with them, seven persons in all, on board. In the Solent they waited six weeks for a convoy. Receiving a warning which put fear into him, the captain put Thomas, Carey and his son Felix ashore at Ryde and sailed away without them. Storing their baggage at Portsmouth, they returned sorrowfully to London.

But this sorrow was to be turned into joy, and the things that had happened were to fall out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel. Back home conditions had changed. Mrs. Carey's expected little one had arrived, a boy—she had named him Jabez. She now expressed her willingness to accompany her husband and take the family on the great adventure, as her sister had been persuaded to go with her. So at last, in a Danish ship, the *Kron Princessa Maria*, they all got away. From Dover Thomas wrote the last words:

“ June 13 (1793): The ship is here, the signal made, the guns are fired, and we are going with a fair wind. Farewell, my dear brothers and sisters, farewell. May the God of Israel be ours and yours, by sea and land, for time and eternity! Most affectionately adieu! ”

So they went, with the four left behind to hold the rope. Pearce's charge was soon fulfilled, for in six years more he died. But Sutcliff for twenty-one years, Fuller for twenty-two, and Ryland for thirty-three, kept their strong hands on the rope. Carey was to outlive them all, and work on eight more years after Ryland had been gathered home.

From the day of Carey's departure Fuller took upon himself the whole weight of the Mission's concerns. He cared for it night and day, and laid himself out for its

welfare and success. His study table was its office. I have said his study, but from Morris of Clipstone I learn that Fuller never had what we call a study. His desk was in the sitting-room, and he worked with his family around him. Under such circumstances he penned all his letters to the missionaries, copied in his own hand and circulated the important part of their replies, and generally conducted all the work of the committee. We must correct the statement and say that his *desk* was the office of the Society.

But the joy of the Lord was his strength. God visited the soul of Fuller with great refreshments of grace and happiness from the founding of the Mission. How striking in its point and sincerity is the following extract from his diary for the date July 18th, 1794:

“Within the last year or two we have formed a Missionary Society; and have been enabled to send out two of our brethren to the East Indies. My heart has been greatly interested in the work. Surely I never felt more genuine love for God and for His cause in my life. I bless God that this work has been the means of reviving my soul. If nothing else comes of it, I and many more have obtained a spiritual advantage.

“My labours, however, in this harvest, I have reason to think, brought on a paralytic stroke, by which, in January, 1793, I for a week or two lost the use of one side of my face. That was recovered in a little time; but it left behind it a headache, which I have reason to think will never fully leave me. I have ever since been incapable of reading or writing with intense application. At this time I am much better than I was last year, but even now reading or writing for a few hours will bring on a headache. Upon the whole, however, I feel satisfied. It was in the service of God. If a man lose his limbs or his health by intemperance,

it is to his dishonour; but not so if he lose them in serving his country. Paul was desirous of *dying to the Lord*: so let me be."

For the next few years following Carey's departure, Fuller spent nearly a quarter of each year in travelling and preaching for the Mission wherever he could get an opening. At first his journeys were naturally in the Midlands, where he was best known; later, in London, where the timidity of the ministers began to give way before his zealous advocacy; and in Bristol, where Ryland's translation to Broadmead and the College ensured for him and the cause a welcome and a response.

He did not confine his efforts to preaching. He humbled himself yet more for the sake of the cause, and for the sake of Carey who had gone down the mine. With his collecting book he personally canvassed the well-off men of evangelical sentiments to whom he gained introductions. Sometimes he was welcomed and came away with liberal donations. Sometimes he had to meet arguments of various kinds, either against the idea of Missions, or the competency of himself and his friends to inaugurate such an adventure. London in particular tried his soul. He told Ryland how he often had to retire to the back streets so that his tears should not be seen when he had left the home or warehouse of some wealthy refuser of help.

During 1794 Fuller's thoughts turned to the wisdom of marrying again. At this juncture there came back with all its power the verse which we may well call Fuller's text: *In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths*. The lonely man returning to his lonely fireside from his preaching and collecting was to be lonely no more. He married Ann Coles, daughter of the Rev. William Coles of Maulden, near Ampthill in Bedfordshire. He was forty years of age, and found a perfect helpmeet in his new wife.

Married on December 30th, a few days later he writes: "We invited about a dozen of our serious friends to drink tea and spend the evening in prayer." This seems to have been the extent of the festivities. They were religious people. Much domestic comfort ensued for Fuller from his marriage. All relatives and friends on both sides cordially approved of the union. To the end the second Mrs. Fuller supported her husband in all his pastoral, literary, and missionary labours. It is her handwriting that is seen in the copies of Carey's early letters home from Mudnabatty which were sent on to members of Committee and other friends. One sent to Kinghorn of Norwich is now before me. Fuller adds a few words of greeting in his own hand, but the copy was made by Mrs. Fuller.

Six children were born of this marriage, of whom three died in infancy. Two sons and a daughter survived their father.

From the desk in the sitting-room at Kettering went the letters which Fuller wrote to the missionaries. Here is an early and characteristic one to Thomas, dated December 24th, 1795.

"Your work is a great work, and the eyes of the religious world are upon you. I often think of the depth of that Providence that first took you to India, inclined your heart to the good work of the Lord, and brought you to England in search of an assistant, just at the time we were in quest of an opening. Your undertaking, with that of your dear colleague, has provoked many. The spirit of Missions is gone forth. I wish it may never stop till the Gospel is sent into all the world. Do not, my dear brother, give way to a spirit of dejection. Look forward to your reward. You are sowing a seed, the fruit of which may grow to the end of time, and may add to the harvest of everlasting joy. How often do I think of you, especially

on a Lord's Day morning. My eye glances more swift than the lightning to your abodes. There methinks I see you, I hear you pleading with a people of a strange language. My soul goes up to God for you. Lord bless them, keep them, support them, succeed them: and thus I doubt not pray thousands of your brethren. My dear brother, the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Our friends unite in affectionate regards to you all."

Another letter to Thomas, dated May 16th, 1796, shows the deepest concern for the spiritual welfare of Carey's erratic companion. Thomas had written to Pearce with some horrible confession of temptation or sin, and Fuller had seen the letter. The pastoral instinct comes out in Fuller's readiness not only to impart counsel, but even to place himself alongside the penitent man as one who himself had been tempted and found succour.

"I have read yours to Brother Pearce. O what feelings does it excite! How could I weep on your account. Nay, before I write any more, I will go aside, and weep and pray for you, to Him who alone can deliver your soul from death, and keep your feet from falling.

"My dear Brother, it has afforded me some consolation, while pleading with God on your behalf, that His help could fly swifter than this letter. O that before this arrives you may be delivered from the horrible pit!

"Shall I tell you a little of my own experience? At one period of my life I had a severe domestic trial. My heart melted under it like wax. I cried much to the Lord, and He delivered me out of my affliction. At first I thought I never could forget His goodness. I erected, as it were, a memorial to it, and charged my soul to live to Him all my future life. But within a few months after my troubles had subsided, I sunk

insensibly into a kind of lassitude, and neglected to watch and pray. I became careless and indolent, and my work became less interesting to me than heretofore.

"In this state of mind I was accosted with temptations which, while they did not draw me into open sin, will cause deep self-abasement to the end of my life. My hands hung down like a bulrush, and I had no pleasure in myself. I used to preach, and resolved to preach the truth, though it should rise up in judgment at the last day to condemn me: and often have I gone into the pulpit with the idea that possibly I might be only heightening my own condemnation.

"I seldom was without hope; though I sometimes feared that I did not refrain from sin because I loved God, but because I was afraid of the consequences; which I could not but consider the mark of a wicked character. . . .

"Within these few years, my soul has not only recovered its former tone; but, blessed be God! a greater degree of spiritual strength than at any former period: and I think my engagement in the work of the Mission has more than anything contributed to it. Before this I did little but pore over my misery; but since I have betaken myself to greater activity for God, my strength has been recovered, and my soul replenished. I have not been contented with ransacking for past evidences of love to God, but have been enabled to love and serve Him afresh; looking for mercy to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. But I still look back to the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me. Should this recital of the Lord's dealings with me be of use to you, how thankful I shall be! The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

There are many letters to Carey of the period covered

by this chapter, but our limits do not permit of their being quoted. On his one furlough William Ward brought home from Serampore a complete handwritten copy of every one of Fuller's letters. The copy had been made by a Bengali, and was found among Fuller's papers after his death. Fuller's grandson printed some specimens in his biography in the *Bunyan Library*.

Fuller's travels for the Mission took him further and further afield as news of the undertaking spread among the churches. The toil, the discomfort, mental and physical, were great. Mentally and socially Fuller was ill adapted for the business of pushing his way among people who knew him not. He was reserved by nature, as men born in the Fenland still are. His spirit revolted at the idea of going among strangers. He confesses that he had many faults in company. Living largely in the intellect, he had to wrench his mind down to the trivialities inseparable from social intercourse. "I am subject to many faults in company," he says, "and often incur guilt. The Lord keep me in the way I go, and enable me to keep my heart with all diligence. Oh! that I may be spiritual, and watchful in all companies. May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ prosper my way. May the God of Israel preserve my family, friends and connections during my absence! "

The physical demands were even greater. There were no trains, of course, nor was the stage-coach yet established except on a few main roads. It was still the age when men made their wills and left affectionate messages for their friends before they ventured into the next county.

The theological strain was not absent. Wherever Fuller went his writings had preceded him. The journals are full of theological references. Yet this created interest and made his visits to be looked for. Churches sought his advice on matters theological and practical, and he was a living link between churches who had no

other bond of union. A large part of one volume of Fuller's work is taken up with counsels of direction to ministers and churches who sought his help. The wisdom of these counsels, as I think, is for the present day the most alive part of Fuller's writings.

I trace to these journeys of Fuller the first influence on a national scale having a tendency to draw the Baptist churches together. This strong, wise, devoted man, in his character as a liberating theologian, a missionary advocate, and a wise and understanding pastor with something of a statesman's mind, moving up and down the land from Newcastle to South Wales, was a blessing to the churches as well as to the Mission. He was a symbol—a gracious man of God, and a bond of union between scattered and sometimes internally disunited communities. Silvester Horne calls him "the apostolic Fuller". The Baptists became one people through the Mission. Should they ever cease to be missionary-minded they will decline in numbers and spiritual quality.

CHAPTER VII

FIVE JOURNEYS TO SCOTLAND

1799, 1802, 1805, 1808, 1813: aged 45-59

FULLER's travels for the Mission were soon to be extended beyond the border into Scotland. The land of economy and thrift, but also of generosity to good causes, was to become an important partner in the great enterprise of giving the Scriptures to India.

What led up to Fuller's invasion of the north had better be told here. The Revs. Messrs. Innes and Ewing, who were at that time ministers of the Church of Scotland, being on a tour in England, had preached at Broad-

mead, Bristol, and had become acquainted with Joseph Hughes, then a colleague of Ryland's at the College. The Scottish ministers afterwards visited Pearce at Birmingham. The ardent zeal of the seraphic Pearce kindled a like flame in these sober Presbyterian divines. Returning home (it was as early as 1794, when Carey had only been gone a year) they spoke freely and widely in Edinburgh of Carey's venture down the mine; and whereas Carey had tried to move his own circle with "See what the Moravians have done!" the Scottish ministers cried among their friends, "See what the English Baptists are doing!" Mr. Innes subsequently became a Baptist minister in Edinburgh, and Mr. Ewing an Independent minister in Glasgow.

Other influences combined to give the new plant a root in Scottish soil. Dr. Charles Stuart, and Archibald M'Lean, the Sandemanian Baptist leader, with some of his people, had received particulars of the great adventure through Dr. Rippon's publication *The Baptist Register* and other sources. The Edinburgh Missionary Society had voted fifty pounds to aid the Bengali translation. Here Mr. Robert Haldane comes into the picture. The brothers Haldane were men of means who sold an estate and devoted themselves to evangelistic work on a great scale in Scotland, preaching themselves, and training and employing others in the work, in a day when such work by laymen was little understood or believed in by many in Scotland. Meeting Dr. Stuart one day, Robert Haldane enquired what intelligence he had of Carey. "Dismal intelligence!" replied the Doctor. "The funds are low, and no success as yet." "As to funds," said Mr. Haldane, "I always intended to give them something, but never did: could you desire Mr. Fuller to draw on me for a hundred pounds, and tell him that if he would come down and preach, I am persuaded my brother would welcome him, and so would Mr. Ewing?"

So it came about by the good hand of God that Fuller went for his first trip to Scotland to begin his periodical raids for funds from the kindly and warm-hearted Scottish believers. One evening, when many of such were gathered together with the chief Ropeholder in the midst, a lady said, "Oh, sir, why did you not come here before?" "Why, madam," replied Fuller, "every man, as Sir Richard Walpole said, has his price; and till that gentleman there sent me a hundred pounds, I did not know it would be worth while to visit you!" This was in October, 1799.

We can follow Fuller every stage of his way to the Scottish capital. On October 2nd, 1799 (the anniversary of the meeting in Widow Wallis' parlour seven years before), Fuller slept at Bourne, where in the evening he had met a Christian commercial traveller who told him much of the religious condition of Lincolnshire and parts adjacent, where Antinomianism was paralysing practical godliness. Next day, by the Lincoln stage-coach, he travelled to Barton-on-the-Humber. Crossing the Humber by boat he preached at Hull, and remained there the next day, which was a Sunday, preaching three times—at Mr. Lambert's place, at Salthouse Lane, and at George Street. A Methodist gentleman gave him two guineas. He visited many on Monday morning to collect for the Bengali translation, and preached yet once more on Monday evening before setting off by the night mail-coach for Newcastle.

Reaching Newcastle on the 8th, he met Sutcliff, who had arrived before him. In Newcastle there came a foregleam of many bothers awaiting him in Scotland. He had called on a Dr. Grieve who had been excluded from a Scotch Baptist Church, merely for not agreeing with them in some point of discipline. He notes, "I perceive we are going among men where indeed we had need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

On the 10th he rode to Edinburgh, arriving at Dr.

Stuart's in the evening—eight days after leaving home, a thing to remember when we estimate the exertions of travel in those times. The good Dr. Stuart took measures to introduce Fuller and Sutcliff to as many friends as possible. Ministers of the Church of Scotland, ministers of the other Presbyterian bodies (whose history and special principles are quite beyond the comprehension of a mere Englishman), Christian laymen of many brands, as well as leaders of the Scotch Baptists—all these were induced to lend an ear to the two English Baptists, who, as Carey's friends, had come to plead the cause of the Bengali translation.

Fuller's impression of the Haldanes and their efforts for the Gospel in Scotland are on record, and the following passage will explain much:

“Robert Haldane seems a very disinterested, godly man, and his wife as disinterested and amiable as himself. They have agreed to sell a large estate, to put the money into the funds, and to live as retired as possible, in order to have the more to lay out for the furtherance of the Gospel.

“His brother James is a simple-hearted, affectionate, good man. He was a Captain of an East India-man, and relinquished his post for the Gospel's sake. He is pastor of a church on the Congregational plan which meets at the Circus, and amounts to near three hundred members.

“The forming of this church seems to have been the united work of Messrs. Ewing, Innes, and the Haldanes; principally for the sake of enjoying a greater degree of religious liberty than could be obtained in any of their denominations, which are each ruled by their respective synods.

“They wished, as Mr. Ewing told me, to be at liberty to preach in the villages, without being accountable to any body of men, who were commonly

averse to all extraordinary exertion, and contented to plod on in the path of their predecessors.

"They wished also to introduce English preachers, and to have places of worship to which they could invite them. And having, as I understood it, found the people willing at Edinburgh, they erected a place at Glasgow, which they called the Tabernacle. Here Mr. Ewing preaches, and has the tuition of twenty-five young men for the ministry, all at the expense of Mr. Robert Haldane."

It will be believed that these measures were received with mixed feelings by the leaders of the regular churches, but when it is remembered that the dreary reign of Moderatism had well-nigh smothered evangelism in the land, the course taken by these earnest soul-winning men will be better understood. The appearance in Scottish religion of men like M'Cheyne, the Bonars and W. C. Burns, whose evangelical fervour was to culminate in Chalmers, Guthrie and the Disruption, was still to come. The Haldane movement was an indicating portent. Fuller and Sutcliff on this journey of theirs in the autumn of 1799 planted a seed calculated to grow into strength in such congenial soil.

The Tabernacle in Glasgow had been opened only ten weeks when Fuller and Sutcliff visited the place. From the first Sabbath an amazing congregation had been gathered, the bulk of the people from no one knew where, and a few from other churches.

On October 21st the two friends went over to Glasgow. They visited the eminent philanthropist, David Dale. He was the first merchant of the city, and also pastor of an Independent congregation. This is he of whom it was said, "David Dale gives away his money by the shovelful and the Almighty shovels it back again to him."

In David Dale's carriage they went, accompanied by Mr. Ewing, to Paisley, where they preached to a crowded

auditory and returned with twenty pounds for the Bengali translation. On getting back to Glasgow they heard of the death of Pearce. Pearce had lingered long in weakness and was now at rest. Fuller was distressed. "O Jonathan," he cried, "very pleasant hast thou been unto me. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan! O Jonathan, thou wast slain upon thy high places!" Yea, verily. In young manhood and in the fullness of his spiritual maturity, the deadly consumption had done its work. The stern, tender, gruff, gracious soul of Fuller prayed once again. "God of Samuel Pearce be my God."

At Greenock they preached and collected twenty pounds. The greatest preaching day of Fuller's whole life followed on the next Sunday. In the morning at the Tabernacle he preached to about four thousand people. In the afternoon he gave place to Sutcliff, who preached to the same number, or rather more, while Fuller went to hear David Dale at the Independent place, where they collected £200 for the Mission. In the evening of this great day Fuller preached again in the Tabernacle to the greatest crowd *he had ever seen!* Many hundreds were turned away for lack of even standing space. Meetings in and around the city were arranged for the two Englishmen, and money flowed into the treasury.

The upshot of this first visit, from the treasury point of view, was that Fuller and Sutcliff returned home with £900 for the Mission. Big money in those days, especially when we recall the comparative poverty of the promoters of the Mission enterprise. Their hearts were bounding with joy at the good hand of the Lord upon them. Moreover, it looks as if the Scots had taken the just measure of the personal and preaching power of the men who had been among them. Out of their own country the prophets had received honour which became them.

Reference was made above to the bothers awaiting Fuller in Scotland, and this may be the best place to refer to them. Wherever Fuller went, his writings had preceded him. With Christians in general this made him interesting. His work against Socinianism was prized by all evangelical Christians. It had been produced in 1793, about the time of Carey's departure. People were anxious to meet the man who had made so valiant a defence of true Calvinism against such doughty opponents as Priestley, Belsham, and Lindsey. But among the Baptists there were other reasons for the interest his presence created. These were connected with his earlier treatise, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, already referred to. To the hyper-Calvinist school the doctrine of that work was obnoxious. They called it "Duty-Faith" and dubbed it "Fullerism". But this was chiefly in England, and eastern England at that. In Scotland the ground was different. There the Baptists were very largely tinged with the Sandemanian doctrine; and with their leader, Archibald M'Lean, Fuller had already been in controversy. It would require much space to review the controversy with M'Lean, and it would not be interesting to the readers of to-day. It must suffice to say that it turned on the nature of faith, whether faith was an action of the mind, or a moral action in which the whole soul was involved.

There were other peculiarities among the Scotch Baptists, and on these Fuller made notes in his journal. The chief matters were: they thought that a plurality of pastors, or bishops, was essential to a regular church. They insisted on the observance of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. They practised the rite of feet-washing. (On this Fuller commented once in a letter to M'Lean, that if the latter would visit him at Kettering he would gladly clean his shoes, which action, in his judgment, fulfilled the spirit of our Lord's command.) They practised the holy kiss. They were too

much given to making people offenders by excessive discipline over small differences of judgment. They lacked evangelical zeal, were deficient in family religion; but they excelled in liberal giving, and were peaceable and worthy citizens.

Notwithstanding these differences, the Scotch Baptists supported the Mission, and Fuller on his part gave much wise counsel to churches and officers of churches who often sought his advice even if they did not always follow it. In such matters Fuller's calm wisdom, practical prudence, and strong understanding made him a counsellor indeed.

Four times more Fuller was to travel to Scotland in the interests of the Mission—1802, 1805, 1808, 1813. Every one of these journeys was an adventure full of incident, but space forbids more than a summary account, though the materials are abundant and interesting.

His second journey, in 1802, was reported to Mrs. Fuller in a series of travel letters. In August he started, and wrote from Barton-on-Humber that he was reduced to four shillings in his pocket, and while waiting for the tide was thinking whether he must not take a walk before dinner, instead of having one! Worse befell, for a gale delayed the vessel, and when it did start the sea was mountains high, and of the sixty passengers most were sick. Fuller stood on deck, holding on to the rigging, and "gazed with a kind of sublime pleasure at the majestic sight". He was no doubt as glad as others to land safely at Hull, which he did with elevenpence in his pocket! He closes his first letter: "My mind is peaceful and happy; and my approaches to a throne of grace, at which I do not forget you all, have been free and tender."

From Hull he would fain have gone by ship to Leith for Edinburgh, but the Leith packet sailed on Lord's Day morning. That would not do! He went by coach, preached at York, supped with the evangelical clergy-

man Overton, called on two other evangelical clergymen in the city, and from these and others collected £12 12s. Better still, he found out the little Baptist church which had recently been formed and gave them good counsel, though a sermon could not be arranged.

In September he was in Edinburgh, preaching in and around the city. In one place there were 1,500 people in the morning, 4,000 in the evening and a collection of £130. With Mr. Wardlaw, a young minister, for a companion, Fuller set out for Dundee, preached there to 1,400 hearers and collected £20. Then back to Perth, thence to Stirling and thence to Glasgow.

The Fenland farmer peeps out now and then: "They are now in the midst of harvest. The women reap as much as the men. The natural sterility of the soil of this country" (so different from the fat black soil of his native Fenland) "has stimulated agricultural improvement, which seems at a greater height than in England."

In Glasgow he preached among Haldane's people, and for this reason he was not favoured by some of the Presbyterian ministers. Some of the Baptists, too, were still doubtful. He tells with gusto of one church which sent a message that they would like to hear what his faith was, and if it accorded with theirs they would give him a hearing and a collection. He told them that they had sent their faith to him and he approved of it, but that he should make no further profession. He did not come as a candidate for their pulpit, but would not object to answer any question they might care to ask. A deacon came saying that if Fuller would make no confession they would not receive him. "Very well," said the gruff voice, "then I shall go to the Tabernacle, and consider your conduct as a renunciation of connection with us as English churches." He preached at the Tabernacle to 4,000 in the afternoon and to 5,000 at night, and collected £200. "I have a little headache, but my voice is not hurt."

By September 25th he is as near home as Liverpool. On the journey of fifty hours by coach he was cooped up "with a compound of profligacy and infidelity" in the person of a Jew with whom he held long and fruitless debate, reported dialogue-wise in a letter to Mrs. Fuller. Finding a copy of his own work, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in a bookshop, he purchased the book and sent it with his compliments to the Jew at his hotel, drawing his attention to the *Address to the Jews* which that work contains.

In the mail from Manchester to Harborough he again finds himself in "very profane company". He therefore composed himself as if asleep. Later he meets with a member of the Prussian Ambassador's suite, Count D—. They spoke of religion in Prussia. The Menonites were mentioned. According to the Prussian gentleman they are Baptists, but like Quakers, enthusiasts, having no regular clergymen, but any of them get up and speak, as they feel themselves inspired. Cautious Fuller adds, "How far his account is to be depended on I cannot tell."

The records are full of Fuller's conversations with fellow-travellers in mail-coaches, inn-parlours, on ferry-boats and elsewhere. He was ever trying to win souls. He sowed beside all waters. As an advocate of missions to the heathen he had no discharge from the obligation to preach to all himself, in season and out of season. This he did, often with acceptance, at other times in faith that good might be seen after many days, sometimes with the feeling that he had cast his pearls before swine. But this is the lot of every evangelist.

So he got home from this 1802 journey and found all well, and writes, "Thanks, as dear Brother Pearce said after his journey to Ireland, thanks to the Preserver of men."

A third journey to Scotland followed in 1805. He

preaches his way up. Lincoln was first stop. He climbs the 338 steps to the top of the cathedral and tells Mrs. Fuller that he could see Boston stump thirty-five miles off, which yet "seemed near". Hull again over the Humber—a calm day this time. Preaches and collects £150. Although it is June, the weather is trying to his lungs (ominous word, this. There is going to be a lot of trouble with this incipient cough). Scarborough, Edinburgh, Dundee, Inverkeithing, Kirkcaldy and many other places were visited. In Aberdeen in July his strength failed and he was obliged to go to bed. Good Dr. Stuart, who seems to have accompanied him on this trip, treated his sore throat "plentifully with harts-horn". Next day he is at Montrose, thirty-five miles away, and preaches with ease, having nearly lost his sore throat and cold. At Aberdeen he baptized three persons at six o'clock in the morning at a mill-dam five miles from the city; returning at eight, he went forty miles to Brechin and preached again at night.

On the way home from this Scottish tour he preached at Liverpool, at Manchester, and at the Yorkshire Association at Leeds, arriving home early in August. Writing to Dr. Stuart he says: "I have upon the whole enjoyed a greater share of happiness and brotherly kindness in Scotland than perhaps I ever did before: no small part of which was from my companions in travel. If I have sometimes been a little severe on the Northern heresy (Sandemanianism), I am somewhat more at rest about it, in that it was principally confined to our travelling conversations: that is, it was between ourselves. My language is, as you know, often too strong: though whether it was so when pointed against the heresy in question, I do not know."

Fuller's fourth journey to Scotland was in 1808. It is the same story repeated in the main. Sermons, interviews with prominent Christian leaders, collections of large

sums for the Mission, conversations with theological critics and opponents, and best of all, endeavours to spread the knowledge of Christ by wayside talks to individuals of varied walks in life.

In Hull this time he calls on a Socinian minister who had sent him a pamphlet and a letter full of heavy charges, but offering a mite for the Mission if Fuller would call on him. Partly to justify himself from the charges against his doctrine Fuller went to see his correspondent, "and came away with a whole skin and a guinea for the Mission".

In York this time "they circulated printed handbills" and gathered thereby a thousand hearers. After sermon, the Lord's Supper, Fuller presiding. "Many churchmen stayed as spectators." Newcastle, Alnwick, Berwick, Edinburgh all have sermons and collections. He meets James Haldane and has much talk about his changes of view regarding discipline and the "kiss", entreating him to remember his fallibility, and to observe the relative proportion of things. He dines with Robert Haldane. James was present, but the talk was only general about the Mission. Leaving the house, James walked with Fuller and they had more talk about the breaches coming into the Haldane circle. Nevertheless James Haldane's people gave their collection to the Mission, and it was £200. As good Dr. Stuart wrote at the time, "Differing from one another, all Christians agree in helping this cause".

Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen and many other places are again visited. Burgher meetings, Relief meetings, sometimes an Established Church congregation, accept his services and give a collection. Crossing the Tay on the way back from the north they encounter a terrible storm. Good Dr. Stuart is fearfully worried about Fuller's chest as the result of exposure, but no harm ensues, and in due course the party get back to the crowds in Glasgow. Many hundreds of pounds have been gathered into the

treasury, and Fuller's preaching and personal influence have spread spiritual life and missionary zeal far and wide.

The financial results of this 1808 trip were substantial. In his own words: "I have been enabled to collect as much as £2,000 in the course of six weeks, after a journey of 1,200 miles. God be praised for all His goodness, and for the abundant kindness shown towards me and towards the Mission."

Fuller's fifth and last journey to Scotland took place in the summer of 1813. Starting in late June he varied his outward route from that previously followed. Nottingham, Chesterfield and Leeds were visited. He called at Fulneck and saw the Moravians settled in that place, met two German missionaries about to go out, and had fellowship with Mr. Ramftler, the presiding minister.

At Bradford he expected to meet William Steadman, but was disappointed, and set off alone to Kendal in driving rain, thankful for once to have an inside place in the mail-coach. "After tea I found out Mr. Key, the Baptist minister, who with his wife appear very serious, godly, and intelligent people. I much enjoyed half an hour with them. The good woman seemed hardly to believe that I could be the Mr. Fuller that had written so many books! "

Leaving Kendal he was not able to get an inside place in the mail, whereby came to pass one of his very worst experiences of travel. At six it began to rain, with poor Fuller on the exposed top of the coach. Six mortal hours more in that pelting rain before Carlisle came in sight. "A miserable journey over the bleak Westmorland and Cumberland mountains; many of which had their tops enveloped in the clouds. The wind and the rain beat in my face all the way, but the guard lending me his umbrella, I was not wet through." He could not have been very dry, and there was no good Dr. Stuart this

time to "treat him plentifully with hartshorn". He was miserably cold, and getting an inside place next day, he reached Dumfries by nine, put his feet in warm water before going to bed, and had a good night. At Dumfries Steadman turned up, and also Barclay, and the three went on through the west of Scotland. At Kilmarnock John Dyer, destined one day to be in Fuller's shoes as secretary of the Mission, joined the party. Dyer did great work with his preaching, and was evidently a man to be kept in view. Glasgow was as glad as ever to see Fuller and his friends, and responded as nobly as before to his appeals.

From Edinburgh Steadman returned home, while Fuller and Dyer, with the good Dr. Stuart now of the company, journeyed on all up the east coast. At Dundee there transpired a notable incident. It was now August 4th; and on that day Fuller met Thomas Chalmers, then of Kilmany, near by, and destined to become the greatest churchman in the Scotland of his day and father of the Disruption. Fuller, then fifty-nine, was twenty-six years older than the younger man. Fuller's note is disappointingly brief: "An extraordinary writer: it is said that being lately engaged to draw up an article in the Scotch Encyclopædia on Christianity, the writing of that paper became the means of thoroughly impressing his own heart with evangelical truth." Fortunately Chalmers has given a much better account of his own evangelical conversion from Moderatism.

Who would not like to have seen these two together? The one, heir to all the culture of Scottish University life; the other the self-taught—or should we say God-taught?—Fenland farmer's son. Yet in personal qualities how like: the same native vigour of understanding, the same instinct for theological enquiry, the same practical effectiveness in affairs, the same breadth of vision.

The disappointment we feel at the brevity of Fuller's record is increased by the fact that there might have

been so much more, for after preaching Fuller went to stay the night with Chalmers, sleeping in the manse. Knowing Fuller's weakness for sitting up late talking theology (little else interested him—except the ropeholding) one would wish to have had the seat of the silent man in the corner listening to these giants.

Chalmers was a reader of Fuller's books. It is acknowledged that the germ of his famous series of sermons, preached later in the Tron church, Glasgow, on Astronomy and Religion, and published under the title *Astronomical Discourses*, was derived from Fuller's own chapter on a similar theme in his book *The Gospel Its Own Witness*. The chapter in question is headed "The Consistency of the Scripture Doctrine of Redemption with the Modern Opinion of the Magnitude of Creation". The heading sufficiently indicates the nature of its contents. The chapter is perhaps the most vigorous in the book, and is a marvellous performance for that time of day. As the argument of a man who had enjoyed no systematic education whatever, it is one of the most striking pieces of work to be met with anywhere.

Back to Edinburgh, and home—but there are no further notes of this last visit to the land which had been so generous to the ropeholder, and so interested in what was being attempted down the mine.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE LABOURS FOR THE MISSION

1799-1814: aged 45-60

WE must now go back to the same point of time from which the last chapter began, and speak of many matters which had been happening at home during the same period. And it will be convenient to

make this chapter terminate at the year 1814.

Fuller once preached in the pulpit of a parish church. This was at Braybrook. A young man of twenty had died, expressing a wish that Fuller might preach a funeral sermon at his interment. The local Baptist minister, John Ayre, one of the founders of the B.M.S., said, "But where shall we put the people, for the meeting-house will not hold half of those who will attend?" Application for the use of the church was made to the vicar by the father of the deceased youth—an important man in the place. To the astonishment of all concerned, the vicar gave consent. The vicar had enquired on whom the penalties for the breach of the law would fall, and, being informed that if on anybody it would be Fuller, (though this was wrong), took the risk. He was a good-tempered old man, but "lay under no suspicion of either evangelical sentiments or of being righteous overmuch". It was nearly dark, very cold and damp, and about five hundred people crowded into Braybrook church to hear Fuller's sermon. The old parson stayed to hear, and Fuller says, "I aimed at and longed for his salvation." Sermon done, the old man took Fuller by the hand and said before all the people: "Thank you, sir, for your serious pathetic discourse: I hope no ill consequences will befall either you or me." Next day Fuller rode several miles with the old vicar on the way home. The old man was afterward summoned before his superior, who asked, "Did Mr. Fuller pray for the King?" "Yes, indeed, sir, very fervently." "And what did he preach about?" "About the common salvation." Here the matter ended, with an admonition not to repeat the offence.

The story got about. A garbled form travelled down to Ryland in Bristol, so that the good Doctor had to write asking whether there was any truth in the story that Brother Fuller was in prison for preaching in a parish church!

The death of the beloved Pearce has been mentioned. To Fuller was assigned the task of preparing his Memoirs. This duty he discharged with his usual ability, and produced a record which still throbs with a passionate love. Pearce's own letters and diaries form a large part of Fuller's book. Our Baptist Brainerd, as Pearce Carey calls him, can still be heard and felt in the faded pages of print.

During this period Fuller was working under great pressure. To a solicitous editor he writes:

"Every journey I take only makes way for two or three more: and every book I write only occasions me to write others to explain or defend it. . . . Some are pressing me to write more largely on the Mediation of Christ, and others to review the second edition of Mr. Booth's *Glad Tidings*.

"Pearce's Memoirs are loudly called for. I sit down almost in despair. My wife looks at me, with a tear ready to drop, and says, 'My dear, you have hardly time to speak to me.' My friends at home are kind, but they also say, 'You have no time to see or know us, and you will soon be worn out.'

"Amidst all this, there is 'Come again to Scotland. Come to Portsmouth. Come to Plymouth. Come to Bristol.' Dear Brother Ryland complains of old age coming upon him, and I expect old age will come upon me before I am really old."

A very serious illness overtook the strong man. People said Fuller was going after Pearce, to which Fuller replied, "If so, I hope to go whither he is gone." His warm and tried friend, Dr. Stuart, travelled all the way down from Edinburgh, not this time to "treat him plentifully with hartshorn", but in order to be able to reassure his many friends in Scotland to whom Fuller had become dear by his visits and his writings.

This affliction was increased, no doubt, by sad tidings

about his eldest son, Robert. Robert had been apprenticed in a London warehouse, with the provision that if he should show a talent and grace for the ministry he should be released. Alas, Robert displayed a restless instability, and forsook business for the Army, but was discharged on the ground that he was under apprenticeship. He subsequently enlisted in the marines, and was so unhappy in his surroundings that he was bought out and restored to his father's home. A situation was then found on a merchant ship, but before he could join the ship he was caught up by the press-gang and found himself on a man-of-war, in the capacity of a common sailor. News came that he had tried to desert, had been flogged for it, and had died under the infliction. This was all proved wrong later, but imagine the sorrow in Fuller's deep and affectionate heart while believing it to be the truth! When the joyful intelligence came that the report was a fabrication, Fuller exclaimed, "Blessed be God, I find the report is unfounded. I have received a letter from my poor boy. He is yet alive and within the reach of mercy."

Later, Robert was in the marines again, went a voyage to Brazil, and wrote pathetically to his father on his return, entreating forgiveness, urging that he was on the point of sailing for Lisbon, "whence," he says, "I may never return." This proved to be the case, for the poor young man died off Lisbon, in March, 1809, after a lingering illness. Two sources of comfort came to the Kettering manse. Letters received from Robert himself, one to his father and another to his sister, encouraged the home circle to believe that he had fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel. The other source of comfort was found in a letter from his captain and another from a messmate in which a highly creditable account was given of Robert's character.

Preaching on the Sunday following on the death of

Christ for sinners, the sorrowing father was obliged to pause and give vent to his feelings by weeping. Many of the congregation who knew the cause wept with him. His heart was full. With a pastor's faithfulness he charged every sinner to apply for mercy ere it be too late, for the Gospel would be a swift witness against those who knowingly rejected its offer and call.

In the midst of these afflictions and overwhelming engagements Fuller produced his celebrated work entitled *The Gospel Its Own Witness*. It is directed against the Deistical writers, like Tom Paine, Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke. It was a copy of this work that was lying on the table of William Wilberforce when Pitt called on him. Pitt rallied his friend on his poor taste in listening to the extemporaneous effusions of low and illiterate mechanics. Wilberforce protested in turn against Pitt's prejudice, and turning to the treatise on the table directed his attention to the chapter on the doctrine of redemption not inconsistent with the magnitude of creation. The statesman perused the chapter carefully and remarked that "if they had to combat such arguments as those in the House of Commons, they would require a different amount of preparation from that which was ordinarily in demand". Wilberforce then assured his visitor that the volume was from the pen of a man brought up as a working farmer, with no more advantages as to education than such a condition could secure.

On one of his many journeys to London in this period, Fuller had occasion to call on the leading evangelical clergyman of the metropolis of that time, the Rev. Richard Cecil of St. John's, Bedford Row. Without telling his name, Fuller asked for a contribution for the Mission. The clergyman refused and spoke in slighting terms of the movement and of the body responsible for it. Cecil, good as he was, was not free from that touch of the supercilious which so easily besets men of

his class. "There is, however," said he, "one great man among you, and his treatise entitled *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* is one of the most masterly productions I know." "For all the faults of that work, sir, I am responsible." Cecil rose from his chair and, profuse in his apologies, pressed a subscription upon his visitor. "No, sir, not a farthing! You do not give in faith," said Fuller, in his own deep bass tones. A little further talk mollified the secretary, and he came away with Cecil's name on his subscription list.

That men of other schools, with every advantage of birth and education, felt the power of Fuller's mind, and appreciated the vigorous clarity of his writing, is a tribute to his merit. As his son well remarked, Fuller was "one of the most acute and practical theological writers of the age, and, though learned in no tongue but that of his native land, has not brought that into discredit. In all his voluminous writings, circulated throughout the United Kingdom and America, he has not left a single sentence of which the question has to be asked, 'What does this mean?'"

During the period under review in this chapter Fuller paid a visit to Ireland. This was in 1804. He was disappointed with what he found. The principal Baptist place in Dublin was under the influence of doctrines Fuller thought pernicious, and the practice of the members was compromising and worldly to a distressing degree. He printed some remarks on the Baptist position in Ireland on his return. These led, of course, to some slight controversy, from which, however, emerged new efforts for Ireland through the "Baptist Irish Society". These, in time, effected improvement in the older churches and the establishment of many new ones within a few years.

In May of 1805 the great esteem in which Fuller's writings were held in the United States was shown in the conferring upon him the honorary degree of Doctor

of Divinity by Yale College. This had been done before, as early as 1798, by Princeton. But Fuller had respectfully declined to use the degree on two grounds: first that, in his opinion, he had not "those literary qualifications which would justify the assumption of academic honours"; and secondly, that he conscientiously disapproved of distinctions among brethren in matters of religion. Having taken this position he adhered to it when Yale also granted him their honorary D.D. in 1805, notwithstanding that they sent over Professor Silliman to present the honour in person and urge its acceptance. For Ryland, as head of the College, and for other reasons, Fuller thought it might be well. For himself he preferred to be Brother, not Doctor, Fuller. To Dr. Timothy Dwight, President of Yale, and grandson of the beloved President Edwards of Princeton, Fuller sent a gracious letter of appreciation of the honour and a renewed assertion of his reasons for not using the degree.

In this year 1805 trouble began on the field in India. The mutiny at Vellore, near Madras, in which a number of British soldiers were massacred, was laid to the account of Missions, though no missionary had anything whatever to do with the disturbance. In 1807 opposition got the length of a request to Carey and his comrades to desist from interfering with the superstitions of the natives. This was from no less a person than the Governor-General, Sir George Barlow. This meant no tracts, no preaching, in fact nothing at all to be done as Christians. Later it was modified to no itinerating, no forming of new stations.

This opposition filtered home. Letters were written to the directors of the East India Company, complaining of the missionaries. The chief literary antagonists of Missions were a Mr. Twining, Major Scott-Waring, and "A Bengal Officer". It was an attack in waves. No sooner had the indefatigable secretary downed one than

another came on, and still another. A full account of this dangerous assault, the stages and the final issue of it are part of the history of the Mission, and for space reasons must be dealt with briefly in this sketch. Fuller rallied the forces of all friends of Missions, and by many interviews with friendly and unfriendly members of the Board of Control defeated the endeavours of the adversaries. Fuller attended the full Court of Proprietors and from a "good place in the gallery" heard the debate, communicating a full account to Carey subsequently. To his great relief the Court was dissolved by show of hands without serious repressive action being taken against the activities of the Serampore brotherhood.

The battles of the board-room were reflected in the literary activities of the time. The "Edinburgh Reviewers" joined in the attack and directed their bitter sarcasms against Carey, Marshman, and Ward, with their later helpers. The *Quarterly Review*, however, rendered good service in their defence. Replying to the coarse invective of those who stigmatized Carey and the rest of the missionaries as "fools, madmen, tinkers, Calvinists, and schismatics", the *Quarterly Review* put their case before the reading public of that time in these brave and noble terms:

"These 'low-born and low-bred mechanics' have translated the whole Bible into Bengali, and have by this time printed it. They are printing the New Testament in the Sanskrit, the Orissa, Mahratta, Hindustani, and Guzerat, and are translating it into Persic, Telinga, Karnata, Chinese, and the language of the Sikhs and Burmans; and in four of these languages they are going on with the Bible.

"Extraordinary as this is, it will appear more so when it is remembered that of these men, one was originally a shoemaker, another a printer at Hull, and

a third the master of a charity school at Bristol.

“Only fourteen years have elapsed since Thomas and Carey set foot in India, and in that time have these missionaries acquired this gift of tongues. In fourteen years these ‘low-born and low-bred mechanics’ have done more towards spreading the knowledge of the Scriptures among the heathens than has been accomplished, or even attempted, by all the world beside.”

In point of fact, little as it was suspected by many, these letters and pamphlets were not merely intended to prejudice the minds of the directors of the Company, but were designed to initiate a movement to crush not only the Mission of the Baptists, but every organization for the propagation of Christianity in the East; and to secure the recall of every individual who dared to interest himself in the moral and spiritual welfare of the natives. It was well that it had had to measure itself against the calm, persistent and courageous energy of Fuller.

At the “desk in the sitting-room” in the Kettering manse, the secretary’s pen flew over the foolscap, and soon, under the title *An Apology for the Late Christian Missions to India*, appeared a bulky volume in answer to the charges of Twining, Scott-Waring, and the “Bengal Officer”. In a letter to Marshman, reporting that these men had threatened, if defeated in the India House, to bring the matter up in Parliament, Fuller says, “We do not fear them. We will play the man and fight for the cause of God, and Jehovah do that which pleases Him. Mr. Charles Grant delivered a very able speech before the directors. Lord Teignmouth is a firm friend on the Board of Control. Government, too, is more favourable than of late.”

When the East India Company’s charter fell due to be renewed in 1813, Fuller was active in consulting with

other religious interests concerned, to secure measures of protection for the Mission and similar activities. With Ryland, Sutcliff and James Hinton, M.A., of Oxford, to help him, the secretary interviewed many people. The good William Wilberforce framed requests on behalf of another Society in such a manner that, if granted, the provisions would cover the usual activities of Serampore and the Mission generally. For the greater part of the spring of 1813, Fuller was kept in London on the watch against any slip up in the securing of these safeguards.

In the debate in the House of Commons on the charter, three days were given to the matter of the missionaries and their activities in India. Wilberforce spoke for two hours. He made a noble speech reciting what we know so well of Carey's character, history, ability, and labours in translating the Scriptures. He told how that Lord Wellesley had appointed Dr. Carey Professor of Sanskrit and Bengali at the Government College: how that Marshman had established a seminary, and also was as learned in Chinese as Dr. Carey in Indian tongues: how that Ward had established a Press of great usefulness, and that the three men, earning each of them every year from a thousand to fifteen hundred pounds apiece by their labours, threw the whole into the common stock for the benevolent purposes of the Mission. The Commons could not forbear to cheer when this speech concluded.

In the House of Lords Lord Wellesley himself declared that the missionaries had lived under his eye, that he had employed them in the college, that they were orderly, discreet and learned men. "I employed them," he went on, "in the education of youth, and the translation of the Scriptures into the Eastern languages. I thought it my duty to have the Scriptures translated into the tongues of the East, to give India the advantage of access to the sacred fountain of truth. I felt that a

Christian Governor could not do less: I knew that a British Governor could not do more."

Thus the enemy was routed, and the way forward made open and secure.

But we must go back a year. In 1812, March 11th to be exact, a great and disastrous fire broke out which left the Mission's printing works a shell of naked walls. The distressing tidings reached Fuller while on tour for the Mission in Norfolk. The Serampore trio relate that the fire laid in ashes the result of nearly thirteen years of labour. Dictionaries, precious manuscripts, type of various tongues not less precious, paper in stock and much else went up in flames. The presses by their detached situation escaped, and later on the steel punches, which would have taken years to replace, were found among the smoking ruins. The delight of Ward in this discovery can be imagined. Four thousand punches of the types of fourteen languages, representing the product of more than ten years' labour, were found undamaged under the debris of the fire.

Sympathy for the Mission in this devastating loss began to flow immediately. From nearly every Christian interest in the land assistance was forthcoming, for by this time what the Baptists had done in India had become a household word in religious circles. The Rev. Basil Woodd, for example, took a collection in Bentinck Chapel (Anglican) and forwarded £130. The Rev. Legh Richmond, a leading evangelical clergyman of the day, hastened to help. The secretary soon had financial matters in train, and before long the total loss, amounting to £12,000, was subscribed by a sympathetic Christian public. American sympathizers sent £2,000. In fact, but for the loss of a literary kind and the labours involved for Serampore, the fire might almost be deemed a blessing, so much did the calamity spread knowledge of the work and create interest among Christians.

The grief and sorrow felt by Fuller over his son Robert seemed likely to receive compensation in a nephew of great promise. Visiting his brother John at Little Bentley he was attracted by the character of his brother's son Joseph. This lad had a talent for learning, and Fuller took him to his own home, superintended his education, got the Rev. Mr. Brotherhood of Desborough to teach him Latin and Greek, while Fuller watched for the signs of the new life of God in his nephew's soul. This evidence appeared in due course, and Joseph, expressing a desire for the ministry, was sent to Ryland at Bristol as a college student, having been baptized by his uncle and received into the church at Kettering beforehand. Ryland felt the same attraction in the youth, nor was it only for Fuller's sake. When Joseph preached his first college sermon at sixteen years of age, Ryland was obliged to hurry out of the room in order not to let the lad see how much he was delighted by what he had been hearing.

But Joseph seems not to have had a good physical constitution. Walking from Kettering to Bristol he got wet several times on the road. He began to complain of his lungs, and went home to Bentley under his mother's care. Six weeks at Kettering among old friends did not see any improvement. He passed away, leaving upon his uncle this impression: "I do not remember to have known a lad of his years who possessed more command of temper, or maturity of judgment, or whose mind seemed more habitually directed to the glory of God." Joseph wanted to be a missionary, but God willed otherwise.

We may conclude this chapter with an account in brief of two of the many journeys in England and Wales on behalf of the Mission in the period under review. In 1804 Fuller visited Portsea, preaching at various places on the way there. Some of the good people had been

rather prejudiced against him on account of his "Fullerism" in doctrine. He on his part had heard accounts not too favourable of the Portsea Baptists. The following dialogue shows well the sort of controversy the theologian had to handle in many places beside Portsea.

"Sir," said one of his hearers, "I was greatly disappointed in you."

"Yes, and I in you."

"I mean in hearing you last Lord's Day morning. I did not expect to hear such a sermon from you."

"Perhaps so, and I did not expect such treatment from you. I had heard things of Portsea people which gave me but a mean opinion of them; but I have hitherto no cause to complain; so that we are both agreeably disappointed."

"Well, but I do not like your book."

"You do not understand it."

"Oh, I cannot believe faith to be a *duty*: we *cannot* believe."

"You seem to think we ought to do nothing but what we *can* do."

"True."

"And we can do nothing?"

"True."

"Then we ought to do nothing: and if so we have no sin, and need no Saviour."

"Oh no, no, no! I want to talk more with you."

"Yes, but the mischief is you cannot count five."

"What do you mean?"

"First you say we ought to do nothing but what we *can* do. Secondly, we *can do nothing*. Then I say, thirdly, we ought to do nothing. Fourthly, we have no sin. Fifthly, we need no Saviour."

Nevertheless, Fuller declared, the people were greatly interested in the preaching, welcomed him to their homes, and would have it that he was of their principles.

"They took all well, and I prayed with them before we parted."

London, after the initial hesitancy was got over, was not behind other places in supporting the work. In 1806, for example, Fuller preached extensively in the metropolis and collected in three weeks upwards of £800 for the Mission. Incidentally he notes that the Association at Leicester that year reported an increase of eighty-eight members. "The prayers of some of our younger ministers did my heart good."

In 1812 Fuller made a tour of the Principality of Wales. In the early summer he preached at a vast out-of-doors assembly at the Welsh Association in Glamorganshire. A good many of the ministers, from suspicion of his doctrine, would not hear him, but retired to the chapel during his discourse. Those who heard, however, so reported the great things done by the Gospel in India through the Mission that the prejudice was greatly modified. Fuller's visit, and with it the attention drawn to his writings, combined to effect a change in the views of many. From that time on in no place were his works more read and valued than in South Wales.

This is only one example of what happened in many places. There is no doubt that the liberating effect, theologically speaking, of Fuller's ministry was scarcely second in importance to his services to the cause of the Mission.

The twentieth anniversary of the Mission was reached in 1812. The secretary, in the name of the enlarged committee which had just been set up (in view of the increasing years of the founders), sent a long letter to the missionaries on the field. It is in three sections—one to the missionaries, one to the churches they had organized, and one about the home base. The last section of the letter will show very clearly how widely Fuller and those who helped him had sown the seed of

missionary interest, and how rapidly it was growing up in strength.

"It is an encouragement to us that there is manifestly an increasing interest in the work. We have not had occasion to urge, nor scarcely to entreat, the religious public for contributions: but, as in the case of the Macedonian churches, the entreaty has in many instances been on the other side.

"Beside the churches from which the parent society was formed, you know the willingness of our brethren in *Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Yorkshire, Somersetshire*, and other places, who at an early period entered into our views, and communicated freely of their substance.

"You know of the annual subscriptions in the *Metropolis*, which with collections and donations, etc., have gradually increased to upwards of £1,300.

"You know of the collections at *Norwich, Cambridge, Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham, Plymouth, Newcastle, Alnwick, Berwick-on-Tweed* and other places.

"You know of the unexampled exertions of *Scotland*, of some liberal contributions that have been received from *Ireland*, and of the almost unsolicited kindness of the churches in *North America*.

"To this we can now add that some of our churches in the *Eastern, Southern, and Western Counties* of England appear to feel an increasing interest in the work.

"Liberal collections have been made at *Manchester, Leeds, Sunderland, North and South Shields*, and in various parts of the Principality of *Wales*.

"Auxiliary societies are formed and forming in *London* and its vicinity, in *Norwich, Cambridge, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh*, and in places less distinguished by their population."

On May 26th, 1814, Fuller writes to Ryland:

"Between now and the first week in August I have no rest. I give you my routes that you may write no letters to me at Kettering while I am out, and may write if occasion should require to other places. June 6th I set off for Essex, where I shall collect between the 8th and the 20th. From thence I go to London to the Annual Meeting on the 22nd; come down to Kettering on the 24th or 25th: set off for the North of England on the 27th for five Lord's Days.

"I expect to spend the first at Liverpool; the second at Manchester; the third at Leeds; the fourth at Newcastle; and the fifth at Hull. (This programme was shortened by sickness.)

"I have written this day an application to the East India Directors for permission for Mr. Yates to go to Serampore. My hands are full. In the last three Lord's Days, and on the week-days between them, I have collected about £500, and after doing a little more in this neighbourhood I hope to reach home about the 19th inst."

He came back to Kettering with £600.

It is no wonder that with labours like these the secretary's great strength was exhausted. By 1814 he was worn out. Sutcliff was dying, and Fuller was a broken man—a martyr to the Mission.

CHAPTER IX

LATER YEARS IN THE KETTERING PASTORATE

1799-1814: aged 45-60

IT is timely now to review Fuller's pastoral work during the latter period of his ministry. In Kettering, besides the parish church, which in Fuller's later years had an

evangelical ministry, there was the Independent church (over which the two Tollers, father and son, presided for a hundred years), and a small Methodist meeting. These were the religious forces in a population of about 3,500.

There had been a second Baptist meeting, under a Mr. Satchell, but this gathering was united with the larger body under Fuller, soon after he had settled. Mr. Satchell was a man of high culture, and his son, who had received a sound classical education, was an efficient deacon of the church until Fuller's death, when he removed to London.

From his Soham ministry Fuller had learned the value of keeping in close personal touch with members by visiting them in their homes. His son says: "He was a constant visitor, especially at the houses of the poorer members of his church. The griefs and sorrows of his people became his own, and he entered into their joys with all his heart."

His correspondence with the missionaries contains occasional references to his own experience in the pastorate. His letters to Ward, especially, have many of these revealing touches. On a December day in 1803, for example, he tells Ward in a letter:

"Three persons whom I baptized this summer had something peculiar in their cases. One was a man of sixty, a son of one of our old members, who had lived all his life a drunkard and a thief. His wife, old likewise, was reached by grace, and her baptism proved his conversion. The poor man seemed contented to go to hell while his wife was going with him, but he could not bear to go alone!

"Another was our maidservant, which is a second instance that the Lord has given us of late, in consequence of their living in our family."

The souls of those near at hand were ever precious to this man whose thoughts were constantly for those afar

off. And the warm piety of his fireside drew to Christ the two girls who served in his family. He continues to Ward :

“The third is the wife of Captain Tomlin ” (a fine young soldier, who distinguished himself at Reggio in Calabria, and died from fever after the action) “who is brother to Mrs. James Hobson. His wife lived at Walgrave Lodge, with her husband’s relations. She heard brother Hobson pray in the family, and pray for her and her husband, whose life and soul were in danger. The poor woman was cut to the heart that another should pray for her and her husband, and that she could not pray either for him or for herself. She would go alone under the hedges and weep on this account. She has now laid hold on eternal life.”

In 1804 a letter to Ryland in Bristol suggests that a dry spell had come to Fuller’s soul :

“My experience of late has been somewhat singular. I think I have not for a long time felt such difficulty in getting on with my work. I know not how to preach, pray, or do anything else in a right manner. Yet, when engaged, I have been carried through with more spiritual-mindedness than common. My heart has also been much set of late in preaching, if I could, more on Christ crucified. If in all my gettings, I had got more of that heavenly wisdom, I should have been much richer in a spiritual sense than I am. My mind has been low of late on account of the low estate of many of our churches. Divisions, removals of ministers, scandals, etc., occur in various quarters.”

In 1805 there occurred what must have meant prosperity coupled with care and labour. In September of that year the meeting-house, which had been rebuilding all the summer, was reopened for worship. The foundation stone had been laid in May. A wall or so of the old

edifice was retained and the building was designed to accommodate nine hundred persons. Fuller's son, then a little fellow of six years old, led by his mother's hand, and wearing a sort of Joseph's coat, recalled the occasion and tells us that the ceremony of the stonelaying was performed in a heavy fall of snow, though it was May.

Soon after the opening the burly and genial Mark Wilks of Norwich visited Fuller. The two divines walked up and down the aisles, Fuller's little son trotting behind them.

"Well," said Wilks, "it's very plain: I see no ornament about it."

"No," replied the pastor, "we did not concern ourselves about that: we aimed at comfort and convenience, and such as it is we have paid for it amongst ourselves."

Some six or seven years afterwards Fuller was on tour for the Mission at Yarmouth, and was being driven by Wilks. On leaving the inn the ostler in leading the horse out of the inn-yard allowed one wheel of the high gig to go over a stone.

"You great blundering blockhead," said Mark, recovering his balance after being nearly thrown out, "couldn't you do better than that?"

"Brother Wilks," said the grave monitor by his side in a bass whisper, "you know not what manner of spirit you are of. What will that man think——" The remainder of the sentence was lost in the distance.

Writing to Mrs. Fuller's father on September 29th, 1805, Fuller remarks, "I must go another tour next week of six hundred miles to Plymouth, but hope to be out only two Lord's Days. We met first in our new place of worship last Lord's Day, when it was well filled. To-day we commemorated the Lord's death. I baptized three persons last Thursday in our new baptistery. Next Tuesday we have our ministers' meeting, when Mr. Hall

of Cambridge is expected to be one of the preachers." (When first Fuller met the brilliant son of his old mentor, Father Hall, he had prayed, "Lord, keep that young man." His prayer was abundantly answered. He rejoiced to see the astonishing powers of Hall junior come under the consecrating spell of evangelical conviction. Hall's matchless eloquence was frequently used in the service of the Mission.)

The time had not yet passed when the worship of dissenters might be disturbed by rowdies crowding into the place, but in Kettering Baptist meeting it could no longer be done with impunity. Morris of Clipstone reports that in 1806 a number of unruly persons alarmed the worshippers by riotous behaviour while Fuller was preaching a funeral sermon for a respected member of the church. "The punishment which Mr. Fuller inflicted upon them, after having brought them before the magistrates, was to make them all stand up in the midst of the congregation on the following sabbath, and ask pardon for the offence, while he read their confession to the people."

A letter to Carey in 1808 gives another instance of blessing. The dry spell has passed by now. He writes:

"I have lately found some encouragement in my work, having for more than a year past been more than heretofore led to insist on the gospel way of salvation through a crucified Christ. I think I have seen of late some of the effect among the young people.

"During the past year we had a female member die. She had for the last twenty-five years been a useful, good woman, but her husband was a perfect sot. She by her industry nearly maintained her husband, and brought up four children. She lived to see her daughter married and her sons settled in business. Her eldest son has been baptized, the second son a hopeful character. Her daughter's husband was about

a year ago a wicked Antinomian, but God has met with him, and he has become a little child. I baptized him lately.

"Soon after his baptism the mother died. Her poor old sot of a husband then remembered her counsels and prayers, and even he is a new man. He weeps like a child and wonders at himself. He never understood the Gospel before, he says, though he has heard it many years. And now the married daughter weeps and says, 'I can see the change in my husband and in my father, but what am I?'

"The youngest son, seeing his father weep, asks what is the matter. 'Oh, James,' replies the poor old man, 'come to Christ! Come to Christ!'

"I preached a sermon to the youth last Lord's Day: *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy.* I think I must have had nearly a thousand. They came from all quarters. My heart's desire and prayer for them is that they might be saved."

These years were rich ones in Fuller's own ministry. To Ryland in Bristol he writes, March 2nd, 1808:

"There appears to be so much of an earnest enquiry after salvation among our young people that I feel it necessary to be absent from them as short a time as possible. We have a weekly meeting in the vestry for all who choose to come for conversation. Four have been accepted, and wait for baptism."

Another letter in 1809 says:

"We rejoice to hear of your prosperity, and hope the cause of God is going on with us. I think I have seen more of it in my own charge within the last year than I have seen for many years."

This wave of blessing continued for several years. The Friday night meeting was transformed into an enquirers' meeting. Fuller gave special talks on the way of life, both as to the way *in* and the way *on*. He took it for a sign of the divine favour on his work for the Mission that God did not let his own work in the pastorate be fruitless. The Monday night prayer meeting was full of power and sweetness.

One other instance of his personal and pastoral interest in individuals may be given. When on the last of his journeys to Scotland, in 1813, he found the Northamptonshire militia in Edinburgh Castle. He went to see them, and found four Kettering men among them, viz., Sergeant Spence, Sergeant Katterns, a young lad named Smith, and Benjamin Benford. He writes home to Mrs. Fuller: "I have invited them to come to meeting and have given Benjamin a Bible."

Fuller's son says:

"I knew Benford well, and remember his enlistment. My father must either then or subsequently have given another Bible, for having an engagement to preach for the late Rev. James Mursell at Kettering in 1873, I received an earnest request to visit a very old soldier at the point of death. The poor man seemed much moved when I accosted him, and producing an old pocket Bible from under his pillow, said as audibly as his failing breath and energies would allow: 'That book was given to me sixty years ago by your father at Edinburgh Castle. It has been a blessing to me, and I shall die with all the more comfort that his son has come to see me in my last moments.' He was not one of the four mentioned above."

Of the actual Sunday worship of the Kettering congregation we can construct a fairly clear picture from the recollections of Fuller's son.

As to the singing, there was little life in it. Two books were used, *Watts' Psalms and Hymns* and *Rippon's Selection*. There was invariably a clerk or precentor who would announce the hymn, read several verses, and then "with due regard for the natural obfuscation of the people's intellects, *parcel it out two lines at a time.*" The staid old tunes such as "Bedford", "Abridge", etc., were in use, but the singers itched for "a class of tunes with fugues and endless repetitions, which were applied indiscriminately to all kinds of words: repetitions of two lines, one line, half a line, half a word, repetitions of such words as 'blast them in everlasting death', without any apparent thought of their awful meaning." The people sang sitting down.

As to prayer, there was only one prayer, and as a boy Fuller's son found it wearisome. The more so as the congregation stood for prayer, and, moreover, the backs of the people were turned to the minister during the exercise. This had "the serious disadvantage of diverting the attention of the worshippers", though it might have "the disciplinary merit of inflicting on late-comers general observation".

The seating arrangements were "not very conducive to the efficiency of the services, especially with children". The pews next the walls were square. Few of the present day will ever have seen these pews. They were "pews" indeed. Each was like a little room, with seats round three sides, and a door on the fourth, facing the aisle. It followed that some must sit with their backs to the preacher, and this "privilege" was usually accorded the children.

On each side of the pulpit was a long window twenty feet from top to bottom, very torturing to the eyes of the congregation, and often concealing the face of the preacher in an unendurable glare.

The service times on the Lord's Day were morning and afternoon. The afternoon was fixed for the second

service for the convenience of the villagers round, who came in considerable numbers, returning to their villages afterwards to hold evening gatherings among themselves. This was the very general practice among the dissenters of the period, and to these Sunday evening village preachings Fuller and men of his stamp gave themselves very earnestly. It was an important evangelistic opportunity of which they took full advantage. Fuller had ten of these preaching places round Kettering.

Fuller's preaching at his morning service was mainly expository. During his thirty-three years at Kettering, he went over large parts of the Bible. His volume of expositions on *Genesis* gives an idea of his power in opening, illustrating, and above all of applying scriptural subjects. In the evening, and on special occasions, Fuller's sermons were textual and topical. His text was never a "pretext". Even here he was still the expositor.

His pulpit preparations ordinarily were not protracted. He worked quickly (as we may readily believe he must have done to accomplish so much in his shortened life). Constant composition with the pen gave him a facility which rendered long preparation unnecessary. He wrote shorthand, and prepared for the pulpit by making a rapid sketch of his matter. He needed no paper in the pulpit. Having thoroughly digested his scheme he was unhampered by any need to refer to notes. Morris of Clipstone says that in the usual way a few hours at the close of the week, or even between services, sufficed him. This would be dangerous counsel for many, but for one whose mind seemed never to have been lifted from the contemplation of revealed truth, which was Fuller's case, there was a fullness of truth in the soul which made the rules suited to lesser men inappropriate.

His son records an unhappy departure from this method of preparation. Having promised to speak at a

platform meeting for the Bible Society (he hated platform meetings, with their fulsome compliments flying back and forth), he wrote his speech very carefully, and tried to commit it to memory, a thing quite off his beat, so to speak. He must needs read this paper after breakfast to all the family. Of course he filled his speech largely with Serampore matters, and referred to *Suttee*. "Women were burnt alive with the dead bodies of their deceased husbands," rolled out the deep bass of the father of the family.

"Oh, father! Were their husbands both dead and deceased?" cried the critics of the breakfast table.

"Oh, how stupid of me to have read that over and over again and not to have noticed the redundancy!" he replied. The pen was drawn through one of the superfluous epithets. He read the amended sentence over several times to make sure. All went to the meeting to hear father's speech. When he came to the *Suttee* passage, out came the sentence "with the measured tread of a cavalry horse at slow time": "Women were burnt alive with the *dead* bodies of their *deceased* husbands!" It need not be said that the children extracted the full toll of fun out of this blunder of father's at the next meal-time! We hear no more of Fuller attempting the *memoriter* method of preparation for public addresses.

With reference to the village preaching, there is a passage in Fuller's paper on the *Dissenting Interest* bearing on his practice:

"I have for some time been in the habit of preaching on the Lord's Day evening, in eight or ten villages round my situation, and never met with any interruption in so doing. The people attend with great decorum, from fifty to five hundred in number; and I have no doubt but such congregations might be obtained in a hundred villages as well as ten, provided

ministers could be found that would go and preach to them. Popular prejudice, it is true, was kindled against the dissenters a few years ago by the disputes concerning the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; but this has now very nearly subsided. Men who enter deeply into party prejudices may continue much the same, but the common people think little or nothing about it."

From a paper on the Baptist churches of Northamptonshire written by Fuller, the following particulars may be given. There were twenty-three churches in the county. Four of them were in market towns, and nineteen in villages. Of these, eleven were in the Association; the other twelve were in no association. The average number of members in each church was about seventy, and the average number of hearers about three hundred.

Of the churches not in the Association, three or four were of the hyper-Calvinist order. The rest, whether associated or not, held with appeals to the unconverted to come to Christ. "We distinguish between high Calvinists and Antinomians: with the former we do not refuse communion, but with the latter we do."

Half of the total number of Baptist churches had been raised in the previous fifty years. Older ones had doubled their membership in that period. Several of the flourishing churches had been a few years before only branches of other churches, but through gifted brethren called out into the ministry, they had grown in numbers and become independent. Some of the ministers laboured in secular callings while carrying on their ministry.

"If genuine Christianity multiply only in the same proportion as it has done in the last half-century, in respect to the number of churches, and of members in each church, it will increase considerably more than

fourfold; and if from each of these churches should proceed only three or four faithful and useful ministers of the gospel—if especially there should arise among them only now and then ‘a fruitful bough’—say a Thomas, a Carey, a Marshman, a Ward, a Chamberlain, or a Chater—‘whose branches run over the wall’ of Christendom itself, who can calculate the fruits?

“From a part of these churches, connected in association with others in the adjacent counties, within the last twenty years, has ‘sounded forth the Word of the Lord’, into the very heart of heathen and Mohammedan Asia; and as the times foretold in prophecy, when ‘a little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation’, appear to be fast approaching, it behoves us not only to ‘attempt’, but also to ‘expect great things’.”

Towards the end of the period covered by this chapter an assistant in the pastorate was provided for Fuller on account of the latter’s multiplied and anxious labours for the Mission. John Keen Hall, M.A., grandson of Father Hall of Arnsby, and nephew of Robert Hall, M.A., became his associate. This was in 1811, and the arrangement worked very well indeed. John Hall commended himself to Fuller and to his people, as we may believe from the fact that he succeeded to the full pastorate upon Fuller’s death, and held the position for fourteen years. His death at an early age was a great loss to the Church and the denomination. He had a powerful intellect, and much of the family gift of speech.

The Kettering manse received several young men who were preparing for missionary service. In a letter to Ward, Fuller says: “We have two young men on probation. They are very fresh at present: they need to be somewhat ‘pickled’ before they are sent out.” Fuller’s son remarks that from an early period young men had been taken into the family. Their studies were

superintended, and they were sent out to preach. It was all useful preparation.

"Well, sir, may I ask what subject you think of preaching on to-morrow?" said Fuller to one young hopeful.

"Oh yes, sir: it is about the one thing needful."

"And what do you consider that to be?"

"Oh, Christ, sir, of course."

"Indeed! that's worse than the Socinians; they do allow Him to have been a man, you make Him out to be only a thing!"

So Fuller's young man had his exegesis and his humility improved in one stroke.

The best remembered of those who passed through the Kettering manse on their way to India was Lawson, one of the most valuable members of the Serampore family, a man of refined taste, a devoted missionary, and in early life an artist of no mean ability in wood engraving. He proved of outstanding usefulness in the construction of types for the translations of the Scriptures. He endeared himself greatly to the members of the Fuller family before he went abroad, and it was the same after he arrived at Serampore. (His daughter married Dr. John Wenger, and thus he is linked with the Wenger family still represented on the Bengal field.)

CHAPTER X

THE LAST YEAR

1814-1815: aged 61

IN the last months of his life on earth Fuller was a very sick man. For some time before he had been wont to speak of himself as getting old. An "organic disease which fastened on the liver" increased its ravages upon his strength. Twelve hours a day at "the desk in the

sitting-room", broken by his exhausting tours all over the land, and his anxieties and cares in connection with the defence of the Mission against its enemies in high places in London, made him very weary.

Sutcliff had already passed away on the previous 22nd June. Robert Hall had undertaken to furnish an account of Sutcliff's character and work, but excused himself afterwards to Fuller on the ground that he had quite failed in his attempt and must give it up, suggesting that Fuller himself was the only person who could truly represent his character to the reading public. Alas, Fuller's health so broke down that, though he made a beginning, the work was never done. It is a pity that of this faithful friend and colleague of the founders of the Mission there is neither a biography nor even a portrait beyond a silhouette.

Sutcliff's caution was a byword. Writing once to Ryland, Fuller said, "I allow you and brother Sutcliff to excel me in wisdom, especially in foreseeing difficulties: but I fancy I excel you both, if it be an excellence, in courage. I therefore wish to *advise* with you both, but to *execute* without you."

Nevertheless from the very first Sutcliff was the one to whom the often harassed secretary had recourse more than to any other for understanding fellowship in his labour and cares. Years ago it had been said,

"When Mr. Fuller received any intelligence from India which perplexed him, he would tie up his papers, get upon his horse and ride over to Olney, where he could see things better, he used to say, than at Kettering."

But if himself cautious to a fault, Sutcliff had unlimited confidence in his friend the secretary. "Call a committee meeting!" he once exclaimed. "No, the matter is self-evident. If you do call one, appoint some proper place on the turnpike road, at such a milestone.

Fix the hour and the minute: let us set our horses' heads together, pass a vote, and part again in two minutes."

During Sutcliff's last illness, too, Fuller was his frequent visitor, facing the rigours of a severe winter that he might give comfort and receive inspiration.

Sutcliff also, like Fuller, had received students into his house. Indeed he took a larger house in Olney than would have sufficed for his own needs in order to make room for what amounted to a small academy. Among those who passed through Sutcliff's hands was Eustace Carey, Dr. Carey's nephew, a young man of eloquence and preaching power far above the ordinary, who did great service among the home churches, as the magazines of the period amply show. He also served for ten years in India.

Now Sutcliff was gone, and his passing was for the sick secretary undoubtedly a loosening of the silver cord. Fuller preached at his funeral on *Looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life*. The latter part of this sermon relates the bare particulars of Sutcliff's life, and this is the only record extant of one of the noblest yet humblest of the ministers of his age.

With the effects of his illness constantly draining his strength, sometimes unable to walk, Fuller tried to go on his travels, but from the designation of Yates, a recruit for India, at Leicester, he had to return. He endeavoured to fulfil his cancelled programme for Lancashire and the north, but had to give up at Newark and go home. More bad news came. Mrs. Sutcliff died only eleven weeks after her husband—another dear and trusted helper gone. Ryland was dear as ever, but was far away in Bristol. No wonder the secretary was increasingly lonely.

Unable to travel, he nevertheless sat long hours at "the desk in the sitting-room" and prepared for the press three publications—a volume of sermons, his *Exposition of the Apocalypse*, and a long and elaborate

Letter on Communion to be sent out only if Hall's anticipated production on the other side should seem to call for it. Meanwhile the *Letter* was entrusted to the discretion of Dr. Newman of Stepney College.

In February, 1815, he wrote to his brother Robert at Isleham:

"We shall soon finish our course: may it be with joy. If I am able next summer, it is in my mind to take a tour eastward to Wisbech, Lynn, Fakenham, Norwich, Yarmouth, and some other places in Norfolk and Suffolk, and return by Isleham and Soham; but perhaps I may prove like Samson, who went out to do as at other times, and wist not that his strength had departed from him."

He staggered over to Clipstone to take part in the ordination of John Mack as minister there. He addressed the church from the words, *Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward*. Leaving the pulpit he said, "I am very ill—a dying man." Leaving the place he said, "All is over—my work is nearly finished. I shall see you no more: the blessing of the Lord attend you. Farewell."

The following Sunday he preached what proved to be his last sermon to his own people. It was the first Sunday of the month and the Communion followed. The people had a strong impression that they were receiving the sacred emblems from his hands for the last time. Fuller "seemed absorbed in the contemplation of a crucified, risen, and exalted Redeemer". It was an affecting scene—the pastor dying on his feet, worn out by excessive labour: the people, many of them his own children in the Lord, affectionate, anxious, and weeping for sorrow and foreboding fears.

His people, determined to do their utmost, arranged for him to go to Cheltenham for the waters, but he was

too ill to avail himself of their kind intention. By next Sunday he could no longer write—the hand that had never ceased to write must cease at last. He dictated a loving letter to Ryland, “my dearest friend”, and appended with difficulty his initials for the last time. So ended the writing.

“I have very little hope of recovery. . . . I am a poor guilty creature: but Christ is an almighty Saviour. I have preached and written much against the *abuse* of the doctrine of grace, but that doctrine is all my salvation and all my desire. . . . Come, Lord Jesus: come when Thou wilt. Here am I: let Him do with me as seemeth Him good.

“We have some who have been giving out of late, that ‘if Sutcliff and some others had preached more of Christ, and less of Jonathan Edwards, they would have been more useful’. If those who talked thus preached Christ half as much as Jonathan Edwards did, and were half as useful as he was, their usefulness would be double what it is.

“It is very singular that the Mission to the East should have originated with men of these (Calvinistic) principles; and, without pretending to be a prophet, I may say, If ever it falls into the hands of men who talk in this strain, it will soon come to nothing.

“If I should never see your face in the flesh, I could wish one last testimony of brotherly love, and of the truth of the Gospel, to be expressed by your coming over and preaching my funeral sermon, if it can be, from Romans viii. 10.

“I can dictate no more, but am ever yours, A.F.”

Next Sunday, May 7th, as he heard the congregation singing in the meeting-house next door, he said to his daughter Sarah, “I wish I had strength enough.”

“To do what, father?”

“To worship, child.” He added, “My eyes are dim.”

The family were around the bed waiting the end. The dying man turned to his other daughter: "Come, Mary, and help me."

He was raised up and continued in that position for an hour. John Keen Hall was preaching in the adjoining meeting-house on *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me*, when Fuller fell back, gave two or three sighs, and went home to God. His thirty-two years of pastoral labour in Kettering were over.

Coming out of the meeting, word having been passed up to the preacher that the end had come, the congregation met the friends from the other churches of the town. "He is gone, he is gone," passed from lip to lip, and tears trembled in many eyes. The news quickly spread through town and county, and throughout the country.

For the funeral the meeting-house galleries were propped in many places lest the crowds should be too much for the building. It was estimated that two thousand squeezed into the place, occupying every inch of space, standing in aisles and passages, or listening in lobbies as best they could. Ryland preached on *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness*, as Fuller had desired. Robert Hall gave the funeral oration, and, whether overcome by feeling, or for some other reason, was not able to satisfy himself or others in the part assigned him. No persuasion would induce him to consent to the publication of his address. Fuller's son, going into the house after Ryland had said the last few words over the open grave, found the renowned orator leaning on the mantelpiece by "the desk in the sitting-room", his shoulders heaving with the emotion to which he was giving vent. He retreated unobserved and closed the door against the intrusion of any others. The scene imprinted itself too deeply on the observer's mind to be ever forgotten.

Subsequently, however, Robert Hall characterized Fuller in his own unmistakable manner. No other hand could have written the following:

"I cannot refrain from expressing, in a few words, the sentiments of affectionate veneration with which I always regarded that excellent person while living, and cherish his memory now that he is no more; a man whose sagacity enabled him to penetrate to the depths of every subject he explored, whose conceptions were so powerful and luminous, that what was recondite and original appeared familiar; what was intricate easy and perspicuous in his hands; equally successful in enforcing the practical, in stating the theoretical, and discussing the polemical branches of theology.

"Without the advantages of early education, he rose to high distinction among the religious writers of his day, and, in the midst of a most active and laborious life, left monuments of his piety and genius which will survive to distant posterity.

"Were I making his eulogium, I should necessarily dwell on the spotless integrity of his private life, his fidelity in friendship, his neglect of self-interest, his ardent attachment to truth, and especially the series of unceasing labours and exertions in superintending the Mission to India, to which he most probably fell a victim.

"He had nothing feeble or indecisive in his character; but to every undertaking in which he engaged he brought all the powers of his understanding, all the energies of his heart; and if he were less distinguished by the comprehension than the acumen and solidity of his thoughts, less eminent for the gentler graces than for stern integrity and native grandeur of mind, we have only to remember the necessary limitation of human excellence.

"While he endeared himself to his denomination by

a long course of most useful labour; by his excellent works on the Socinian and Deistic controversies, as well as his devotion to the cause of missions, he laid the world under lasting obligations."

To the eloquent tribute of the first preacher of the age may be added the words of his dear companion and helper in all his works, Mrs. Fuller. In a letter to Ryland she says:

"I cannot forbear adding my testimony to my late dear husband's conduct in his domestic character; which, so far as his mind was at liberty to indulge in such enjoyments, I must testify to have been, ever since I had the happiness of being united to him, of the most amiable and endearing kind.

"But to so great a degree was he absorbed in his work as scarcely to allow himself any leisure or relaxation from the severest application; especially since, of late years, his work so accumulated on his hands.

"I sometimes used to remark how much we were occupied (for, indeed, I had no small share of care devolved upon me in consequence); his reply usually was, 'Ah, my dear, the way for us to have any joy is to rejoice in all our labour, and then we shall have plenty of joy.'

"If I complained that he allowed himself no time for recreation, he would answer, 'Oh no: all my recreation is change of work.' If I expressed an apprehension that he would soon wear himself out, he would reply, 'I cannot be worn out in a better cause. We must work while it is day,' or 'Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.'

"There was a degree of bluntness in his manner, which yet did not arise from an unsociable or churlish disposition, but from an impatience of interruption in the grand object of his pursuit. In this sense he

seemed not to know his relations or friends.

"Often, when a friend or an acquaintance on a journey has called, when they had exchanged a few words, he would ask, 'Have you anything more to say? If not, I must beg to be excused,' at the same time asking them to stay and take some refreshment, if they chose.

"You know, dear sir, he had a heart formed for the warmest and sincerest friendship with those whose minds were congenial with his own, and who were engaged in similar pursuits; and I never knew him to be weary of their company.

"I am fully persuaded that my dear husband fell a sacrifice to his unremitting application to the concerns of the Mission: but I dare not murmur. The Lord has done as it pleased Him; and I know that whatever He does is right."

There is one other voice to be heard, and the reader will be astonished to find that the speaker is Fuller's splendid mother, who actually outlived her famous son by one year, and died over ninety years of age.

After Fuller's funeral his son overheard his grandmother and his two uncles discussing their sad loss:

"Well, mother," said Robert from Isleham, "we have had a great loss in Andrew's death."

"Ah, my dear, I feel it very much indeed."

"He was a great man," said John from Little Bentley.

"I don't know what you mean, my dear."

"Why, mother, he wrote many books which are much thought of."

"Well, well, I don't know much about that; he never said anything to me about what people thought of them. I know that he was a good man, and a good son to me."

Perhaps among all the tributes this is the best.

CHAPTER XI

FULLER'S WRITINGS

IN 1831 Fuller's son, the Rev. Andrew Gunton Fuller, collected everything of permanent importance which his father had written. Prefaced by a memoir, the whole was published in five thick volumes. There were later reprints in one double column volume. Both forms were widely sold in this country and in America, where he was perhaps no less appreciated than at home. From his own day, until the close of the nineteenth century, Fuller was quoted upon those questions in theology to which he had given attention. In such a representative work, for example, as *Systematic Theology* by Augustus Hopkins Strong of Rochester, there are thirteen distinct references to Andrew Fuller.

Ryland's judgment was that Fuller "was the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to the Baptist denomination". It is quite certain that no Baptist writer of his own day exerted an influence comparable to that of Fuller. It is a simple matter of history that his writings changed the current of thinking in a considerable section of the Baptist denomination. But for him a large part of the Baptist body would have been as a train running into a siding. He was as the steel points that caught the train and kept it on the main line of evangelical and missionary advance.

"The predominant feature in the intellectual character of Mr. Fuller," says Robert Hall, "was the power of discrimination, by which he detected the minutest shades of difference among objects which most minds would confound. . . . He never appeared to so much advantage as when occupied in detecting sophistry, repelling objections, and ascertaining, with a microscopic accuracy, the exact boundaries of truth and error."

The Rev. A. G. Fuller, who edited his father's works for the volumes mentioned above, lived to the great age of eighty-two, and wrote still another sketch of his father's career. From the Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon he received the following letter of thanks for the little work:

"VENERABLE FRIEND,

"I thank you for sending me your *Andrew Fuller*. If you had lived for a long time for nothing else but to produce this volume, you have lived to good purpose.

"I have long considered your father to be the greatest theologian of the century, and I do not know that your pages have made me think more highly of him as a *divine* than I had thought before. But I now see him within doors far more accurately, and see about the Christian man a soft radiance of tender love which had never been revealed to me either by former biographies or by his writings.

"You have added moss to the rose, and removed some of the thorns in the process.

"Yours most respectfully,

"C. H. SPURGEON."

It is pleasant to find this letter from one who, in the beginning of his career in London as a preacher, was accused of "Fullerism" and opposed by the narrow school on that ground.

Fuller's position in theology has been stated by himself in a conversation recorded by Ryland as taking place between Fuller and an evangelical clergyman of the time.

CLERGYMAN: "There are different shades of Calvinism, I suppose, amongst you?"

FULLER: "Yes, there are three by which we commonly describe ourselves, namely, the high, the moderate, and the strict Calvinists. The first are, if I may so speak, more Calvinistic than Calvin himself; in other words,

bordering on Antinomianism."

CLERGYMAN: "Have you many of these? "

FULLER: "Too many."

CLERGYMAN: "Do they not reckon you a legal preacher? "

FULLER: "Yes, at this very time I am represented through the religious circles of London as an Arminian."

CLERGYMAN: "On what ground? "

FULLER: "What I have written in a note in *The Gospel Its Own Witness*."

CLERGYMAN: "I remember that note. I and my friends approve of it, and think it agrees with the doctrine held by our church. But what do you call a *moderate* Calvinist? "

FULLER: "One that is a half Arminian, or, as they are called with us, Baxterians."

CLERGYMAN: "And what is a strict Calvinist? "

FULLER: "One that really holds the system of Calvin. I do not believe everything that Calvin taught, nor anything because he taught it; but I reckon strict Calvinism to be my own system."

All his days Fuller was engaged in controversy. He was as one of the wrestlers of his youth, never allowed to leave the ring. "One down another come on" was his fate since his first treatise *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* saw the light.

This can be seen by glancing at the list of his publications as arranged and edited by his son which is appended to this chapter.

The first volume contains his best known and most widely read treatises. *The Gospel Its Own Witness* is written against the unbelief of the day, as represented by Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* and all writers of that school, including Hume the philosopher and Rousseau the French unbeliever. This work made a wide appeal. It had nothing merely Baptist about it. It was a defence of revelation, as Principal Fairbairn said, "against

Deists and deniers of every sort ". It was welcomed and praised by all the friends of the Bible and of vital godliness.

The other treatise in volume one was written against the misbelief of the Unitarians of the day. Dr. Priestley, Mr. Belsham, Mr. Lindsey and others were never weary of inveighing against Calvinism as unfavourable to morality. It was on this ground that Fuller took up the challenge. He compared the Calvinistic belief with that of the Socinians. (He would not use the title Unitarian, claiming that it begged the question. He also believed in One God.) The ground taken explains the title and plan of the work, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared as to Their Moral Tendency*. This work also, it will be seen, was a contribution to evangelical Christianity. It laid all serious believers in the Gospel under obligation to Fuller. It helps to explain why Fuller, above any other Baptist of the time, had influence wherever vital Christianity was valued.

Since Fuller's day the enemy has shifted his ground. The trenches once effectively shelled by Fuller's guns are no longer occupied, and no doubt his artillery is out of date for that reason. But this is only to say of him what has also to be said of Butler and Paley, Lardner and Leland. Nevertheless, even in his polemical works there is so much of Fuller's spiritual and moral fervour, and of his clearness and force in reasoning, that they will still reward the reader into whose hands they may come.

These two works were selected for inclusion in Bohn's *Standard Library* in 1852. The editor of that series says:

"In an endeavour to render the *Standard Library* a complete epitome of English Literature in each of its various departments, it would be invidious alto-

gether to omit the works of those Nonconformist Divines which have obtained an established and merited reputation. Among these the writings of the late Rev. Andrew Fuller *maintain an acknowledged pre-eminence.*"

The second volume of Fuller's collected works contains the famous *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, and other works written in defence of its main positions against all comers. Its guns were directed in the first instance against the hyper-Calvinism which occasioned such distress of mind, heart and conscience to Fuller himself in his youthful searches after saving truth. He found himself fired into from opposite sides. The hyper-Calvinists found two names for Fuller's heresy, as they deemed it. "Duty-faith" was one. In the Circular Letters of some of the Associations from the turn of the century there are constant allusions to the controversy raised by Fuller's work. "Fullerism" was another term of reproach used by many. As we have seen, it was applied to Spurgeon, whose Calvinism was on a par with that of Fuller.

But this was not all. Abraham Booth also entered into the controversy. Not indeed taking the same ground as the near-Antinomians already referred to, but on grounds peculiar to himself. The points of difference between these two worthy men are almost indistinguishable by the present-day reader. And it is not pleasant to think of the author of *The Reign of Grace* falling foul of the author of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. They distinguished and divided and discriminated at such a rate that we can hardly follow them in what must nevertheless have been important in their minds. To us it seems like undertaking to draw exact lines of division between the blending colours of the rainbow.

Another antagonist appeared in Scotland. Archibald

M'Lean, the Sandemanian Baptist leader of the north, disputed concerning the nature of faith, and the controversy lasted for years. This was not all, for from the opposite side came Dan Taylor, the highly esteemed leader of the Baptists of the New Connexion, arguing against Fuller's main positions from the Arminian point of view.

All this argumentation was strictly within the family, and on the whole was well conducted, though with occasional misunderstanding and with some exacerbation of feeling, especially between Booth and Fuller. It was a dispute among the Baptists, and is to-day a burnt-out controversy. It is to the credit of all parties that these theological battles did not hinder any of them from supporting the work of "The Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen" —to give the Mission for once its original name.

The contents of the third volume are entirely concerned with expositions of Holy Scripture. Pride of place is rightly given to the exposition of Genesis. This volume was very popular in its day, and was widely read and used by preachers and teachers. Next is an exposition of the book of the Revelation. Fuller's scheme of interpretation follows the same line as that of President Edwards in his *History of Redemption*. It was published after the author's death, and what was its progress is not apparent. Whether Fuller was more successful than others in unravelling the mysteries of the Apocalypse scarcely concerns us now.

The rest of the contents of the volume are shorter connected expositions, together with a great collection of occasional contributions to the many periodicals of the time. To such journals Fuller was a constant and valued contributor. Journals of this class belong to the past, and have no parallel now.

In volumes four and five the titles nearly all sufficiently explain the nature of the various works. Apart from

the *Memoirs of Pearce* and the *Apology for Christian Missions* the rest consists of practical writings. In such work Fuller excelled, and for the reader of to-day his practical teachings are still alive. Wisdom spiritual, moral, practical, and contemplative are here in abundance. Here are the sermons on special occasions so much sought for in his day. Here are the discourses delivered at ordinations of ministers. Here also the counsels given to churches by this great-souled, wise-hearted counsellor and friend. This side of Fuller would by itself have made him a great man, but when we add his contributions to the theological thinking of his time, and to that his matchless services to the cause of foreign missions, we may affirm that to Fuller the Christian cause in general and the Baptist denomination in particular owes so much that, excepting only Carey, it is hard to name his fellow.

THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF THE

REV. ANDREW FULLER

WITH A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE BY ANDREW GUNTON FULLER

Contents of Volume One

Memoir of Andrew Fuller by his son Andrew Gunton Fuller.

The Gospel Its Own Witness, or The Holy Nature and Divine Harmony of the Christian Religion Contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism. Preface dated Kettering, October 10th, 1799.

The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared as to Their Moral Tendency: In a Series of Letters, Addressed to the Friends of Vital and Practical Religion. To Which is Added a Postscript Establishing the

Principle of the Work against the Exceptions of Dr. Toulmin, Mr. Belsham, etc. Dated 1802. (First Edition 1793.)

Letters to Mr. Vidler on The Doctrine of Universal Salvation. Dated August 2nd, 1802.

Contents of Volume Two

The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation, or The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ. Printed from the Second Edition. (Written in 1781. Published first in 1785. Revised and reissued 1801. Printed by J. W. Morris at Clipstone.)

A Defence of a Treatise entitled The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation: Containing a Reply to Mr. Button's Remarks and the Observations of Philanthropos (Dan Taylor's pseudonym). Preface dated 1787.

The Reality and Efficacy of Divine Grace, with the Certain Success of Christ's Kingdom, considered in a Series of Letters. Containing Remarks upon the Observations of the Rev. Dan Taylor on Mr. Fuller's Reply to Philanthropos, by "Agnostos" (a pseudonym used by Fuller on this occasion only). No date.

Strictures on Sandemanianism in Twelve Letters to a Friend. (The controversy with Archibald M'Lean on the Nature of Faith.)

Dialogues and Letters between Crispus and Gaius (Fuller and J. W. Morris). Dated 1795.

Three Conversations on Imputation, Substitution, and Particular Redemption between Peter, James and John (Fuller, Morris and Abraham Booth). No date.

Six Letters to Dr. Ryland respecting The Controversy with the Rev. Abraham Booth. Dated 1803.

Antinomianism contrasted with The Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures. No date.

Contents of Volume Three

Expository Discourses on the Book of Genesis, Interspersed with Practical Reflections. (Fifty-three Sunday morning sermons, published as a volume.) Preface dated October 29th, 1805.

Expository Discourse on The Apocalypse. (Thirty-one Sunday morning sermons.) Preface dated March 21st, 1815 (a few weeks before Fuller's death. The volume did not appear till after that event).

Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. Thirteen Sunday morning sermons.

Expository Remarks Relative to the Conversion of the Jews.

Exposition of Prophecies Relating to the Millennium. (Written in 1815 just before Fuller's death.)

Exposition of Those Scriptures which refer to the Unpardonable Sin. No date.

Expository Notes on Various Passages. (Collected from various magazines.)

Exposition of Passages Apparently Contradictory. (Also collected from various magazines.) No date.

Contents of Volume Four

Sermons and Sketches. (Eighty-four full sermons or outlines of sermons delivered in the course of his ministry from his first published discourse, *Walking By Faith*, preached at the Association at Nottingham, June 2nd, 1784. Included are the ordination sermon for Carey at Moulton, August, 1787, and the Valedictory for Carey and Thomas at Leicester, 1793. In these sermons Fuller is at his best. Almost any of them could be repeated to-day, so little has time altered their appropriateness, or dimmed their bright clarity.)

Circular Letters. (Nine messages to the Associated Churches from 1782 to 1815.)

Letters on Systematic Divinity. (Under the form of letters to Ryland, and at Ryland's request, Fuller was writing a "Body of Divinity" when he was called home. Nine chapters only were completed.)

Thoughts on Preaching. (Four long letters to a young minister on preaching. Full of ripe wisdom, and still well worth reading.)

Contents of Volume Five

Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, M.A.

Apology for the Late Christian Missions to India, in Three Parts, with Appendix. (Fuller's vigorous reply to those who had opposed and traduced Carey, Marshman and Ward—Mr. Twining, Major Scott-Waring, and "A Bengal Officer".)

On Ecclesiastical Polity. (Letters, essays, and magazine

articles on various matters of church order. They reflect the advice given by Fuller to ministers and churches, when he was consulted by them. They are of great interest. The balanced wisdom of his counsel, and the spiritual quality pervading it, enable us to understand why he was regarded as a father by ministers, and as the wisest and best of friends by the churches of his denomination.)

Miscellaneous Tracts, Essays, Letters, etc. (This section includes many short practical works which were very useful in their day. The Treatise on *The Backslider*, for example, was reprinted many times by the R.T.S. as a tract. It is a piece of diagnosis in which the causes of spiritual declension are laid open with the skill of a true physician of souls.)

Reviews. (Eight works of the day are here commented on, for various magazines of the time.)

Answers to Queries. (More of Fuller's practical wisdom, exegetical insight and loving counsel to enquirers of all kinds.)

Fugitive Pieces. (More articles rescued from the many magazines to which Fuller contributed. The very dust is gold.)